



Employability skills-match of graduates of Mafikeng Campus, North West University

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to analyse the extent of particular sets of North West University (Mafikeng campus) graduates' employability and skills-matching. This study used a qualitative approach in order to look into the employability skills-match of graduates and to suggest some possible solutions to their problems of unemployment and possible lack of skills in finding jobs. Data was collected from the campus graduates who qualified between the years 2010 and 2014, and participants from different government departments and the private sector companies in Mafikeng, using in-depth-interviews. In total, the participants consisted of twenty graduates both employed and unemployed, seven participants from North West provincial government departments, and three from the private sector, using a purposive sampling method.

The study found that employability skills are very important in the work place and can help the graduates to secure jobs. The study reveals the graduates' experiences in finding employment and of the skills that can influence employability. The study also examines their own perceptions in relation to the level of jobs they find and apply for, both in terms of their qualifications and the job sector they are involved in, if at all. Furthermore, the study found that there are particular types of skills that the government departments and private sector companies offer or require from these graduates.

In conclusion, there is a growing need for the development of employability skills, in order that graduates can be enabled to secure jobs. The labour market also sees a demand for people with relevant employability skills and work experience. The study recommends that the problem of employability skills-match of graduates should be urgently addressed by input from tertiary institutions, national and provincial government, and by the private sector. Possibly, there should be an increase in investing towards particular forms of employment skills programmes, so as to assist graduates more effectively.

Key words: employability skills, graduates, skills, skills development, Mafikeng Campus, NWU

DECLARATION

I, Masego Kgosiemang, hereby declare that this dissertation for the Masters of Social Science in Sociology, submitted at the North West University (Mafikeng Campus) has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any university and that this is my work and all materials herein used are properly acknowledged.

.....

M. KGOSIEMANG

.....day of 2017

DATE

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
B.Sc.	Bachelor of Science
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CWP	Community Work Programme
DOE	Department for Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FEED	Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HRSC	Human Science Research Council
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
n.d.	No date
NDP	National Development Plan
NEF	National Empowerment Fund
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHRDS	National Human Resource Development Strategy
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NWPG	North West Provincial Government
NWU	North West University
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
PAJA	Promotion of Administration Justice Act
PDP	Personal Development Plan
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PPC	Pretoria Portland Cement
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Planning Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authorities
SET	Science Engineering and Technology
SI	Supplementary Instructor
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises

SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SOPA	State of the Province Address
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SSPs	Sector Skills Plans
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCTION.

South Africa's unemployment rate is extremely high, estimated to be 25.2%, comprising approximately 4.2 million people in 2014/2015 (Gauteng Province Economic Development, 2014/2015: 9). Levinsohn (2007: 1-3) believes that South Africa's high unemployment rate is due to the fact that workers who are unemployed today are not obtaining the experience and skills that will contribute to their productivity in future. Vally and Motala (2014) state that unemployment is a structural problem and further emphasise that education should not be seen as supplying the labour requirements of business.

However, according to the Department of Labour (in Coetzee and Esterhuizen, 2010: 1-2) there are national funding strategies that the South African government has promulgated and created as a form of financial support and sectorial programmes to provide all unemployed graduates with necessary skills and work experience in order for them to be able to get jobs. Such strategies include the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and the National Human Resources Development Strategy (NHRDS). Regardless of such strategies the unemployment rate of graduates continues to be critical in South Africa.

The South African government also came up with the National Development Plan (NDP) which consists of all the goals that government intends to achieve by 2030. The NDP has been introduced as a vision of the government for the country. As highlighted in Chapter 3 and 9 of the NDP, increasing employment and improving the quality of education are its highest priorities. The vision 2030 of the NDP on employment is to achieve full employment, decent work and sustainable livelihoods as it is the only way to improve living standards and ensure a dignified existence for all South Africans. Furthermore, the NDP argues that all of this will be achieved by expanding the economy to absorb labour and by improving the quality of life of South African citizens, and for its institutions to respond to opportunities and challenges (National Planning Commission, 2011: 109).

In support of the NDP, President Zuma in his State of the Nation Address (2014) stated that:

Youth empowerment will be prioritised in our economic transformation programme. Government will introduce further measures to speed up the employment of young people, consistent with the Youth Employment Accord. We will expand the number of internship positions in the public sector, with every government department and public entity being required to take on interns for experiential training (State of the Nation Address, 2014: 9).

Nonetheless, the rate of unemployment continues to be a problem in South Africa, and this affects the economic growth of the country.

In addition, in the 2014 State of the Province Address of the North West Province, Mr Supra Obakeng Ramueletsi Mahumapelo stated that:

The North West Provincial Government will ensure that 195 youth will be linked to Community Development Work opportunities. In improving social cohesion and employability of youth, 300 youth will participate in Skills Development Programmes”

He further stated that a total of 7 407 jobs opportunities will be created through infrastructure development, the green and social economy during the financial year 2014/15 (State of the Province Address, 2014: 14).

According to the NDP, universities are key to the development of a nation. They educate and train people with high-level skills for the employment needs of the public and private sectors. The NDP views universities as dominant producers of new knowledge, and they can critique information and find new local and global applications for existing knowledge. In addition, universities can also set norms and standards, determine the curriculum, study languages and knowledge, with ethics and philosophy underpinning a nation's knowledge-capital. Yet the NDP also says that universities are no longer having a monopoly on knowledge production globally, since other organisations, such as Science Councils, non-governmental and private funded research institutions, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), private sector, and even government, have also become sites of new knowledge production and application (National Planning Commission, 2011: 294).

Schomburg and Teichler (2006: 11-28) argue that the change from being a student to being a person looking for a job tends to be more difficult, particularly for new graduates. Out of this complexity of transition, an important reason why joblessness is so high among the youth is that young people struggle to gain work experience, which is an important signal of ability to potential employers (Department of National Treasury, 2011: 17).

Powell and Wood (1999: 49) argue that the rate of unemployed graduates with diploma or tertiary qualifications has increased from approximately 8% to 13%. The reasons for graduates' unemployment are numerous, but lack of work experience is the key factor preventing new graduates from being employed. There are many challenges that unemployed youth come across at the beginning of their careers (Coetzee and Esterhuizen, 2010: 2).

Moreover, Okay-Somerville and Scholarios (2013: 572) argue that job quality plays an important role in explaining differences in the employment experiences of graduates in non-traditional (or emerging) and traditional 'graduate' occupations. According to Humburg, Van der Velden and Verhagen (2013: 1-6) problems of employment among graduates are more prominent in South Africa and that the unstable economic status of the country also affects the demand for qualifications of the graduates.

The government target in 2013 was for 19 youth cooperatives to be established, and for 250 youth to participate in National Youth Services for skills development. A further 95 youth were to be involved in sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurship development programmes through which job opportunities would be created in the North West Province (State of the Province Address, 2013: 9).

Skills are essential assets in all stakeholders, including individuals, businesses and local communities. The significance of skills is even more evident in a dynamic and globalized world. Building basic skills early on by broadening and improving the quality of early childhood is essential (Klosters, 2014: 5). The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) identifies skills shortage as one of the key obstacles to growth in South Africa (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2006: 7). At this point, skills shortages are a serious threat to economic growth and service delivery (Gauteng Province Economic Development, 2014/2015: 14). Without suitable work skills it is difficult for a person to acquire a job. Skills are also essential to develop conducive management for productive workplaces.

There are many explanations and justifications for going to university, two of which are, a passion for the subject to be studied, and the chance to experience a different way of life as a student, or what Weber calls improving one's 'life chances' (1968: 927). In this regard, Neumann and Tan (2011: 602) state that universities have long been recognised as central to social and economic achievements within a nation. Sophisticated tutoring is much more than a production of marks for work-ready graduates. One significant reason why students study is that they see higher education as a stepping stone to a good job and a better life. Graduates who participated in this study attended university mostly to develop and fast track their opportunities for employment.

According to Powell and Wood (1999: 56) graduates' lack of employability skills and workplace experience are the key contributors to graduate unemployment. One issue relating to graduate unemployment is that graduates are not employed according to their academic qualifications and also due to lack of employability skills-match. Assuming that they are qualified in their core discipline, the focus of this study is on the employability skills-

match and how skills determine the time taken to get employment, and job matching for graduates.

With reference to the policies on skills training, according to DoHE (in the International Labour Office, 2011: 7) South Africa is unique in its strong focus on redressing racial inequality to access and obtain skills. The country aims to build skills development systems by taking a sectorial approach based on a network of SETAs. The National Skills Development Strategies (NSDSs) guides the development of such a system with clear numerical success indicators, especially equity targets. However, the policy dialogue over the third NSDS cautioned that the numerical targets adopted in previous versions are too rigid to adequately reflect economic conditions in different sectors. Emphasis is now being given to Sector Skills Plans (SSPs), to be developed by each SETA, which will map out detailed implementation plans and success indicators, taking account of sectors' specific situations and needs.

The policy of the Skills Development Framework of 2006 is guided by the fact that the South African workforce, in this case, all employees within the education training and development sector, need relevant and competitive skills. These are required in order for them to develop as individuals, to add value to the performance of the organization, and for them to contribute meaningfully to the development of the South African economy. The following set of policies and legislative frameworks are in place to ensure that these goals are realized: The Skills Development Act (1998), Employment Equity Act (1998), Skills Development Levy Act (1999) and the Labour Relations Act (1995) (Department of Education, 2006: 3).

In addition, the Skills Development Framework facilitates a base for skills provision to achieve the Department's strategic objectives, and to develop all (future) employees (Department of Education, 2006: 2). The policy applies to all current employees of the departments or sectors, and potential employees including learners and interns. South African law is constituted by a number of policies, of which the relevant ones for our purposes include the following: National Skills Development Levies (Act No 9 of 1999) and the internship or learnership framework for the Public Service (2002).

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

For Svecraj (2007: 15) skills shortage is not a new phenomenon, being a feature of the South African economy and its public and social landscape. The graduate numbers of the NWU (Mafikeng Campus) is gradually increasing, with bi-annual graduation ceremonies. According to the NWU Pocket Statistics (2014/2015), in 2014 the Department of Education (DoE) released its 2012 statistics: NWU was rated the second highest university in South

Africa in graduate production, awarding 14, 669 undergraduate Diplomas and Degrees. In 2013, the total number of undergraduate qualifications awarded was 10,939. Comparing 2012 and 2013 for the award of Diplomas and Degrees, a decline is evident (from 14 669 to 10 939). All the different postgraduate qualifications awarded in 2013 reached a total of 4 525 (North West University Pocket Statistics of 2014/2015).

After graduating, employment becomes vital for these newly qualified students, but a crucial aspect is related to the low employability skills-match between their qualifications and job market needs. Graduates are thus forced to stay at home or settle for a job that they did not study for. Finding a job is highly competitive, in the context of the current global recession, resulting in many new employees (graduates) seeing fewer openings. This leads to a growing concern among these graduates about their employability status after graduating. This research seeks to examine the employability skills (mis)-match of NWU (Mafikeng) graduates between the years 2010 and 2014.

Davies (in Raftopoulos, 2006: 28-29) argues that graduates overall do not possess personal, transferable and employability skills needed at the entry level in workplaces. This problem challenges graduates personally and the economy structurally. The problem of mismatched skills and the job market needs to be analysed, for a greater fit between skills of graduates and labour market needs. This research aims to see how one such scenario can be possible. Powell and Wood (in Raftopoulos, 2006: 30) see lack of skills, qualifications and professionalism as real problems that recruiters are faced with when recruiting graduates.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY.

The aim of this study is to analyse particular sets of NWU (Mafikeng campus) graduates employability skill-match (2010-2014), and to isolate some relevant skills that are needed in the job market around Mafikeng, in both the private and public sectors. This is done by comparing what skills are transferred to students, if at all, and what the corporate sector and government actually see as necessary to develop, and whether these are able to be matched or not.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

The study's main objectives are to:

- ❖ Identify skills considered by particular employers when hiring graduates
- ❖ Determine if graduates are employed in the relevant field that they have studied.
- ❖ Identify relevant curricula that inform particular skills for Mafikeng campus graduates.
- ❖ Analyse graduates' perceptions about the required skills to get employment.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

- ❖ What skills do the government departments (Department of Labour, Department of Social Development, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Department of Health, Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development and Office of the Premier) and particular private sector organizations seek from relevant graduates?
- ❖ Are the skills sought by employers in the workplace realistic in relation to particular NWU (Mafikeng) campus curricula?
- ❖ How do graduate perceptions of skills correspond to government and particular private sectors job criteria?

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.

This study looks at the significance of skills in the job market for graduates in Mafikeng and those who go to Gauteng as the natural economic cluster of the country. It also seeks to generate awareness that may inform the university, or its relevant departments, to construct some practical solutions to address this problem. With changing technological conditions, problems of mismatching skills and jobs, the data collected and analysis done would be of significant importance to institutional and non-institutionalized constituencies. It could also lead to more studies of this nature for more intensive research and further generalization on the matter around skills and job matching, as well for greater concern with labour market studies.

- ❖ This study is important to graduates since the analysis and findings convey the views of graduates as an important constituency, and may find patterns to the mismatch between skills needed and skills produced in particular region or provinces and the possibilities for change.

1.7. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter covers the introduction of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions and significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter provides a literature review and the theoretical framework with specific reference to employability skills-match of graduates.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter describes the methodology, the study area, the population under study, the study sample and selection procedure, how data will be collected and analysed, ethical considerations, and choice and rationale of the research design.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter examines the findings of the study, with particular focus on the perceptions which participants have on employability skills-match of graduates.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter contains conclusions and recommendations in the way tertiary institutions in partnership with the government and the private sector need to seriously consider some recommendations emerging from this research.

1.8. SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher discussed the background, problem statement, aim of the study, and research questions and the objectives of her study. Significance of the study and organisation of the study was also discussed. The researcher gave a complete explanation of her study.

In chapter 2, the researcher will explore literature to find out what do different authors say about employability skills in the workplace, and also look into different theories on skills.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW.

In this chapter, existing research is examined, including relevant studies and practices of employability skills of graduates. Reading materials used for this literature review are journal articles, reports, internet websites and books.

2.1.1. The need for employability skills.

For the purpose of this study, Yorke's definition of employability skills will be utilized. Yorke (2006: 8) defines employability skills as follows:

A set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes, for greater employability of graduates and for occupational success, which benefits them, the workforce, the community and the economy.

For Robinson (2000: 1-2) such skills are those basic skills necessary to get, keep and do well in a job. Bloom and Kitagawa (1999: 13) describe employability skills as generic skills, attitudes and behaviours that employers look for in new recruits, and which they develop through training programs for current employees. According to Allen Consulting Group (2004: 12) employability skills tend to involve a high order of mental complexity since they involve a lively and reflective approach to life. In the job market the employability skills are solid in a way that they let employers pay more attention to skills that are in demand in all the economic sectors (National Network of Business and Industry Associations, 2014: 4).

McLarty (2005) define skills as capabilities firms seek by graduates that can be further divided into personal and business skills, practical and non-practical skills. Moreover, for Palmqvist and Perunicic (2007: 5) skills include the concept of capability which provides to portray something that is done well. Skills are a present, visible capability to do a learned behaviour concerning the connection between mental activity and bodily movements (Maxine, 1997). Breiter and Clements (1996: 57-60) highlight the importance of upper-level leadership skills such as skills in diverse areas like human resources, conceptual and analytical practices, communication, problem solving and planning, and as the key focus of future hospitality courses. They argue that these skills are more essential compared to technical skills, which are usually learned through training and workshops in the workplace.

Brewer (2013: 4) points out that skills development can be used as a way of improving the lives of the people. Skills are essential in the way that they can help students to be able to make good choices in education, training, wage employment, self-employment and cooperatives.

For Wright, Brinkley and Clayton (2010: 3), the following is relevant:

Skills shortages, skill gaps and skills under-utilisation as the main problems facing the system in the United Kingdom (UK).

Equally important, in such cases it is clear that there is a spatial mismatch between the demand and supply of skills. The demand for high level skills within 'knowledge-based' service sectors, such as financial and insurance activities, is much lower in some places (e.g. the north-east of UK) than it is in others (e.g. London) (Wright et al, 2010: 4).

2.1.2. Employability and expectations of university students.

To be truly independent and responsible, students have to take charge of their education and learn generic skills intentionally (Bloom and Kitagawa, 1999: 5). Robinson and Garton (2008: 97) argue that a common belief in the job industry is that higher education institutions should equip graduates with the proper skills necessary to achieve success in the workplace. Nevertheless, Dressler (2010: 1) argues that many university students are concerned about finding a job in the present world.

Weligamage (2009: 118) links public service resource constraints on generating employment, to two things: lack of funding and lack of organizational planning. Furthermore, there is the private sectors increasingly dominant role in economies, and which is expected to generate more employment opportunities. Between 2012 and 2013, the percentage of the population classified as graduates has increased from 17% to 38% in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2013: 3).

2.1.3. Matching employer's needs.

Brewer (2013: 1) states the following:

"Employers naturally want employees who can continue to learn and adapt; read, write and compute competently; listen and communicate effectively; think creatively; solve problems independently; manage themselves at work; interact with co-workers; work in teams or groups; handle basic technology, lead effectively as well as follow supervision".

The National Network of Business and Industry Associations (2014: 1) put forward the argument that employers in every industry sector emphasize the need for employees with certain skills. According to the University of Sydney Careers Centre (2006: 1) employers want potential employees that have a range of transferable or generic skills.

Following this, Weligamage (2009: 119) note that employers also prefer to employ persons with degrees and professional qualifications, clearly indicating better career prospects for university students if they supplement their degrees with professional qualifications. Bloom and Kitagawa (1999: 6) argue that "employers believe that the level of success of their organization relies on the generic and technical skills, knowledge and expertise of the employees". The Gallup Organization (2010: 6) shows that employers in the private sector consider graduates with bachelor's degrees to have skills that match the requirements that are needed in their business. But they say graduates with master's degrees would be a better fit.

Still there are concerns about graduates and this is reflected in Wright et al (2010: 4) who argue that in the UK, more than 10 years ago, 44% of qualified people dropped out of higher and further education. There is rising concern about many graduates who are overqualified for the kind of work they do or apply for. Additionally, some employers are disappointed with individuals, including some university dropouts, as they do not demonstrate many of the generic skills that employers look for in the United Kingdom.

2.1.4. International trends in the graduate labour market.

Palmqvist and Perunicic (2007: 16-19) point to policy makers in educational, governmental and economic fields paying less attention to remedies or strategies for transfer of graduates and their skills portfolios for a smooth shift from their higher education institutions to their skill equivalent jobs. Thus two main problems facing Sweden are given little attention, namely, high graduate unemployment, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) improvement in growth and profitability.

Moreover, unemployment trends amongst graduates touch not only the UK graduate labour market, but also recur in the political, economic and educational spheres in Sweden. Remedies to the problem have not been adequately discussed in the context of the skills approach in Sweden, creating a perfect opportunity to fill and explore the research gap in a country that dedicates so much attention to the labour market deficiencies (Palmqvist and Perunicic, 2007: 16-19).

Closer to home, Hindson (in Kraak, 2003: 675) outlines apartheid era trends: where urban semi-skilled African workers increasingly benefitted from forms of secure labour employment associated with internal labour markets. In addition, by the late 1980s, South African semi-skilled workers accrued greater access to promotion, education and training opportunities, were well-paid in comparison to secondary workers, and had access to housing and a relatively developed urban infrastructure.

South Africa has a relatively sophisticated infrastructure for transport, information technology and telecommunications. These require and do employ highly skilled personnel. After the laws of the segregation, South Africa is relatively successful in increasing higher value-added exports, especially in the machinery and mechanical appliances sector. Other recent economic developments (e.g. 'Blue IQ' and 'Innovation Hub' developments in Gauteng) suggest a clear demand for, and infrastructure capable of handling higher skill, higher value-added goods and services (Kraak, 2003: 667).

2.1.5. The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in South Africa.

To counter the apartheid legacy, in particular the low development of skills among the majority population group in South Africa, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) have been established in terms of the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998). SETAs are responsible for the development of skills in various sectors of the economy (Department of Higher Education and Training, Government Gazette, No. 36747: 1-2). According to the National Career Development Services (n.d.) the main aim of SETAs is to provide skills development and training to people who are employed or looking for employment in their sectors. They then ensure that training in their sectors is of appropriate quality and at the skills level needed. SETAs provide information on quality education and training offered by employers within sectors.

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2010: 14) SETAs are instructed to submit information in a standard format and to assist and expose learners to the work before they make their final decisions. The following success indicators apply:

- ❖ SETAs must submit a comprehensive occupational profile of their sector and a guide to employment opportunities in their sector in the format prepared by the DHET.
- ❖ SETAs must provide information on the steps taken to expose prospective learners to work in their sector.



2.1.6. Andre Kraak's ideas on skills.

Andre Kraak's interest in industrial and skills policies deploys a segmented labour market to explain the high degree of unevenness in the demand for enterprise skills across diverse sectors of the South African economy (Kraak, 2012: 1-4). Institutions within open higher education systems no longer function according to their singular missions as in the past. This is due to the differentiating effects of the market to which higher education institutions must be responsive, but also because of the incorporation of diverse sub-sectors into a single unified higher education system. Kraak also sees more well-formed and different skills competencies being in demand (Kraak, 2004: 247).

Lauder and Brown (2005: 31) argue that attaining a high skills economy means raising demand and supply of skills, as the returns benefit both individuals and nations. Persons with many skills stand a high possibility of being happy in their work and opportunities of getting a job.

2.1.7. The contribution of higher education institutions to the economy.

Income growth.

"Higher education can contribute to labour productivity, entrepreneurial energy, and quality of life; it can enhance social mobility and encourage political participation; it can strengthen civil society and promote democratic governance. Higher education's contribution to growth, therefore, means better living standards for people at all levels of the society" (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006: 15). This view reflects in a basic way, how skills can contribute to a diversified economy, and result in income growth, that has the potential to have a sustainable societal effect. Skills are crucial for social engineering in general and in particular for people's well-being, their rise in the social order for greater contribution to civics and politics with the acquired education acquired from skilling.

Creating new technology.

"In a knowledge economy, higher education can help economies keep up or catch up with more technologically advanced societies. Its graduates are likely to be more aware of and better able to use new technologies. They are also more likely to develop new tools and skill themselves" (Bloom et al, 2006: 15).

From the above it is clear that technology is crucial to develop, we well as to sustain the above arguments about developing civics and politics and to maintain a progressive level of skilling that is not merely techniques or stagnating at a particular level of skills acquisition only.

Enlightened leaders.

Higher education can give leaders the confidence, flexibility and breadth of knowledge, and technical skills to effectively confront the economic and political realities of the twenty-first century. It also generates well trained teachers for all levels of the education system” (Bloom et al, 2006: 16).

Here, the crucial elements are leaders and their visions to be able to keep in touch with their constituencies and to interact with people across various sectors to be able to tackle new challenges as they arise as society progresses through its historical development.

Social and economic development.

According to Pouris and Inglesi-Lotz (2014: 1-3) tertiary education contributes to social and economic development through four major missions: the formation of human capital, the building of knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development), the dissemination and use of knowledge (through interactions with knowledge users) and the maintenance of knowledge (inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge). Universities also generate additional output and employment in other economic sectors through secondary or ‘knock-on’ multiplier effects. Higher education makes an additional contribution to the economy through employment.

2.1.8. The role of higher education institutions and skills.

The position of higher education institutions is to set students to the right path to begin the journey of their career and employability (Cole and Tebby, 2013: 5). On that note, the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (2008: 4) states that the responsibility of the university is to provide graduate students with the best potential training for their future roles whether within academia or in other sectors. The success of students depends on their responses to the opportunities and responsibilities that the university environment offers (University of Guelph, 20017: 1).

According to Crosling, Edwards and Schroder (2008), the higher education institutions' curricula must be ethically relevant in order to prepare graduates for living and working in a diverse society. Berger and Braxton (1998) argue that the curriculum can also be helpful in building institutional commitment of the student's potential goals. It is the responsibility of the higher education institutions to offer students the opportunities to be involved in the activities that offer employment experience, learning and skills development (Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh and Knight, 2001).

The role of activities and assessments in all programmes of study is to ensure that students develop skills, and individual lecturers are responsible for ensuring that each unit or module of study plays its part in delivering some aspect of skills (King, 2002: 1). The success of generic skills development is possible if they are included in activities such as academic, workplace-based and personal. Universities such as Sheffield Hallam University have developed learning programmes for study skills which include materials to support the development of key skills. The Liverpool University also has developed a student interactive database, which is used to assist students who require help in developing skills, and provide guidance for each skill area. Such university schemes are regarded as generic skills development associated with particular academic areas succeeding employment. This makes it possible for students to carry records with them as they move from their degree programmes to employment (Gillespie, n.d.: 3).

Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick and Cragolini (2004: 3 - 7) argue that the ability of students to transfer and apply knowledge and skills learned at university into the workplace is important, especially in the final year of their studies. According to their findings, 78.9% of the graduates agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to develop their generic skills while at university. Such generic skills include oral and written communication skills, critical analysis and evaluation, problem solving and teamwork skills.

In sum, the contributions of higher education to economy and society, in various forms and content of knowledge production, or in its contribution to national economies, is great. Such contributions involve training, skilling and general development of individuals and society.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The section below examines theories related to the topic of skills in higher education. Consensus theory, Structural Marxist theory, Conflict theory, Human Capital theory and Dual Labour Market theory, all used to focus on graduates employability skills-match.

2.2.1. Consensus Theory.

Consensus Theory informs an understanding of relations between the economy, education and the graduate labour market. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (in Selvadurai, Choy and Maros, 2012: 296) see it placing emphasis on what social groups have in common, often relating to the social norms or shared cultural beliefs. It is based on the belief that human capital injection by way of instilling generic skills at a tertiary level will ensure employability of graduates and their eventual fast acceleration up or to leap frog the corporate ladder.

Consensus theory tends to blame academia or university environments for not offering sufficient skills through curriculum design and implementation through appropriate educational methods (Selvadurai et al, 2012: 296). Perez, Garrouste and Kozovska, (in Selvadurai et al, 2012: 296) refer to...

The challenges related to the multi-dimensional nature of the employability concept, especially the difficulty of disentangling the role of education and training systems from other factors in evaluating labour market outcomes.

Consensus theory thus falls somewhat short of explanatory power for a full understanding of skills matching. A consensus view of employability thus focuses on the absolute dimension of employability, thereby side-lining concerns about market conditions or about differences between credential holders. The consensus approach to employability is highlighted by market hopefulness, and simultaneously also simplifies the realities of global competition and changing labour markets. Employability is seen as a function of one's educational level and skills-set, which are matched to different sectors of the economy.

2.2.2. Structural Marxist theory

Several social theorists who highlight structuralism have roots in the ideas of the German theorist and political activist, Karl Marx. Bruce and Yearley (2006: 292) see structuralism as an approach that emphasizes that structures hold more power, more than the individuals concerned. Abercrombie, Hill and Tuner (1988: 245) view structuralism as a sociological perception that supports the concept of social structure and that society is important than individuals. According to Blundell (n.d.: 7) the focal point of structuralism is mainly on macro

social structures and institutions instead of individuals. He further argues that structuralists perceive societies as a structural place where individual take part in particular positions. A structure consists of organizations whose purpose is to accomplish economic, political or ideological functions in order to maintain mode of production. The economic structure of a capitalist society is comprised mainly of the relations that put in order the production and distribution of commodities, private property and the market, while its political structure is made up of the institutionalized power of the state (Poulantzas, 1978: 42).

Marx's analysis focuses on the structural mechanisms that steer the capitalist system and produce social class antagonisms. According to Barrow (1993: 52-55) in a firm capitalist society, all structures function in an integrated system in order to maintain the "capitalist" relations of production. On the other hand, Barrow states that, according to the structuralists, crisis in capitalism builds up to the undermining of the decision-making class dominating, and is caused by its internal development. He further argues that most theorists mention three possible factors of those crises which are the economic crisis, class struggle and uneven development. The state must often mediate with policies or institutional restructuring in order to reinstate balance among the different levels. Mandel (1978: 474) argues that it is the responsibility of the state to protect and reproduce the social structure of capitalist societies. Quadagno (1984: 634) sees the state as a go-between to protect and improve capitalist interests.

The structural Marxist disagrees with the argument of the instrumentalists, that the state is a servant of the capitalist or the ruling class, while the instrumentalist continues to argue that the capitalist associates who have the state power positions are the ones that rule the institutions of the state. It is the structuralists' point of view that the function of the institutions of state is to guarantee partial continuous practicality of capitalism. Marxists make another notable function of the institutions of the state which is to reproduce the whole capitalist society. According to the structuralists, the state is seen as a capitalist form of production, because the state reproduces the logic of capitalist structure in its economic, legal, and political institutions and not because certain individuals hold influential positions¹.

In sum, structural factors in capitalism all relate to the relevance of knowledge, skills and training, whether in its endemic economic or political crises, even in its class struggles where particular classes may need to be skilled, given more opportunities for education or in uneven development where skills, knowledge and training may be uneven across classes.

¹ http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:History/Structural_Marxism

2.2.3. Conflict Theory.

Conflict theory emphasises the role of coercion and power in producing social order. This perspective is derived from the works of Karl Marx, who saw society as fragmented into groups that compete for social and economic resources. Social order is maintained by domination, with power in the hands of those with the greatest political, economic and social resources. Conflict theory states that the society is made up of people who are competing for limited resources. This theory is applicable to this study because graduates participants continue to compete for jobs. Kahl (1957: 127-156, 184-220) states that...

Conflict theory is supported by evidence that there are distinctions among status group cultures based both on class and on ethnicity in modern societies.

According to Selvadurai et al (2012: 296) the capital-labour conflict has seen a continuous debate in terms of the employer's role in imparting generic skills and with employees not acquiring adequate skills through training offered by employers. Selvadurai et al further states that there is the employer-academia conflict where the employers feel that the academia have not been providing adequate acquisition of generic skills to the graduates. Conflict Theorists thus argue for employers to take responsibility of providing work place experience to the graduates and not directing the responsibilities to the universities alone. Matsepe (in Jonck and Van der Walt, 2015: 3460) notes the following:

Scholars that subscribe to the conflict theory of employability take into consideration the fact that society is characterised by inequalities in wealth, power, and status, and that these inequalities create conflict between individuals and social groups.

Collins (1971: 1012) thus also notes that...

Conflict theory can be tested by examining the cases in which it predicts education can be relatively important or unimportant for occupational attainment. Education would be most important where two conditions hold simultaneously: the type of education most closely reflects membership in a particular status group, and that group controls employment in particular organizational contexts.

Therefore, education can be most important where the fit is greatest between the culture of the status groups emerging from schools, and the status group doing the hiring; it will be least important where there is the greatest disparity between the culture of the school and of the employers.

In sum of the Consensus and Conflict theory, sociologists like Marx argue that the corporate world cannot exist without having both conflict and consensus in the working environment. Some would go further, in that there is no conflict in the corporate world if there is no preceding consensus that occurs. With this short preliminary literature review, it is evident that there are multiple aspects and problems with regard to the skills mismatch. These can be summed up as follows: in theory, there are the disagreements between conflict and consensus theory that may need to be resolved. In terms of international trends, there are problems facing employers and employees in the mismatch of skills and jobs with an overall effect on society, in terms of the spill over unemployment due to this mismatch. There are four parties, as described above that may contribute to the mismatches in relation to skills and jobs. There are the country to country differences, and issues of over- or under-qualification for job prospects. There are also the differences between universities attained skills and professional skills, and if they are combined, they do prove to be much more useful than if a prospective graduate is only qualified in one of the two areas. There are possible differences between public and private sectors in this debate on skills acquisition, and perhaps differences within the private and public sector too. Lastly, there are the structural constraints of skills mismatching, as against viewing skills-match merely as a personal and psychological competency.

2.2.4. Human Capital Theory.

Human capital theory was developed by Gary Becker whose concept of human capital seeks to encourage investment on education and training. According to Fugar, Ashiboe-Mensah and Adinyira (2013: 467) Becker sees human capital in two forms: specific human capital and general human capital of which both state that knowledge is obtained through education and training, but with different concepts. Specific human capital focuses on education and training for context-specific skills while general human capital is more on being valuable across board such as reading and writing. For Barker (2003:187) globalisation shifted production in favour of capital and skill-intensive sectors to the detriment of labour-intensive ones.

Iliassova (2000: 4) raises another point that the cost of these investments (including the inevitable earnings associated with time spent in education and training) structure of wages are reliant to them. Iliassova further states that on-the-job training is a reasonable method that can be used for formal and informal jobs. Firms provide training only if they are going to benefit, and if there is a guarantee that trained workers will not leave their firms to another firms. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) (2012: 41) argues that skills gaps in the workplace can be eliminated through firm-sponsored training or by providing individuals with relevant incentives to participate in skills development. Jermolajeva and Znotiņa (n.d.: 1) believe that labour productivity of individuals can be increased through the human capital investment. Sweetland (in Jermolajeva and Znotiņa (n.d.: 1) thus also see human capital investment not only benefitting individuals but the whole society gains economic benefits from investments in people. This theory is used in the findings of the study based on the investment of skills and education.

In sum, both specific and broad general skills in whatever form, are relevant for this study. The shift of capitalism to capital and skill intensive areas is also pertinent for this research.

2.2.5. Dual Labour Market theory.

Dual Labour Market theory was developed by Doeringer and Piore (1980) as a form of segmentation theory. Labour market segmentation is linked with inequality and discrimination in the workplace (Deakin, 2013: 1). According to Reich, Gordon and Edwards (1973: 359-360) primary jobs involve and develop stable working practice, skills are essential requirement; wages are relatively high; and job ladders exist. On the other hand, secondary jobs do not require and often discourage stable working habits; wages are low and job ladders are few. They further argue that minority of workers, women, and youth are overflowing in the secondary jobs.

Iliassova (2000: 6) emphasises that the segmentation between the two is resulting in a line up for primary sector jobs mostly. Dickens and Lang (1984: 2) argues that workers in low wage jobs are classified as low productivity workers who are not capable to acquiring skills that can enable them to secure higher paying jobs. Similarly, in the primary-sector workers are ranked in relation to their productivity and hired based on the needs of the employer. However, in the secondary-sector “many employers do not appear to draw distinction between one secondary worker and another than on the basis of physical strength, and almost seem to be hiring from an undifferentiated labour pool” (Andrisani, 1973: 2).

2.3. SUMMARY.

In sum, the literature review reveals that while both consensus and conflict theory do contribute to our understanding of the problem of skills scarcity, the latter is more explanatory in identifying such things as globalization that leads capitalist markets to shift from labour intensive inputs to capital intensive one's, and the inequalities that accompany uneven development, dual labour markets and segmented societies. Knowledge, skills and training can go a long way to resolve such critical and unresolved issues.

In chapter 3, the researcher will discuss the methodology that she used in conducting her study.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY.

A research methodology consists of the assumptions, procedures and methods relating to the whole research process. This research seeks to undertake, to study and evaluate the situation of the graduates of North West University (Mafikeng Campus). This research strategy enables the researcher to examine, in detail, the prospects and challenges that particular graduates face as a result of a mismatch of skills with the job market. The study attempts to determine what kinds of jobs are available in relation to particular academic offerings at Mafikeng Campus, by studying a small and unrepresentative sample of Mafikeng campus graduates.

Research approach.

A qualitative approach is used in the study. For Merriam (1998: 6) qualitative research is...

An umbrella concept for several forms of enquiry, to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as much description of the natural setting as possible. Other terms often used inter-changeably are naturalistic enquiry, interpretive research, field study, participant observation, inductive research, case study and ethnography.

This study is mainly qualitative in nature, but the researcher also uses some quantitative data in terms of demographics for identifying and distinguishing the characteristics of participants so as to give some form of comprehensible results from the data collected.

Qualitative research.

According to Creswell (2005: 39) qualitative research is...

A type of educational research where researchers rely on participants views, to ask broad, general questions, to collect data (word or text) from participants, to describe and analyse these words to identify themes, and to conduct the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.

This study focuses on the importance of graduate skills in the job market, how they develop their skills, the experiences of graduates' skilling processes, and if these are useful for their lives and the job markets they are exposed to.

3.1. STUDY AREA.

While North West University has three campuses (Potchefstroom, Vaal and Mafikeng), this study is based at the Mafikeng campus (established as the University of Bophuthatswana in 1980). The campus is situated in the capital town (Mafikeng-Mmabatho) of North West Province, with students of different races from different provinces, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and from other African countries. Its base is largely Setswana speaking students, as a result of the historical legacy of the Bantustan ethnic system which has not been adequately addressed in the present context.

The North West University, Mafikeng Campus, comprises the following faculties: Agriculture, Science and Technology; Human and Social Sciences; Education; Law and Commerce and Administration. The campus has two academic semesters a year: February to June and July to November. Nearly half of the students live on campus. Apart from gaining education at NWU (Mafikeng campus), students are also widely involved in extra-curricular activities such as sport, music and festivals. Of late, sport has become highly regarded on the campus as a means of student interaction and relaxation, although only a small portion formally participate in the great variety of sports possible on the campus, and some sports codes are not yet fully operational at a formal or organizational and competitive level.

3.2. POPULATION.

The participants of this study consist of employed and unemployed campus alumni of Mafikeng campus who graduated between 2010 and 2014 from different faculties, and also representatives from government departments: Department of Labour, Department of Social Development, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Department of Health, Department of Finance, Economy And Enterprise Development and Office of the Premier. There were also representatives from the private sector.

3.3. SAMPLING METHOD.

Seaberg (1988: 240) describes a sample as

An element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study or a subset of measurements drawn from a population the researcher is interested in.

3.3.1. Sampling size.

The sample units for the study consisted of a sample of twenty alumni of North West University (Mafikeng campus) who graduated between 2010 and 2014. Of the twenty, ten are employed and ten are unemployed. To get a cross sample of views, such graduates were taken from the five different faculties of the campus. The sample also consists of seven representatives from different North West Provincial Government (NWPG) departments and three from private sector companies. The unequal number is because graduates depend more on government jobs than on the private sector, as a result of poor industrial development in Mafikeng.

3.3.2. Purposive sampling.

A purposive sample was used for this study, since it is important to use participants that are familiar with the issues at hand. Such participants provide the necessary information for the study. Purposive sampling is “a non-probability sampling method, where a researcher selects samples based on its elements and the nature of the research aims” (Babbie, 1990: 97).

3.3.3. Sampling strategy.

The strategic use of purposive sampling in the selection process is important, as the researcher wants the views of graduates of North West University (Mafikeng campus) who graduated, regardless of their study course, age and gender, employed or unemployed from different NWU (Mafikeng Campus), so as to affect a comparative analysis. While difficulties did emerge in getting interviews from ex-students, one positive aspect is that the study was conducted at the Mafikeng campus, which made it easy to access graduates. What needs consideration are the unemployed NWU (Mafikeng Campus) graduates who are in locations outside the university, such as Johannesburg, and also to access government and private sector personnel, but since the researcher has worked as an intern in government, access to certain personnel in government became easier.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS.

3.4.1. Gaining access.

The researcher requested available graduates for interviews. This was also done with representatives from provincial government departments and particular private sector companies that are relevant to the graduate's studies, so that arrangements could be made for interviews as per their time schedules. Merriam (1998: 23) argues as follows:

The purpose of interviewing is to capture others views that cannot be directly observed or measured, leading the researcher to ask relevant questions to gain information

Interviews were conducted in familiar surroundings, so as not to make the participants uncomfortable. Furthermore, contact details were collected from as many participants as possible, despite the fact that the initial official response from the campus authorities was that students' information cannot be divulged.

Participants who were contacted directly depended on their availability. It is important to note that career specific differences in the different faculties are kept in mind throughout the research, including skills and employability differences, so as not to conflate the variety of such aspects across different disciplines and faculties.

3.4.2. Pilot study.

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001: 1) define a pilot study as "a mini version of a full-scale study, as well as specific pre-testing of a particular research instruments, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule. It fulfils a range of important functions and can provide valuable insights for other researchers".

Four participants took part in the pilot study. The pilot study assisted the researcher to test the research interview questions taken during the initial process of setting up the research format and its details, the environmental setting and the recording of the interviews. Questions were adjusted accordingly after the pilot study was conducted.

3.4.3. Data collection instruments.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 66) the term data refers to what may be called the rough material researchers gather from the world they are studying. The researcher chooses data sources and set boundaries for collecting and collating the data in question. In this study data collection is by means of in-depth interviews. Other forms of data collection and the instruments used include a diary, a recording device and official documents. The main aim was to collect data and information from graduates and representatives from different government departments and particular private sector companies, with persons interviewed at their workplace and familiar surroundings (and this was not a problem for the interviewee/s). Individual face-to-face interviews were used, with the aim of interacting with the interviewees, and to gain more in depth information about the subject at hand. The interviews were audio-recorded for a rich source of live recordings and for quotes to use in the study.

Prior to each interview, the participants were given an oral explanation of the study, and the researcher got informed consent for participation in the interview, while the participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Interviews were conducted in a public place and in the offices of the representatives of government departments and the private sector. This ensured that the interviewing environments were familiar and comfortable for participants, so that they felt safe to participate in the process.

3.4.4. In-depth interviews.

Participants were asked to take part in in-depth interviews, so as to gather rich information from participants. Interviews also involved probing on related issues and informal conversations with the participants, with the question and answer part of the interview being more semi-structured so as to garner as much information as possible. Boyce and Neale (2006: 3) define in-depth interviewing as follows:

A qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation.

Interviews lasted between 10 and 20 minutes. To maintain quality and accuracy, the researcher also used a diary to record her own personal notes and reactions following every interview, which is so essential for daily events, of various thoughts and ideas, of the interviews and of the researcher's thoughts during or after the interviews.

3.4.5. Open-ended questions.

In this study, many open-ended questions were put to participants during the in-depth interviews. The aim was to provide greater freedom to the researcher in terms of how to limit questions, and allow a liberal dose of freedom for the participants to respond. The questions posed in the interviews are added to this study as an appendix (See Appendix C).

3.4.6. Reliability and validity.

The open-ended questions guide the research objectives and research questions. The supervisor checked the questions to be used for interviews, to eliminate a vagueness or misunderstanding which the researcher might not have noticed. The supervisor made comments and corrections on what else was needed. The questions were tested on a small group (pilot study) before using it on a larger set of participants. All these mechanisms ensured reliability not just of the data, but also of the research process.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS.

The nature of data in this study is qualitative but as mentioned above, some of the data is quantitative for the purpose of citing demographics. Qualitative data collected from the interviews were analysed and the findings are interpreted through qualitative analysis. The data covered the information of the participants (graduates) and their perceptions of effective employability skills-match. Twenty interviews were conducted with NWU (Mafikeng campus) employed and unemployed graduates, and with seven government departments and three private sector representatives.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

In regard to ethics, Strydom (1998: 23-36) has this to say:

Ethics in research relates to a set of moral principles suggested by an individual or group, and are subsequently ideally accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural explanations about conduct towards the experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.

The researcher remained mindful of ethical considerations throughout this study as there are principles which guide the research from the beginning. Ethical permission was granted through the Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee of the North West University that resulted in an ethical certificate being given to the researcher. The following illustrates the ethical considerations which this research complied with:

3.6.1. Relationship with the participants, anonymity and confidentiality.

During the course of the study, the researcher sought to continually maintain good relations with participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research so as to allow them the opportunity to decide to participate or not. Participants were given a further guarantee of anonymity, and all participants were given the guarantee that the data collected from them would be treated as confidential, and that their names would not be used in publications arising from the research.

3.7. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY.

3.7.1. Limitations of the study.

There is a possibility that participants might have lied (or exaggerated) intentionally in order to make the situation seem worse (or better) than it is. Some participants might have not shared all the information they had. Others might have conformed to what they think the researcher expected of them to say.

3.7.2. Delimitation of the study.

The study focuses on Mafikeng campus graduates, North West Provincial Government (NWPG) and private sectors employers in Mafikeng. Any information regarding any other university or college graduates or province in South Africa will simply be for comparative purposes. Such a delimited focus means that the findings here cannot be generalized to all the students of the campus.

3.8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the methodological processes followed in collecting data. This includes the aim to find out about skills (mis)matching in Mafikeng, with an unrepresentative sample of graduates, government staff and the private sector. A qualitative method using in-depth interviews was followed, to gain knowledge of participants' views in a naturalistic setting. Issues of access and ethics were also taken care of. A pilot study was also conducted to test the questions used in the interview. The limits of the research are mainly in its logistics of being research of one campus and in one location (Mafikeng).

In chapter 4, she will discuss the data analysis and interpretations of her findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the results of the research findings carried out on NWU (Mafikeng campus) graduates, government departments and private sector participants. The findings focus on the effectiveness and importance of employability skills-match of graduates in the work place. The results are taken directly from the information gathered using a tape recorder and notes taken by the researcher through the interviews with the participants, and data is presented on the questions asked during the interviews. Due to the amount of data, an additional chapter has been created, that is chapter 5, for the private sector, while chapter 4 relates to data from participants and government department. It means chapter four and five serve as chapters that display and analyse the data collected from different sources.

4.1. BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS.



4.1.1. NWU (Mafikeng campus) graduates.

During the data collection procedure, the data was collected from the NWU (Mafikeng campus) graduates, both employed and unemployed. Twelve of the participants were born and bred in North West Province, whereas eight come from other provinces of South Africa. While the majority of the participants are from the North West Province, interviews also revealed that all of the twelve participants are from the rural areas surrounding Mafikeng.

4.1.2. Government Departments.

The North West Provincial Government (NWPG) consists of different Government Departments with the Office of the Premier as the mother body of all departments. The Office of the Premier is under the leadership of Premier Supra Obakeng Ramueleletsi Mahumapelo, whereas each department is headed by a minister who is appointed by the Premier. Each department has its own priorities but with one aim: to provide good quality service delivery to people. Departments are bound to align their service delivery plans with the general service delivery priorities of the government based on the needs of the citizens. All government departments are governed by the key legislative frameworks that seek to establish a people-driven public service culture which include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Public Service Act (1994), the Public Service Regulations (1999 and 2001), the Promotion of Administration Justice Act (PAJA) (2000), the Public Finance Management Act (1999) and the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act No. 56 (2003). Data was collected from representatives of different government departments.

4.1.3. The private sector.

Apart from the provincial government and the university, the economy of Mafikeng mostly relies on farming and the retail sector. As mentioned above, there is low industrial development in Mafikeng that leads to arguments that the chances of a high rate of employment in the area are very low. In that regard, most of the private sector companies in Mafikeng can be classified as falling within the retail sector. Low industrial development affects practical skills training for graduates who are looking for jobs. The retailers such as restaurants, supermarkets and clothing shops do not offer internships but rather offer temporary or permanent jobs. Nonetheless, they do play a role in the economy of Mafikeng, particularly in creating jobs. The retail employees work on shifts and they are paid based on the shifts they have worked. This can mean that the fewer shifts you work the less salary you will receive at the end of the month. The kinds of duties that employees carry out in supermarkets and clothing stores are mostly stock taking, stock packing and cashiers. But the existence of a small business sector, a business forum or chamber and various civic society organs, could play a key role in the development of skills on the part of graduates and undergraduates.

4.2. DEMOGRAPHICS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS OF GRADUATE PARTICIPANTS.

4.2.1. Qualifications of the graduates.

Responding graduates were given questions about the qualifications they hold and the year in which they graduated or obtained those qualifications. The qualifications varied according to the programme they studied, and the year in which they graduated with those qualifications. One appropriate method of presenting the data graphically is by means of tables. The tables below reflect the responses to questions about the qualifications of twenty graduates, particularly by major field of study and by the year of graduation.

Table 1: Qualification type.

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	01	05
Degree	10	50
Honours	06	30
Masters	03	15
Total	20	100

With regard to data presented in Table 1, 50%(10 graduate participants) of participants hold a degree, followed by Honours with 30%(6 graduate participants), Masters with 15% (3 graduate participants) and lastly Diploma's being 5%(1 graduate participant). From the data on the table, it is clear that the number of those with diplomas is quite low.

Table 2: Qualifications by faculty of study.

Faculty of study	Frequency	Percentages
Human and Social Sciences	06	30
Education	03	15
B. Science (Agriculture, Science and Technology	08	40
Commerce and Administration	02	10
Law	01	05
Total	20	100

In terms of qualifications by faculty of study, Table 2 shows 30% (6 graduate participants) of the participants have qualifications in human and social sciences; 15% (3 graduate participants) have qualifications in education; 40% (8 graduate participants) have Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) qualifications; 10% (2 graduate participants) have commerce and administration qualifications; and 5% have qualifications in law (1 graduate participant). This small set of statistics reflects that a majority of qualifications obtained by graduates are in B.Sc. (Agriculture, Science and Technology), followed by Human and Social Sciences. But this is not the overall national pattern. Due to the apartheid legacy and the current standards in many schools, it is skewed by push-pull factors: students have been pushed into humanities and social sciences and away from the natural sciences. Thus the current generation of students are mostly still registered in the so-called 'soft sciences'.

Table 3: Qualifications by field of study.

The following table illustrates the number of graduates in terms of the name of the course they have studied and type of qualifications they hold.

Name of course studied	Diploma	Degree	Honours	Masters
Animal Health	01			
Bachelor of Science (Chemistry, Physics and Applied Mathematics)		02	02	01
Nursing		02		
Psychology		01		
Development and Population studies		01	01	
Sociology			01	
Social work			01	
International Relations and Political Studies				01
Education		02	01	
Accounting and Financial Studies		01		
Public Administration				01
Law		01		
Total	01	10	06	03

Table 4: Year of graduation.

Year of graduation	Frequency	Percentage
2010	01	5
2011	02	10
2012	05	25
2013	08	40
2014	04	20
Total	20	100

Table 3 data show only 5% (1 graduate) participants graduated in 2010, 10% (2 graduates) in 2011, 25% (5 graduates) in 2012, 40% (8 graduates) in 2013, and 20% (4 graduates) in 2014. The majority of the sampled students graduated in 2013 (40% or 8 graduates).

4.2.2. Sex of the graduates sample.

The gender distribution of the graduate sample is given in Table 4 below. Of the 20 participants, the majority 65% (13 graduate participants) are females, 35% (7 graduate participants) are males. The percentages of male-females are from Mafikeng campus only.

Table 5: sex of the graduates' sample.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	13	65
Male	07	35
Total	20	100

4.2.3. Employment status of graduates.

People see employment in different ways. Graduates may see it as a well-paid job while others may see it as a path to career development. Since finding a job is a big issue, particularly in the current austere economic climate, graduates decide to go and look for jobs in locations outside of Mafikeng, such as Johannesburg, which is the economic hub of the country. Out of the ten that are employed, two are doing their internships at different North West Provincial Government (NWPG) Departments and still furthering their studies at NWU (Mafikeng Campus), four are permanent employees of NWPG, four are permanent employees in the retail sector, such as Shoprite, Pick' n Pay, KFC and Pep Stores in Mafikeng. Of the ten employed, only three are employed within the sector of the courses (qualifications) they have studied, while seven are employed outside fields of not study. They had no other choice but to settle for that job, because it is better than staying at home and doing nothing, and they find that it also helps them to gain experience and skills. Not all of the employed graduates that are employed got internship programmes before they got those jobs. Other graduates were just fortunate enough that after completing their studies they got the particular job that they are currently in.

One of the participants reflects as follows:

Interview graduate 4: *I am doing this job because it is better than staying at home doing nothing. I also have responsibilities of which I need money in order to meet them.*

In addition, of the graduates that are unemployed, five are still furthering their studies at NWU (Mafikeng Campus) with the expectation that a higher education qualification or postgraduate qualification can improve their chances of finding a job. Three of them are at home because they do not have money to further their studies, while two decided to go to Johannesburg to find jobs. They see Johannesburg as a place with better opportunities as compared to Mafikeng. According to the unemployed participants they have been applying for jobs since they graduated but have had little luck in getting any job offers. Furthermore, being unemployed is quite an issue for them, because they see higher education as a stepping stone to a good job and a better life, and as a way to develop and fast track their opportunities for employment. For several of them, their families look up to them as they have recently graduated. For them to find a job can be a breakthrough for their families, as their parents are not working and depend on pensions or social grants. Participants see a job as way to survive. They want jobs so that they can be able to meet their different needs, such as food and shelter, and for career development.

Graduates thus reflect with these comments:

Interview graduate 1: *I went to university not only to get qualifications but to fast track the chances of me getting a job, because we are living in a world where if you don't have tertiary qualifications it is hard for one to get a job. Yet here I am with qualifications but I am not working.*

Interview graduate 8: *Getting a job will be a breakthrough for me, because I need experience and also to help my family financially since I am the eldest child in the family.*

Interview graduate 17: *Finding a job for me is very important because I have responsibilities and also have to provide for my family with their basic needs, such as building a home for my mother and siblings and also ensuring that they have food on the table, this is because my mother is not working.*

The second response (Interview graduate 8) above reveals the structure of the family being dependent on the student who is educated, particularly if he or she has obtained certain tertiary qualifications, that the institution or government may not take account of when making policies (such as not introducing free high education at the time of writing this research). The recent calls for free higher education in South Africa were as a result of the continual increasing of tuition fees within tertiary institutions in South Africa. Tertiary funding

for students is in a socio-economic crisis, and the announcement of 'free higher education' by the then president (Zuma) on 16 December 2017, will need to be further monitored as it's not a fete accompli by mere announcement, without much planning. The structural problems of the unemployment may be alleviated by the development of free higher education for all (and adding a certain percentage to taxes paid) within a planned system for the poor that are academically worthy students.

The second comment points out the structural form of the economy not allowing the graduates to get jobs in Mafikeng and that there has been very little industrial development to create a 'natural economic climate' after the artificial economy created by the apartheid (Bophuthatswana) regime. So while NWU (Mafikeng campus) may not be sufficiently skilling students in a diverse manner as the material in this research point to (though this needs further empirical verification), the region is also underdeveloped as a town, and that needs to change if Mafikeng campus can produce graduates that can be employed in the region.

Table 6: Percentages of the employment status of the participants.

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployed	10	50
Employed	8	40
Internship programmes	2	10
Total	20	100

The data in Table 4 shows 50% (10 graduate participants) of participants as unemployed, 10% (2 graduate participants) are in internship programmes, and 40% (8 graduate participants) are employed. From this small sample, of relevance is the large chunk of unemployed graduates (50%), despite their having obtained a degree.

4.3. THEMES.

The results of the understanding of employability skills amongst the participants are placed in themes and sub-themes as shown in Table 7, and only themes 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 are dealt with in this chapter, while 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are dealt with in Chapter 5 due to the lengthy data.

Table 7: Major themes and sub-themes arising from the interviews

Major themes	Sub-themes
4.3.1. Understanding employability skills from graduates' perspective.	a. Graduates' perceptions about the required skills to get employment. b. Qualities and skills graduates bring to an employer.
4.3.2. Understanding employability skills from employers' perspective.	a. Skills that the employers requires from graduates. i. Government departments. ii. The private sectors. b. Skills that the employers offer. i. Government departments. ii. The private sectors.
4.3.3. Employability skills in the work place.	a. Internships and Learnerships b. Jobs that fit the abilities and interests of the graduates.
4.3.4. The current situations of graduates.	a. Relevance of the education. b. Challenges that graduates without jobs are facing.
4.3.5. Skills development	a. NWU, government and private sectors' responsibility in relation to employability skills. b. Effective methods to promote graduate employability skills. c. Views on engaging with university for graduates' employability skills. d. Other means of skills development. e. Changes recommended to higher education institutions, government and private sector. f. Challenges in the labour market and higher

	education in context with mismatch of skills of graduates.
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The purpose of the above themes and sub-themes is to respond to the objectives and research questions of the study. Individual responses do not differ that much, as they illustrate more or less similar themes across the interviews. The themes and sub-themes emerged from the data were collected by the interview questions to participants. This discussion will include direct quotes from the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Understanding employability skills from graduates’ perspective.

a. Graduates’ perceptions about the required skills to get employment.

Results from individual interviews demonstrate striking similarities in the responses to many of the questions posed to them. Participants universally agree that there are fewer opportunities for graduates to obtain work without employability skills. Unemployed participants indicate that the standard of the skills that the employers require are too high, since newly emerging university graduates have only been exposed to theory. Their studies have not been sufficiently relevant to the requirements of employers, particularly for those in the Human and Social Sciences. Participants feel that employers mostly focus on work experience and skills. Most of the participants totally disagree with the need for graduates to possess the high standard of the skills that employers require. However, one may argue that perhaps the graduates do not read the requirements of the positions carefully enough. The responses of some participants reflect the requirements of employers:

Interview graduate 2. *Employers’ requirements are extreme, especially for us who just come from the university, particularly in terms of work experience which include skills.*

Interview graduate 17: *I once went to a job interview but I didn’t pass that interview. They called me and said that my interview was unsuccessful. I asked them what made me not to be able to pass it, and it was that unfortunately I don’t meet all the requirements. Requirements such as work experience and enough skills that the post requires.*

Moreover, participants state that their course content lacks relevance to what the labour market requires in terms of employability skills and work experience. Participant graduates want both theory and practical orientations. They prefer learning 50% theory and 50% practical work, in order to have a balance between theory and practice. Furthermore, the employers usually say they need someone with two to three years' experience, but internship programmes only offer twelve months experience. In terms of the skills match of graduates, work experience and what employers seek, there is a mis-match, as the twelve months internship programmes do not offer enough work experience.

The following quotes from the interviews confirm this:



Interview graduate 3: *I did an internship of 12 months but it was not enough, because usually the jobs that I apply for, they want between 3 to 5 years' experience, and also skills that I don't have.*

Interview graduate 12: *University offers 100% theory, but only if they can do it 50/50 like in other courses, like nursing.*

One may argue that such a direction of 50% theory and 50% practical work can be met through buy-in from all sections of society (local, provincial and perhaps national government, rural community, students, schools, civics and the like) to be able to make students useful in getting this balance of 50% practical with any of these constituencies that will take in the student for practical experience for an extended period. This may even call for science parks, outreach by NWU, government and private sector in Mafikeng and involvement by civics, churches, or schools to make up that 50% experience.

On the other hand, one may argue that universities are not Technikons (or that Technikons are not universities), but in the new dispensation, perhaps these institutions do need to criss-cross their functions: universities are supposed to give academic education. But also need to skill students in some practical way, just as some Universities of Technology now also offer PhDs. Universities should expose students to academic studies but they also have to facilitate applied knowledge. The demand for higher education has grown and particularly university education, and thus students also need to be prepared to enter into universities.

In addition, the generation of students of today are exposed to a different set of circumstances compared to the past generations where they had to more or less stick to one job. And this means they need to be multi-skilled, apart from other circumstances such as economic downturns that makes one unemployable, so it is worth being multi-skilled.

Universities are supposed to also produce responsible citizens and one of the ways to do this is through a skills set that students take with them when they leave university (from mental to entrepreneurial skills, through to communicative and critical thinking skill), or in the link between the university and Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) that are supposed to provide the platform for developing skills. There has to be some kind of entrance provided for the township or the village into the university, so that the latter is unhinged from its ivory tower to fulfil some form of community, societal or human function to alleviate the conditions of ordinary South Africans.

The data shows that lack of employability skills makes it difficult for graduates to get jobs. On the aspect of employability skills being implemented in the undergraduate curriculum, participants commend it, because this can prepare them for the workplace. It can help them to apply the theoretical knowledge that they are learning, and also to apply their understanding in practice on different issues and problems relevant to their studies and the work place. Graduates may also be able to develop practical and professional skills and an understanding of relevant ethical issues. Furthermore, employability skills at the undergraduate level can form a basis and help students and graduates to plan their study and to connect their learning with personal and career goals. It can also benefit students to be more enthusiastic for their chosen course of study and to gain an understanding of the broader ethical global contexts. The following quotes from the interviews confirm this:

Interview graduate 4: *I wish the university can introduce modules that cater for what the job market wants from graduates. Perhaps that module can be in some kind of practical work.*

Interview graduate 9: *If employability skills modules are introduced at the undergraduate level, this will work in our favour, particularly for us in the humanities.*

In sum, there is a difference between what skills employers need and what graduate perceive they need, and also a difference in what universities offer and what the labor market needs, especially in the humanities. More practical and professional skills are needed, and multi-skilling is seen to be relevant.

b. Qualities and skills graduates bring to an employer.

The findings show that a majority of the unemployed graduates in the study have no work experience, but that they do have certain skills (such as computer, communication, time management skills and the like), which some have learned at high school and some at university. It is interesting that there are graduates from university who have certain skills that they can offer to the employers. Positive attitudes and a good work ethic are what graduates can bring to the employers or place of work. Character traits are also what they are able to offer to employers. This is related to the overall development of students as citizens. Therefore, notable issues here are: firstly, students need to want to learn this in their modules; secondly, the curriculum adds these into the foundations of modules; thirdly, that the interaction with different national and local agencies integrate these into their work, and finally, that the international office at Mafikeng be extended, to make sure it can ultimately spread its wings to every faculty and department, and to do this as a matter of course within their programmes. The following quotes bear witness to this notion:

Interview graduate 3: *I believe that I am a determined and persistent person so that's what I can bring to the employer. Also, skills such as planning, communication, team work and the like.*

Interview graduate 7: *University may offer mostly an educational background or knowledge but through our studies there are skills that we learn and can apply in the working environment.*

Interview graduate 12: *I am a competent and fast learner. I can bring good conduct in the workplace. I am also a team player.*

Interview graduate 20: *I may not have work experience but I definitely have certain skills that I can offer at the workplace, which I have learned at the university.*

In addition, graduates that studied Teaching, Nursing, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Statistics and Accounting as their major, find it much easier to gain skills and experience, as they get opportunities to do practical training and experience during their studies. Nonetheless, skills are considered an important advantage for employment. Employed participant graduates are pleased with the opportunities that their employers are providing for skills and professional development. Participants feel eager and willing to add to their knowledge and learn more in the work place. Some participants reflect this as follows:

Interview graduate 6: *In the department I am working at, we are given opportunities to learn more and new skills through capacity building.*

Interview graduate 11: *During my years at university as an education student, I used to do my practicals in different schools. That gave me exposure, skills and work experience.*

Interview graduate 14: *In physics we do practicals, particularly in the chemistry part because that's where we apply theory into practice in the laboratory.*

Graduates also feel that they have excellent interpersonal and social skills which they have developed through their journey in life. Through working with fellow students during group work or projects, graduates have learned to network with others in order to work together, and to share resources and ideas. Through their graduate studies, graduates were able to realise certain qualities which helped them to excel in their studies: qualities such as being responsible, ambitious, calm in high-pressure situations, and being professional and ethical, goal-oriented, hard-working and adaptable to any environment. However, one may argue that perhaps this needs to be communicated to the private sector, and to the government departments, for the development of a more streamlined path to skilling students. One option is that Mafikeng campus can make it compulsory that each module has a component that deals with such, and marks are allocated for this, but also to work on pathways for students, or to begin tracking students and alumni where they go after leaving the university. The need for skills is supported by the following responses:

Interview graduate 10: *I may not have the exact required skills but at least I have basic skills and given the opportunity to work I can utilize them and be able to do the work effectively, because I am a fast learner.*

Interview graduate 13: *I believe that I have good qualities and interpersonal skills that I can offer to the work environment, of which most of them I have developed from the journey of life and also at the university.*

In sum, graduates feel that they bring various skills to the table: communication and computer skills, time management and good work ethic skills, as well as interpersonal, character and professional skills.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Understanding employability skills from employers' perspective.

a. Skills that employers requires from graduates.

i. Government departments

Employers that were interviewed noted that graduates often come with theory as compared to a practical orientation. The study reveals that government departments require people with relevant qualifications, skills and experience. Most of the skills that the public service requires from the university graduates or people applying for jobs in the public service include, amongst others: good leadership skills, interpersonal skills, computer literacy, report writing skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, presentation skills, time management and working in teams.

This is supported by the following responses:

Interview Office of the Premier (IOOP): *We always experience graduates with more theory than practical experience, but skills that we require from graduates or people seeking jobs include good interpersonal skills, computer skills, leadership skills and other important skills.*

Interview Department of Labour (IDoL): *We want competent people who can offer quality skills (such as problem solving skills, communication skills, presentation skills, time management and team work) and are able to adapt to the challenges in the work environment.*

Interview Department of Social Development (IDoSD): *skills that we require from graduates differ from job position to job position, meaning it depend on the kind of the requirements of the job. Future graduates or employees will move from one job position to another, so it is important for graduates to be able to be versatile and to be able to do one or more jobs. This is through with skills as they are important in the work place.*

Some of these skills are done at the module level, and so the same applies: either the university makes it compulsory, or add in extra-curricular programmes to the Mafikeng campus, so that students are able to pick up other skills that are not curriculum based. It may even need provincial government to commit to assisting, with funds, skilling opportunities and to explore the possibilities of students doing sub-internship in provincial or local government work: it serves a dual purpose: it gets added to the CV of the student and work also gets done in government.

Furthermore, other skills depend on the position that has been advertised or that is vacant. For example, if the advertised post is for an Assistant Director: Research, they need a person with experience in writing research and evaluation reports, developing research proposals, development of tools and instruments for information gathering and reporting, appropriate computer, writing and verbal skills amongst other requirements (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2016: 41). According to the participants from government departments, it is very important for a person who applies for the post in the public service to know and understand the Batho Pele Principles, Chapter 10 (Public Administration) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999 (Act No.1 of 1999), and other public service policies and Acts.

In addition, from the data collected, it is evident that such Acts and policies are important, hence it would be wise that there be an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NWU and the NWPG, to add some of these to the courses, and for government to also take part in them. Perhaps the existing compulsory 'Understanding the World' modules need to be reviewed: with career orientations in their syllabus and with practical components added in, so that students can learn from this, and be able to get direct access to work areas. Such modules can also be project-based in certain companies in the area (or outside) or electronically if the cost is high.

In addition, data collected underline the importance of those policies and Acts in government as pieces of legislation passed by the first democratic government of South Africa. The government departments do not condone unethical behaviour such as fraud, corruption, bribery, extortion, embezzlement, nepotism, conflict of interest, just to name a few. From the data collected it is clear that the formal evaluation of the persons who apply for the posts in the public service is based on the qualifications, experience, skills, competence and knowledge. The following verbatim quotation bears witness:

Interview Department of Health (IDoH): *Every government department complies with the policies and Acts...It is very important for one to be aware of them when applying for a job. As they are rules and laws of how we as public servants must conduct ourselves in the work environment.*

From the data collected, employability skills, qualifications and work experience are the main demands from the public sector. Moreover, the government departments want employees who can build a strong team relationship amongst themselves and the citizens of South Africa, with a sense of commitment and motivation. It is very important that graduates are equipped with the right preparation and interview skills, in order for them to be successful in

their working environment. Participants also emphasize that attributes and personal competencies are individual factors, considered when assessing an individual's capabilities for being employed. Graduates or job seekers should be sensitive to ethical considerations in situations that sees a need to manage ethical dilemmas, or that involve workplace conflict. Thus, the following comments came from the participants:

Interview Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (IDoRDLR):

Skills, work experience and qualifications are very important because it is a guarantee that the person is well aware of what the job entails. Ethics are also important in order to maintain stability in the workplace.

Interview Department of Justice and Constitutional Development(IDoJCD):

We want people that are competent with good attributes and also can bring much potential to the work place in order to grow not only themselves but also for the purpose of the department.

Interview Department of Health (IDoH):

We want people who are able to coordinate and chair meetings and also conferences. People, who are able to take duties, have good administrative skills and work ethics.

Findings reveal that administrative skills or activities apply to all employees regardless of the type of work one is hired to do. For example, the above response from an Interview at the Department of Health (IDoH) shows that as an employee you have to be able to coordinate and organize meetings and conferences or chair meetings. Employers need people who are able to carry out duties and tasks required regardless of the challenges they might encounter when doing their duties. Administrative skills may enable one to be more marketable in the work place. It is important for one to have good work etiquette, as it helps in one's daily interaction at the work place. Participants note that it is also essential for graduates to think beyond their academic success and to focus on the skills they used to earn their degree or postgraduate qualifications that will be fundamental in the work place. From the participants the most essential things are years of experience, hands on tasks of applying knowledge, to be multi-skilled, being able to cross disciplines and to multi-task, being innovative, creative and not frightened to be adventurous.

This is supported by the following response:

Interview Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development (IDoFEED):

Administration skills are also key in the work environment. One must be able to run the office or do any duty that is admin related. Administration skills do not only apply on secretaries or clerks but to everyone regardless of the type of the job.

In sum the public sector, in the views of those interviewed, needs particular skills for particular jobs, but also a host of generic skills that may be introduced in or out of the curriculum at the university, and they cite the following skills needed: leadership and interpersonal skills, computer and report writing skills, problem solving, administration and chairing meetings, communication and presentation skills, time management and ability to team work, to be versatile, to have a knowledge of legal frameworks and in ethical issues.

ii. The private sector.

The basic functions that the private sector performs have an impact on the economy of Mafikeng and the country at large. In the case of skills that the private sector requires, retail sectors are looking for evidence of core skills and competencies. According to them, excellent academic results will not compensate for weak skills. As a result of that, retailers have witnessed many employees with weak skills, who leave their jobs because they could not cope anymore. The far-reaching debate on skills shows that employers want people who are able to recognise the skills that they are using or developing in any given working environment situation. This is supported by the following response:

Interview Private Sector 1 (IPS1): *People have the perception that working in retail is the job of people without qualifications, and they are wrong. We want people with skills (such as communication, writing, time management, financial skills and interpersonal skill). Experience and qualifications because all of them are important. It is such people with low skills that end up quitting their jobs because they cannot stand the challenges of their jobs.*

In addition, attributes of employees plays an important role, for example, self-confidence, professionalism and willingness to co-operate in a good manner. Irrespective of what graduates studied at university, interpersonal skills are crucial. One major theme running throughout the interviews is that the skills that the retailers are mostly looking for from the graduates are communication, writing, time management, financial skills and interpersonal skills. Usually retail banks want graduates or employees with financial skills, accounting and business skills. Marketing, communication and client relationships are also essential in maintaining the institution or the business. A customer's needs change from time to time, so it is very important for the retailers to have people who can adapt to that change. They want people who are willing to work with the management to make changes that will improve the workplace and their performance. A good personality is also noted to play a role in the skills that they want from employees, as it is regarded as a personal skill, which it is said to be associated with hard work and ambition. Flexibility is also important because retailers are

always busy, more especially at month-end and festive seasons. It is emphasised from the data collected that basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are also important.

The following quotes from interviews conducted confirm this:

Interview Private Sector 2 (IPS 2): *The skills that we require from graduates are time management, financial skills, good personality. We want confident people who are willing to oblige. We want people who are willing to be hands on, even in the management, in order to ensure that they grow as employees as is the business. We want employees who can be able to adapt easily to the business because the customers can sometimes be difficult. So it is important for one to be able to handle the customer in a good manner.*

Interview Private Sector 3 (IPS 3): *There are employees in this business that have tertiary qualifications and those with only matric, but what is important mostly is the skills and experience that they can offer to us. We are running a business so financial skills are also important. Also one must be a person of a good character because we are dealing with customers of which we have to satisfy. We don't want lazy people but rather flexible, hard-working and determined people.*

In sum, the private sector goes beyond academic qualifications, and seeks the following: communication, writing, time management and inter-personal skills. They also seek graduates to take on challenges. Banks in particular need graduates with financial, accounting, business, marketing communication, client relationship skills as well as a 'good personality.' Retail companies want graduates to be flexible in their approach, to have literacy and numeracy skills, and to be hard working and determined.

b. Skills that employers offer.

i. Government departments.

Government departments offer different skills to equip their employees. All departments offer training, workshops and capacity building to their employees. According to the data gathered, the government departments use the Skills Development Policies and Strategies, Skills Development and Training Plans and Skills Development interventions for their employees. Furthermore, in the public sector each employee has his or her own Personal Development Plan (PDP) which is a source of guidance to the employee. It is clear that skills development is one of the mechanisms that the government departments are using to level the playing field. The government departments offer skills development programmes such as short courses and internships. They also offer opportunities for education and training by

giving learnerships and bursaries. These skills development programmes are used to give skills to the employed public servants, both permanent and on contract, but they also offer such programmes to those that are unemployed. Bursaries are used to compensate for scarce skills. There is also a workplace skills plan in government departments which help the departments to plan and meet the targets of gender, age, race and disability in the departments. This is supported by the following responses:

Interview Department of Health (IDoH): *We offer training, workshops and capacity buildings as a way of equipping them with skills and experience in the workplace. We also offer internship programmes for graduates as a way to introduce them to the public service working environment and skill them.*

Interview Office of the Premier (IOOP): *as the department we do offer different opportunities of skills to our employees. We use Skills Development Policies and Strategies, Skills Development and Training Plans and Skills Development involvement in order to develop and help them to grow in the work place. We also offer bursaries.*

Furthermore, findings reveal that every newly appointed or hired public servant must attend the induction course, which also contributes to skills development in government. The course educates the new employees about the government and its functions. It is the responsibility of the department to take necessary steps to prepare public servants or its employees for a strengthened public service culture of responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to the public. The government departments also ensure that the public servants take responsibility for their values, as well as their behaviour and attributes towards each other and the public at large.

This is supported by the following response:

IDoL: *It is very important for new employees to attend induction course, of which helps them to gain more skills and learn about the functions of the public sector. We ensure that that they take responsibility of the public, workplace values and of themselves also, and that they are well behaved.*

In addition, interviews revealed that government departments offer internship programmes for graduates on a twelve months contract. Participants explain internship as a programme that prepares graduates to access employment opportunities in the public service. Internship programmes help the graduates to understand skills they need and how to apply their

learning in the work environment. It also intends to provide interns with skills, structured learning and practical experience under the guidance of a mentor, supervisor or coach in the workplace. During the internship, graduates are also given a chance to understand how government functions. The study found that interns attend training and workshops during the programme. For example, the 'Breaking Barriers to Entry (BB2E) into the Public Service', is a five day orientation workshop programme, where they are trained and taught about the public service and how it functions. This is supported by the following response:

IDoFEED: *It is very important for every directorate to have an intern in the department because that is a way of offering graduates skills and exposure to the working environment. They are guided by their mentors of which assess them and make sure that they do get skills and experience. We also offer them the courses such as the BB2E as an exposure to learn and know the functions of the public service.*

There are also learnerships that the government departments offer, which offer an excellent platform for people without qualifications to be in the workplace and seek further opportunities for their development. Mostly, learnerships are only offered to people with a matric certificate or qualification. This opportunity is given to them so that they are able to learn about the work place or gain skills and experience before going to a college or university. From the data gathered, it is possible for a person with only learnership experience to get a job after completing the programme, even without tertiary qualifications.

This is supported by the following response:

IDoRDLR: *Our focus of offering skills is not only on the graduates but we also offer those with only matric opportunities to learnerships and bursaries. Through them there are skills that they learn which can prepare them for the work place or even use in finding or creating jobs for themselves.*

Moreover, government departments, such as the North West Province Office of the Premier, also offer bursaries to learners who have passed their matric and to students who are already at universities. Every year the Department of Social Development also offers scholarships to students who want to study social work at the university. The scholarship covers their registration fees, tuition fees, residence fees, books and meals. After the students complete the course, the department places them in different locations where they start to practice as social workers, but they firstly have to register with South Africa Council for Social Services Professions, in order to be regarded as qualified social workers.

The following quote from the participants confirm this:

IDoSD: *As a department we offer students the opportunity to study or become social workers. This is done through scholarships which cover everything. After they complete the course we ensure that they are registered as qualified social workers and place them at different work stations.*

Government departments in their different directorates have graduates as employees both on contract and on a permanent basis. The findings reveal that from those graduates that are employed by government departments, there are some who are still furthering their studies (part-time and full-time) through different academic institutions. Interviews reveal that when employees complete their courses, they are able to get promotion when vacant post is being advertised, if the post requirements state that certain requisites are needed.

The following quote from the participants confirm this:

IDoH: *We do have employees that are furthering their qualifications and this is a good thing, because it offers them the opportunity to be able to move from one job position after completing their course. But of course, only if they do qualify not only through tertiary qualifications but also with the relevant requirements of the certain available post that they might apply for.*

In sum, the public sector serves as a platform for various forms of educational opportunities, including skills, training, workshops, learnerships, induction to new staff and also assisting the unemployed. The aim is to intervene in gender, age, race and disability areas of disadvantage, and the Department of Social Development offers bursaries for Social Work students.

ii. The private sector.

Career opportunities in the retail sectors are growing. Analysing the skills that the private sector provides to the graduates or its employees is also useful. They provide their employees the opportunity to apply and demonstrate skills they have learned from the university or previous jobs. Retailers offer different skills to its employees and customer service are one of the key skills. As a worker you have to be friendly, polite and always put the customer first. The graduate or person seeking a job might not have a Degree or Diploma in Business Management but it is important to have customer-related experience or skills. It entails dealing with different customers, including those that may be difficult. It is clear that their complaints and queries can be stressful, which also entails a particular personality type and for one to have above average communication skills. In addition,

working in retail offers a level of commercial awareness, and it is very important for the employee to know and understand how business operates and how commercial decisions are made. There are times where employees have to work in busy times, such as at month end and during festive seasons. At such times employees work under pressure and have to use their coping skills. Equally important is that as a worker one has to be able to handle oneself and be able to work under pressure.

The following quotations refer to such an assertion:

IPS 2: *We do offer our employee graduates opportunities to use the skills that they have acquired from the university. It is such skills that they have that helps to develop and grow our business.*

IPS1: *Our employees must be friendly to customers and be able to deal with difficult customers, so it is important for our employees to be able to handle them. That is why we try by all means to offer them training and workshops on different aspects.*

IPS 3: *Month end and during festivals such as Easter and Christmas are our busiest times, and from such times our employees learn and apply their coping skills.*

From the responses of the retailers, employers agree that new technology is constantly introduced, and it makes the business grow and develop. The new technologies do not only benefit the business but also the employees, as they learn and gain technical skills from it. With regard to computing or technology skills, we are living in the society where technology should make our lives easier and the ability to use technical systems is very important in the work place. Retails use technical equipment such as computers and other technical machines to run and monitor their businesses. The employees are given skills on technical systems; they offer practical and hands-on experience of using technical systems. Technical systems are used in distribution of stock, stock taking, pay point tills and management to interpret data of the sales. In any case, being responsible, reliable and trustworthy is very important and employers describe it as self-management. Simultaneously, self-management includes punctuality, improving your performance and doing your duties as agreed in your employment contract. This is supported by the following response:

IPS 2: *Technology in our county is growing, and as retails we also use technological equipment to run our businesses and from that our employees gain technical skills.*

Nevertheless, numeracy is important in the retail industry, as employees have to ensure that they give customers correct change after paying. Private sector (retails) ensures that their employees offer customer-friendly and innovative approaches, which has had an effective growth impact on the business. They provide training services to facilitate learning and development of new and existing skills. Most retailers see their aim as creating a friendly and positive work environment for their employees, in order to inspire them to work hard and stay motivated. The following quotations refer to such an assertion:

IPS 1: *It is important for our employees to maintain good and friendly relationships with our customers, because customers are very important as we need them in order for our business to grow and develop.*

IPS 3: *We offer training and workshops for employees particularly those that are new. This is to help and boost our employees.*

In sum, companies (particularly retail companies) require that graduates should have the following skills: application based skills, and skills graduates bring from the university and their previous jobs. They are also required to have customer relations skills, have a personality that can blend in with the company ethos, know about business operations, and be able to work under pressure. Furthermore, graduates are seen to need to be aware of the various technological systems that are needed in modern businesses. They need to be innovative and also highly motivated.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Employability skills in the work place.

a. Views on internships and learnerships that the government and private companies are offering to graduates.

Graduates applaud the government and private sector for offering internships to qualified graduates, yet they also wish that such internships could at least be increased annually, and also appoint them permanently after completing the internship programme. Still, participants who are doing an internship programmes and those who have completed one believe that the having twelve months work experience that the internship programme offers is better than nothing. The graduates that are doing internships at different government departments find it interesting, and they are happy with the support, skills and experience they are getting.

In addition, they have hopes that at the end of the programme they will get a job. As for responses from the employed graduates, they did internships at different government departments before they were employed, and they applaud the programme as they assert that the internships groomed them and played a large part in bringing them to where they are today. From the data gathered, there are graduates participants that completed their internship programmes but they remain unemployed. According to them, the reason for this is that the labour market is looking for people with many years of work experience. They also believe that as an individual one has to use the twelve months wisely and grasp any opportunity that allows one to gain more employability skills and experience.

The following verbatim quotes from the interviews confirm this:

Interview graduate 3: *I completed my internship programme almost 2 years ago and yet I am still at home unemployed, because I don't have enough years of work experience. Sometimes I feel like it was just a waste of time.*

Interview graduate 12: *I did internship in monitoring and evaluation, and it was very good because it involved things that I have studied. But I wish they could extend it to at least 2 years and appoint us after completing them, even with entry posts. But it is important for one to use such opportunity to learn even if it's for a short period of time.*

Interview graduate 19: *Internships and learnerships are very useful experience. Graduates are offered new skills and knowledge about the workplace. And also they find what their strengths and weaknesses are in order to improve.*

At some point internship graduates are required to perform unskilled office duties such as photocopying, typing, faxing, answering the telephone, running errands or even making tea for the employers instead of doing work that requires the use of their theoretical understanding. It can be argued that perhaps the internship programmes are not well planned in terms of the activities of the intern. One of the graduates states that:

Interview graduate 17: *The internships are good, but they are only infringed by the work that we as graduates often do, when in the workplace. We make photocopies... usher at functions. How does that give us employment skills? That's still a mystery.*

Findings further reveal that if only government departments and private sector companies can make interns rotate during the internship programme, this may help them to gain skills and experience in other parts of the directorates in government departments. For example, if a graduate is doing an internship programme on Human Resource Management, he or she can rotate to the field of labour relations, employee wellness or any directorate or sub-directorate. The following quotation refers to such assertions:

Interview graduate 5: *Rotation during internship can be useful because one will be able to gain skills in other fields, and will improve his or her chances of applying for jobs that are not in their field because of the exposure they get in another field. Perhaps through rotation one may discover the stream they really want, career wise.*

The extension of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NWPG and NWU (Mafikeng campus) through the institutional office needs to ensure that such a rotational program is defined, arranged, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

In sum, the views expressed by graduates include the fact that while internships provide an opportunity for graduates, such internships are not well planned, are too short, and that interns are made to do unskilled work. Rotational internships is one suggestion for a way forward, and the extension of such issues in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that the government has with NWU is one possible way to go forward in this regard.

b. Jobs that fit abilities and interests of the graduates.

During the interviews, the researcher also became aware that most of the participants understood their abilities and interests, with abilities and interests differing from person to person. From the data collected, it is clear that people might have studied the same course but it does not mean that they have the same abilities and interests. However, the majority of graduate participants seem to have more or less similar abilities and interests. Graduate participants, particularly those who studied courses in humanities and social sciences, report that they have an interest in communities, especially in issues that affect people's lives and also respond to their problems. While one may argue that it is not everyone that can solve all community problems, even if you may have done a degree there are a variety of problems out there, and thus there has to be facilitation (and even specialisation through such programmes within degrees) for graduates to be able to help communities with problems.

The graduates interviewed make the following clear. First, choosing an education path that can lead to the career that best suits your abilities and interests. Secondly, it is important to choose a career that is in line with your abilities to perform in a given work position. Poor abilities and lack of interest translate into low workplace performance in the workplace. It would be useful to have a plan of what one would like to do after completing studies or after graduating, to prepare one physically and psychologically. The quotes below reflect this:

Interview graduate 1: *Working as a Community Development Practitioner would fit my interests and skills because I enjoy engaging with communities about issues which affect their lives. Setting goals for improving and responding to problems and needs through empowerment and active participation.*

Interview graduate 9: *Being a scientist will be the best job for me because I enjoy working in a chemical laboratory and solving scientific problems, and also discovering new information through experiments.*

Interview graduate 14: *I am working as a service delivery monitor that deals with society and community development, and also monitors our governments public service points to check if the services rendered to our society are of good quality and is dignified. I enjoy my work because it suits my interests and abilities. From my experience it is important for one to choose a career that fits her interests because when it fits your interests and abilities then you will be a happy employee, and a happy employee produces good results in the workplace or does his or her job wholeheartedly.*

The study also reveals that graduates seek out jobs in different fields that offer similar opportunities to their interest and abilities. Others believe that job interests and abilities develop during the second and probably the last year of their studies, since that it is where they find their best perspectives and capabilities from their studies. One has to also be wary of creating pathways that are limited in terms of their skills, since modern economies are changing and graduates need to be multi-skilled as contemporary economies see such constant shifts. The idea that is therefore important is to have multi-skilled programmes on offer in various faculties. This calls for regular planning and with an eye on the changing market too. Currently, graduates are said to go through three career changes, which means that graduates have to be prepared to shift but also be as diverse as possible in their initial graduate degrees. The following quote reflect this:

Interview graduate 20: *I want a job that I am interested in, because doing what you love makes one happy and can be able to do their work.*

Throughout the interviews graduates constantly mention that passion is also important, because it can be the reason you wake up and go to work every day. It is better to have a job that you are passionate about than to wake up daily and do something that makes you miserable. One thing to begin with when looking or applying for a job is to think about the things that you are good at. One graduate who studied nursing justified her choice as she is more interested in health issues and her passion for working with people. Moreover, it is noted from the data, that the working environments also play a significant role in influencing the interests of a person. There are participants doing jobs they do not have any interest in, but with low employment in the Mafikeng district they simply settle for jobs outside the field of their degree, to survive. The following quotes from the interviews indicate some of these:

Interview graduate 2: *I am currently doing a job that does not interest me; I was pushed to do this job by life's circumstances and the lack of jobs in Mafikeng.*

Interview graduate 13: *Through passion one is able to grow professionally and personally, and that helps one's career to grow.*

Interview graduate 19: *Having passion for your job is important, because passion encourages you to work hard and when you're passionate about your work you learn new things such as skills.*

In sum, graduates are aware of their different abilities and capacities, but they are passionate and have an interest in communities and NWU should further facilitate the development of such skills.

4.3.4. Theme 4: The current situations of graduates.

a. Relevance of the education gained from the university to the labour market needs in general.

Education gained from the university plays a major role when one is applying for a job. Higher education institutions should also be considered as an area of work experience as it is where graduates or students start to learn and build their career. Most of the graduate participants agree that tertiary education or formal qualifications are fast becoming the most important thing in today's world. The labour market constantly demands more employability skills, knowledge and qualified people. Such a demand makes the tertiary education very important and influences young people to enrol. Graduate participants emphasise that education is not just a learning process but also part of human development. It provides

training and prepares graduates for the work place. The following statement by a graduate participant reflects this:

Interview graduate 18: *Higher education is very important...in the world we are living in. These days a matric certificate does not weigh that much. Even a diploma and degree no longer weigh that much when looking for a job. At times job requirements would state that they want a person with postgraduate qualifications.*

When discussing the education issue, one has to deal with the quality of it. The interviews also reveal that a majority of graduates, especially those that do no practical training during their studies, do see the labour market as being hard on them, as its requirements are beyond their reach, having only obtained theory at the university. Some of the participants indicated that considering the quality of education and skills obtained from the university it is very difficult to get a job with theory only, because the labour market wants people with a high standard of employability skills and work experience. The participants were not hesitant to evaluate and even criticise the relevance of education they got from the university. There are graduate participants that believe that the education they got from the university is not relevant to the labour market. This is based on the courses they have studied, while others believe that what they studied at the university is very relevant to the labour market. Graduates also are of the view that the labour market should be more lenient in terms of requirements, so that they can be able to adjust to the conditions in the market. This is confirmed by the following responses, even if interview 10 over-generalizes on his skills being irrelevant to the labour market:

Interview graduate 9: *Yes, the education I got from university is relevant. Seemly because of the economic crisis that our country is dealing with at the moment.*

Interview graduate 5: *It seems like the university gives this education then the labour market wants that, so it seems like there is disconnection between the two.*

Interview graduate 10: *The education that I got from the university is not relevant to the labour market at all because the labour market tends to look for what they call skills. The course I studied only consisted of theory, there was no practical experience.*

In sum, graduates see higher education as highly relevant for the world out there, but that human development is quite important at a university and not only the formal educational qualifications. The theme of the gap between what a university does and what is required of the labour market again crops up in graduates views.

b. Challenges that graduates without jobs are facing.

The real problem that bothers most of the participants deals with the question of what happens after someone has completed their studies. Unemployment does not only affect an individual but also the family and society. From the interviews conducted, it is quite clear that graduates without jobs face challenges in finding job opportunities. They continue to apply for jobs. After completing their studies at the university they need to cope with endless changes from being a student to being unemployed. Unemployed graduates are back home again after qualifying, and they are there as they do not have money to further their studies, and are unsure of what they would like to do in the future. They feel that barriers such as lack of job opportunities and not having suitable skills prevent them from exploring work or training opportunities. Comments from the graduates in this study confirm that they find it difficult to be at home doing nothing after years of studying hard at university. Job requirements by employers are also an issue, because they are said not to have the requisite workplace skills. Participants' comments from the interview testify to this, though they may also reflect victimhood:

Interview graduate 11: *Whenever I think about studying further, I say, why bother, either way I will remain unemployed and sit at home with my qualifications.*

Interview graduate 13: *The challenges that I am facing now as a graduate, are that every time when I apply for a job, work experience is required. And being fresh from university I do not have the work experience needed in the workplace. I can only bring theory of my respective field of study.*

Graduate participants also indicate that the challenge of getting a job affects them personally, as they had been under the impression that after completing their studies they will immediately find solid employment. Those that are doing internships are in a dilemma because there is no guarantee that after completing their internships they will find a permanent job. It might take a month or even years before they get a job. Furthermore, with the low level of industrial development in the Mafikeng region, graduates are forced to rely on government and the retail sectors as a source of employment, or to move to other provinces. With many graduates that NWU (Mafikeng Campus) produces annually, it can be

argued that this is a major issue not only for the graduates but also for the economy of Mafikeng. They have attained qualifications but finding a job is difficult. For example, in an interview with a psychology graduate with only a degree, she explained that it is difficult to say she has practical skills that she can offer to employers. This is because practicals are only done at the Masters level. While it can be argued that graduates have the same chances of being unemployed as the person with only a matric certificate, it is also true that such graduates need to study further but may be pressured by their families to find jobs after having qualified with a degree. Participants' views are reflected by the following statements:

Interview graduate 2: *I am currently doing an internship of which it is coming to an end soon, and by the look of things there is no guarantee that by the end of it I will get a permanent job. Because government has become our only source of employment in Mafikeng.*

Interview graduate 8: *I thought after completing my degree I will find a job, because I completed my matric in 2009 and then tried to look for a job with that qualification, then I realised that I do need tertiary qualifications because it was difficult to find a job. But then here I am with a university degree qualification but still it is difficult to find a job.*

Another challenge that graduates face is that at the university there are scarcely any practical skills training for students, in particular for those that studied social sciences, but this may apply to the other fields too. Graduates participants find volunteering difficult for them, especially those who will have to travel distances as they do not have transport fare. For them they would consider volunteering if they resided nearer to the town, or if the sector where they considered volunteering could pay for their transport, as some have no source of income at their home except the pension or social grants of their parents. Following this, graduates mention that being unemployed does not only affect them but also their families, as some of their families thought that they will get a job and help in terms of finances and aspects of the household. The resultant pressure and negative responses from their families is stressful. From the data collected, there are graduates who would welcome any opportunity to improve their skills but feel frightened by the job requirements from the advertised vacancies. Disconnection between skills and available jobs is also an issue for graduates, as they do not have the skills and work experience needed for the available jobs and so they do not qualify them. Participants' views are reflected by the following statements:

Interview graduate 1: *I do want to volunteer but the fact that I don't have the money for bus or a taxi fare it's an issue, so if only they were offering money for transportation then that would be better.*

Interview graduate 9: *I think it will be of a good idea that there are formalized voluntary work programmes at the Mafikeng campus. Such programmes could be conducted in village, in schools, in clinics, in townships and in communities of Mafikeng. At least with that we will be able to volunteer without stressing about the bus fare money since such programmes will be in near communities or in our villages where we are staying.*

Interview graduate 13: *I feel like I am a burden to my family because they took me to university and yet I am home with a qualification and not working. There is a tension between me and my parents because I have graduated 2 years ago but with no job. Sometimes I feel like I have failed them.*

According to the graduate participants, being unemployed is very stressful for them, for they get up daily and do nothing at home. Graduate social life is negatively affected due to being unemployed. They state that they feel useless and their self-esteem is damaged as a result of being unemployed in contrast to the pride they had when they graduated. Graduates that are looking for greener pastures to start building their careers in Johannesburg face other challenges. Accommodation is one major challenge there, as they do not have relatives there, and the cost of living in Johannesburg is very high. Also, adapting to a new environment is very challenging. They note that the competition for jobs in Johannesburg is also high with many people from different provinces looking for jobs there. The following quotes from the interviews confirms this:



Interview graduate 3: *This affects me emotionally and physically, because I had a perception that having completed my studies I will immediately find solid employment. But the sad reality is that after graduating one sits at home, while in search for any kind of work. Even work I didn't study for. Staying at home and doing nothing is a very big challenge for me.*

Interview graduate 12: *I saw it best to go to Johannesburg and look for greener pastures because in Mafikeng there is no hope. Yet staying in Johannesburg is not easy because the standard or cost of living is high there especially on*

accommodation. Competition for work is also high with many people going there to look for jobs.

In sum, graduates feel that it is a huge challenge to find a job even with their qualifications, with the specification that work experience is needed for jobs becoming a barrier for first time entry into the labour market. The low level of industrial development in Mafikeng, and the fact that the two main sources of employment are the university and the government, are two negative factors in this regard. While graduates may be interested in voluntarism, they usually do not have funds for such opportunities. A formal work experience program needs to be put in place at the university, they argue.

4.3.5. Theme 5: Skills development.

a. NWU, government and private sectors responsibility in relation to employability skills.

The available data indicates that the university must be proactive to further the established relationships with government and the private sector by spreading them to all faculties, and to find out their needs and requirements. This is a solid investment as it ensures that the university is producing graduates that are employable. Developing employability skills at the undergraduate level should be a priority of a student's university practice without losing sight of academic education.

The participants echo this with the following:

Interview Graduate 16: *I believe the unification of the NWU as a whole had a negative impact on the structure of the university, because most of the things are done in Potch campus, for example our study guides are produced in Potch, it would have been better if each campus was producing its study guide, for such reason is that jobs and skills could be developed for graduates of Mafikeng campus. Mafikeng and Vaal campus are not much recognised, even the qualifications of Mafikeng campus seems to have less value in the labour market as compared to of Potch. The unification of the university could be used to give postgraduates students' exposure in terms of developing them academically and professionally. That can be done through conferences and workshops, or even exchange of students through the NWU campuses or even internationally. Another thing is that Mafikeng campus is a black students- and staff-dominant campus, while Potch is whiter dominant.*

Interview graduate 19: *If the university, private sector and government departments can have a solid partnership, which will be better. Because through that the university*

will be aware of what exactly do employers want from the graduate, for example the type of skills needed. Through that partnership there can be an agreement between the two parties where students are offered practical experience by working in their organizations. Just as they do with nursing and education students.

Findings further suggest that offering modules or short courses for development of employability skills in each undergraduate course can also be helpful for students or graduates, as it will prepare them for the corporate world. In addition, seminars or quarterly symposia on employability skills can also help to equip students. It is also important for academics to help students to gain confidence, because employers want people who are confident and can be able to express themselves. This can be done through more presentations during lectures. Data reveals that lack of skills is also caused by lack of career guidance; more career guidance should be offered in the university as this will assist students throughout their studies and prepare them for the workplace.

The following quotations from the interviews conducted confirm this:

Interview graduate 2: *It is the responsibility of the university to give their students the relevant employability skills, through continuous workshops for final year students, where they will learn the practicality behind the theoretical work they have been taught.*

Interview graduate 5: *Employability skills being taught at the undergraduate level can be good, because at this moment it is similar as going to a war with a gun without bullets. We are acquiring the theory behind what we love, but we are not armed in any way with relevant skills.*

Interview graduate 9: *There is career centre in campus but it seems like the students are not utilising it, so the university must ensure that the students know the purpose of it. Career guidance is also needed on students, because they tend to do courses that they do not like.*

It is very important for government and the private sector to support new employees (graduates) in the work place. This will enable them to adapt more easily to the working environment. Graduates also need to realise the connection between education and employment. A commitment is needed for skills development, in order to help and improve employability skills-match for graduates. Employers always have huge expectations from graduates, so it is important to ensure that skills training are provided in the way that suits the needs of the graduates and employers. Government and the private sector can do more

to improve the available information on skills and training. A strong common interest for graduates and employers is the collaboration on promoting skills and training that can lead to greater skills development success and more relevant jobs for graduates. For graduates, employability skills are not just about work but are essential for social and personal purposes. Unquestionably, more attention and development is needed on scarce skills.

In sum, graduates feel that government and NWU need to be more intricately involved through the faculties (though they do not cite the danger that this poses to the autonomy of the university), that the NWU campuses remain racially divided, and that merger opportunities are not utilized sufficiently enough, and practical skills are yet again raised up. They also feel that the career centre at the university is under-utilized.

b. Effective methods to promote graduates' employability skills.

In 2014, the Minister of Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development (FEED) Ms Wendy Nelson announced in her budget speech, stated that the department has developed a database for unemployed graduates in the North West Province. Graduates have to register on this database, and upload their Curriculum Vitae (CV), and that the database is used for keeping a record of the number of unemployed graduates and to come up with job creation strategies to absorb them into the formal economy, as well as coming up with an assistance programme for those who want to start their own business. This database is aimed at reducing unemployment in the North West Province (NWPG Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development, 2014: 1). Yet, NWU and government need to prioritise the development of employability skills for graduates. As indicated above, government offer internships and learnerships for graduates, and this is one of the ways to promote graduate employability skills. They also use websites, newspaper job advertisements and social media such as Facebook pages for recruiting graduates. Work experience is also seen as a way of promoting skills.

Equally important is that employability skills can be acquired by different means. The NWU (Mafikeng Campus) is giving students and graduates opportunities to be supplementary instruction facilitators, tutoring work, to work at the campus radio and newspaper ('The Album'). For example, supplementary instruction facilitators assist students with assignment questions, test preparation and examinations, by preparing revision lessons for topics. Each session is meant to ensure students' academic development. They also attend training courses and development sessions each semester. From such opportunities students and graduates gain skills and experience, which they can apply in the work environment. There are graduate participants who had the chance to take part in such opportunities offered by

the university. But graduates and employers participants also feel strongly that industrial development in Mafikeng can improve and offer opportunities for employability skills of graduates. It is those small businesses in town, and also some of the bigger ones in and around the Mafikeng district, and the farmers in the province, that can play a significant role.

The following quotations from the interviews confirm this:

Interview graduate 5: *I am grateful for the opportunity that the university offers to the students by letting them work at the campus radio and newspaper, because they give them a chance to work and gain experience. This is a good thing because they give a platform to the students instead of hiring many people from outside.*

Interview graduate 8: *I have worked as a Supplementary Instructor (SI) and through it I have gained a lot based on experience, because when I apply I add that experience to my CV.*

Interview Graduate 11: *A lot of money has been spent to creating SETAs but yet they do a little in skills development. Perhaps they need to be reviewed and well introduced especially in universities. I think the purposes of SETAs are very good but yet more still needed to be done in relation to its popularity particularly in Mafikeng, because I think most of graduates are not aware of them. They can be used as a way to fight poor skills development of the graduates.*

Interview Graduate 16: *Work based learning can also be introduced in order to promote skills opportunities for the students.*

Interview graduate 20: *Mafikeng is industrially poor, so if there can be more industries then many graduates will be able to get jobs and skills.*

c. Views on engaging with university for graduates' employability skills.

Students or graduates who engage in developing their employability skills are likely to be employed. From the data gathered, the Department of Health works hand-in-hand with the North West University (Mafikeng Campus) for nursing graduates. The Department of Health's partnership with the university offers the students the opportunity to do practical work in clinics and hospitals, and once they complete their studies the Department hires them. Students in the Education Faculty, doing a teaching degree are also given an opportunity to do practical training by teaching in schools. As mentioned above, the Department of Social Development offers scholarships to the students and after completing the course they are then placed in different Department of Social Development offices.

This is supported by the following comment:

IDoH: *as the department we do offer nursing students to do practical work during their studies, this is done through the partnership between the department and the university. All registered students in nursing do their practicals in hospitals and clinics regardless whether they're in their first or final year.*

In addition, participants expressed their views that government and the private sector can invite graduates to engage in employability initiatives that can boost them with employability skills or encourage them through their courses. Skills projects and programmes can be launched to address the mismatch on employability skills in the form of working towards providing graduates with skills and experience. Those projects can offer skills to the graduates not only to help them to secure jobs but possibly to start their own business. This will not only benefit the graduates but also the economy of Mafikeng and the province at large. Private sectors and government can invest in training of the graduates by engaging with the university. Engaging employers in the development of graduate employability skills can promote the confidence and competency in the work place.

Participants thus stated that:

IDoL: *Both parties meaning private sectors and government need to engage and encourage the graduates in initiatives that can equip them with employability skills. But yet such initiatives lacks in Mafikeng.*

IDoRDLR: *There is more to be done between the university, government and private sectors through a partnership where they can be able to equip students or graduates with skills. It can be nice if all government departments have a link with the university, as this will cater for all courses. Where each government department will work hand in hand with all university faculty departments, in order to alleviate the mis-match between the employer and employees.*

IPS 1: *Students or graduate need to partake in employability skills programmes and projects where they can be able to gain skills in order to be employed or open their own businesses. I also think that we as the employers we should be more involved in their skills development.*

Furthermore, NWU offers students extra-curricular programmes (activities, sports, volunteering and representations) and by participating in professional activities beyond their course of study including opportunities to work and study in different contexts. Furthering their academic study after they graduate can also help them to enhance their skills. Encouraging students or graduates to undertake voluntary work and to engage with local communities can assist in developing and gaining skills. Graduates should also consider contributing to the society through community development activities as this will help them to acquire and apply other important skills such as critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills. They can also effectively use their knowledge and what they have learned through their studies to motivate and guide others. This is supported by the following comment:

IPS 2: *Graduates need to volunteer and be more engaged in community work as way to develop skills and gain experience.*

In sum, graduates feel that the following aspects are important to progress in terms of skills development: the development of a data base of unemployed youth is a start, various means need to be found to skill the youth, the Mafikeng industrial zone needs to be resuscitated, and that various forms of partnerships are needed, and that extra-curricular activity is also relevant.

d. Other means of skills development.

This sub-theme emerges from the following question asked: 'What do you think can be done in terms of skills development of NWU graduates?'. Skills development can play a vital role to provide opportunities for graduates to develop themselves and the economy of Mafikeng. The following responses from participants indicate various ways to develop skills:

IDoJCD: *University, government and the private sector in Mafikeng need to develop and invest on innovation hubs and science parks. Also the Mafikeng airport needs to be well considered for exports and imports of goods. Skills can also be developed through small factories for example sewing, clothing and footwear factories. That is a way of industrial development of which it is much needed in Mafikeng.*

IPS 2: *More attention is need on local entrepreneurships as most of the entrepreneurs in Mafikeng are foreigners. The university need to also invest on entrepreneurships and form partnership with local businesses and NGOs.*

IOOP: *Graduates need to come up with ideas on how we can empower ourselves on skills development and stop depending on the government. Such can be done through entrepreneurship, not will this only benefit the individual but also our communities, town and providence, because jobs and skills development will be created, and so the economy will grow.*

IPS 1: *Mafikeng is mostly classified with villages and farms, of which is rich in terms of agricultural purpose. Skills can also be developed through production of rural economy. The Mafikeng campus can also play a part in that as it has students doing causes on agriculture.*

IDoSD: *Internship programmes must be more formalized, for example there can be an agreement between the university and the government.*

IDoRDLR: *It is time we do away the white elephants such as the recording music, through it much can be done, where the university can also be involved through the campus choir. The talent of Mafikeng can also be nurtured through that studio instead of our youth go to Gauteng for their music career. The use of the SABC needs more attention where students and graduates of communications can be able to acquire practical skills during their studies.*

IDoH: *Intervention on sports and arts qualifications, through those skills can be developed. Industrial development is also key because through it jobs and skills opportunities will be created*

In sum, various suggestions include science parks, innovation hubs, import and export from the airport, fostering local entrepreneurship, develop the rural economy, do away with the white elephants in Mafikeng (unused buildings and infrastructure), and resuscitate SABC. While some of these other means of skills development were not fully explored in the literature review, there is some positive evidence that participants believe that they can work. Participants believe that such skills development programmes can empower graduates. Some of these are idealistic and some of them are contradictory in suggesting 'doing away' with old regime infrastructure (white elephants) when they could be made use of.

e. Changes recommended to higher education institutions, government and private sector, that could improve the employment opportunities of its future graduates.

Most interviewees mention that the strong collaboration between the universities career centres, government and private sector can help to ensure the graduates are provided with information on what to expect and what the job market requires. Therefore, increasing the interaction of government and the private sector, in the higher education curriculum, particularly of the NWU (Mafikeng Campus) will allow the labour market to state what exactly they want or need from graduates based on skills. This collaboration can provide continuing professional development for graduates, and also provide relevant information about job requirements from graduates.

Moreover, from the data gathered, it is recommended that NWU in partnership with the government and the private sector can provide employment skills sessions targeted at assisting graduates with job-seeking skills. These sessions could include the writing skills training and interview preparations as it will prepare the graduates thoroughly. Involving employers in the education practice through guest lecturers may also assist students understand the relevance of their course and learn to apply theory in a practical way in the work place. Skills and career programmes should not only be offered after the formal tertiary education has been completed but also at an early stage of the course, especially at the first year level. These programmes should run concurrently with support from government departments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and private sector corporates. Extra-curricular opportunities such as work experience and mentoring can also help the graduates in terms of skills development. The following quotes from interviews confirm this:

Interview Graduate 4: *Government departments and the private sector should at least take graduates on a permanent job after completing their internship programme. There is no use grooming them for 12 months then not hire them.*

Interview Graduate 6: *I recommend that final year students be given practical classes and do training for at least 12 months before being given their qualifications. This must be an initiative of all universities. Just so that they make sure that students have the relevant work experience that is required in the workplace.*

Interview Graduate 16: *The university can partner with TVETS: most TVETS offer diplomas, so one can be able to continue with a university to do a degree. University work is more academic so the link between it and TVETS can assist in skills*

development. Modules that are offered at TVETS can be applicable at the university. But this does not have to change the purpose of the university.

Interview Graduate 20: *partnership between government, university and private sector is the way to go, with skilling sessions involved for graduates or students.*

IPS 3: *I recommend that tertiary institutions to familiarise future graduates with workplaces, where they might find employment and provide holiday employment for future graduate studies, so that employees of departments may be able to hire them.*

IDoL: *I recommend to graduates to volunteer to get experience. It is key in the job market. Qualifications without work experience it is difficult to be employed.*

IDoSD: *Entrepreneurship can also be used as a weapon to fight against low skills of graduates. They can start to be more involved in it, create jobs for themselves and others. And also to develop and gain skills.*

IOOP: *Employers can be more involved in the university curriculum and can now and then give or be called in for special lecture class.*

IDoFEED: *What I recommend is for skills and career programmes to be given more attention, and partnership between university, government and the private sector.*

In sum, the suggestions are as follows: collaboration is important for progress on skilling, to bring in colleges and the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETA's), to synchronize the curriculum to the market (yet the danger to the university autonomy is great here), work on professional development, government to continue assisting the unemployed to find jobs, work on college-university relations, ignite a voluntary ethos, and stress work experience, careers and entrepreneurship.

f. Challenges that graduates, government and private sectors face in the context

As noted above, unemployed graduate participants argue that they thought after completing their qualifications they will immediately get a job. But the sad reality is that they have to stay at home with the qualifications they have worked hard for, while others have settled for the jobs that they did not study for. From the data gathered, there are certain challenges that employers face on the mismatch skills of graduates and employees. Poor performance of the employees is one of the challenges that most of the employers face. Graduates who

apply for vacant posts that are advertised do not have the employability skills to meet their expectations. It can be argued that several employees are over-qualified, and are not challenged by their position or that the position is beyond the employee's skills and abilities.

The following quotes from the interviews confirm this:

IPS 3: *Sometimes graduates are either overqualified or do not meet the requirements of the post. It means they will not perform on the standard of the given job duties.*

IDoSD: *It seems like some of the employees are not challenged by their work as they tend to have big qualifications and this lead to the poor performance in the workplace, and we end up not delivering as the department.*

IDoRDLR: *What kills us is that there are employees who do not do their jobs adequately, or submit late and these results in delays in delivering our services to the people. It is one of the challenges that we are facing.*

Moreover, and more importantly, there are financial pressures on government departments and the private sector that constrains hiring interns and permanent employees and to allow for training budgets. There are vacant posts but with the smaller budgets that both government departments and the private sector have, they are unable to fill those posts. There is no doubt that graduates can continue to face competition for jobs. This is supported by the following response from government personnel:



IDoSD: *There are vacancies but the budget does not allow us to hire people, because it is not enough.*

As noted above, with low industrial development in Mafikeng, public service or government employment is increasingly becoming the only starting place for job creation. It can thus be agreed that for as long as there is low industrial development in Mafikeng, lack of skills development for graduates will continue to be a worrying issue. It is worth noting that the private sector is currently small in Mafikeng, with mostly retails being operational there, but it is also true that some of them have been around for over a hundred years (including the business chamber that has no public face in the town of Mafikeng), and that there are some big businesses too in the region, such as the cement factory (Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC)) or the gold mine nearby. The two largest employers in town are the provincial government (having about 9.5 billion annual budget) and the NWU Mafikeng campus. The need for industrial development is supported by the following responses:

Interview graduate 7: *Industrial development in Mafikeng is in demand. There should be more companies that can offer skills and jobs to the graduates. This can avoid the cause of government being the only source of employment in Mafikeng. Not only will this create employment but it will also boost the economy. Mafikeng is full of retails and as a capital town of the province it should have many industries. Now it seems like Rustenburg is the capital town because in Rustenburg there many industries compared to Mafikeng.*

IDoH: *I think industrial development in Mafikeng can bring lot of skills and job opportunities for the graduates. They can be able to even do practicals and gain skills and work experience.*

In addition, the choice of educational career remains alarming, for students or graduates often graduate in higher education or with certificates just to get a job, with little attention to the requirements of the labour market. After they graduate they have little understanding of expectations in the workplace. Interviewees underline the lack or mis-match of employability skills of the graduates as a major challenge. With fewer open entry posts or vacancies, the government and private sector find it difficult to employ interns permanently after completing the internship programme and those that are on contract. In support of this is the following:

IOOP: *Lack of skills that matches our requirements from graduates or people applying for jobs its quiet an issue for us, because we cannot hire people without the relevant skills.*

IDoFEED: *There are fewer vacancies open so it is difficult to take interns on permanent post after completing the programme. Such it is also caused by lack of funds or budget in the department.*

In sum, graduates feel that job prospects are poor or they qualify in one area but shift to another. Employers feel graduates perform badly, or lack the requisite skills. The position may be challenging or graduates are over-qualified. Financial pressures to hire interns are huge government and corporates face recessionary times. Still, there should be space for developmerit if recent (2018) events (of the resignation of the premier and his removal from the provincial ANC due to allegations of corruption) is anything to go by.

4.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that skills are very important in the workplace and that graduates need skills in order for them to secure jobs. The data analysis emphasized the role of skills and how skills can be acquired. It also shows that the graduates are well aware that skills are necessary in the workplace. The overall response from graduates, public and private sector respondents shows that corporate employability skills are prerequisite in the workplace.

In chapter 5 the researcher will discuss the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS.

5.1. Employability and multi-skilling, and voluntary work.

Throughout the research responses, there is a strong highlight of the significance of skills in the workplace and in being able to get a job. However, not all graduates participants think that they are not able to secure a job without skills. All they ask for is a chance to prove that they are capable of being in the workplace. Despite many having a low base of skills or no skills at all, they believe that they have the ability to secure jobs. It is clear that in the case of skills and abilities (especially interpersonal skills, time management, communication skills, and problem-solving and teamwork skills) a person starts to develop them probably from middle or high school. There is also the possibility that some people are naturally inclined to acquire such skills.

Nevertheless, graduate participants seem not to have the employability skills which are mostly required, with low professionalism, low exposure to the working environment and application of their studies and qualifications. Graduates state that there are few opportunities for them to acquire skills that are needed in the job market. Lack of skills-match can characterise most of the unemployed graduates which denies them the chance of being absorbed in work places. The study found that the solution to this problem requires efforts from different government departments and private sector involved in skills development and job creation programs, as well as the university to take part.

Findings shows that graduates do not do any voluntary work on or off campus. There needs to be a formalized voluntary work programme at the Mafikeng campus. It could be done in the villages, in schools, in clinics, in townships and in communities. They could be related to the course content of students, if faculties put their mind to it. On the issue of transportation to do voluntary work participants mentioned that they are unable to do it due to bus fare, this can be offset by having a bus within at five km radius (as at University of Cape Town with corporate buy-in) off the campus. This can be for safety and for such voluntary work for students, but the institutional office may have to sanction this.

The study reveals that government and the private sector (retails) want more or less similar employability skills from the graduates. The skills requirements also differ from position to position. Employers want people who can cope with the challenges in the working environment. In addition, the study found out that employers need different skills from graduates and they also offer skills after they have been appointed in the workplace by

providing workshops and other relevant means. Some of these are generic skills, and they need to be part and parcel of learning but there also needs to be incentives for management to encourage the learning of such skills by making students take part in extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, the issue of multi-skills and inter-disciplinary skills is crucial and needs to be added to the agenda of faculties if this is possible, so that graduates are flexible when they get to the job market. The problem is how this can be done if each discipline or department is working on its own: curriculum innovation needs to both decolonize and to encourage such skilling. There has to be a shift in career counselling, as many students seem to end up in jobs that they did not qualify for. Then there has to be some needs identified in the local Mafikeng region market (regularly by the university) and of youth interests, and then to add these to the curricula and to adjust these every few years.

In addition, such skills could be acquired if the university works with NGOs and have student-appropriate administrative skills, but there are other civic organs, and also private sector organs with whom such understandings can be facilitated. It has to begin at base level, that is, first year, but it can be launched with the third years and there has to be representation to the public and private sector to get this going.

Nonetheless, from the data gathered it is evident that skills have so much power and influence in determining graduates possibility of being employed, regardless of higher qualifications they hold. The data collected shows that employers seek individuals that are skilled, confident and who can navigate in the work environment, drawing on their personal and interpersonal skills as much as their professional competencies. It goes without saying that any special ability that one has in finding a unique or elegant solution to problems that the employer might have, is considered as a very valuable skill. Skills strengthen one's ability to cope in the workplace regardless of the challenges they face and also in building professional relationships. Skills that graduates will be using and learning in the workplace can be regarded as a weapon that they can use to develop their growth and potential of the organization, their jobs and take-over on other positions or ventures.

The issue of work experience was not tested on the participants, but it became an emerging issue as the participants mentioned it. Responses from the employers in this study show that work experience also plays a big role when hiring people or graduates. A person with many years of working experience stands a better chance of getting a job compared to a person with a little or no working experience. This research recognises that government departments provide an excellent platform for graduates by offering bursaries, internship programmes, and also learnerships for those with matric qualification. The employers made

frequent comments during the interviews that there are vacancies but the problem is the budget, because they do not have enough money to hire people.

The findings of the study also reveal that the North West University (Mafikeng campus) continues to design and implement a number of means to offer students opportunities for skills and experience development by working at the campus radio station, through its newspaper and with its tutor program. Students in science, education and nursing are also given opportunity to do practical training while studying. This shows the effort of the campus with regard to skills development for the students and graduates. From the graduate participants, there are those who have benefited and learnt a lot from such opportunities, and they applauded the university for the effort taken in creating such opportunities.

5.2. Institutional collaborations are crucial within rural area bottlenecks.

The data collected found that career opportunities in the retail sector are growing, which is all well and good, but the main problem is the lack of industrial growth in the town: without this, graduates qualify in one field that is not related to the retail sector and are thus placed inappropriately. There needs to be a workable industrial strategy and programme, and if government cannot produce this, NWU has to produce it for them and see to it that it works. This programme can then have the harder skills attached to it, so that students gain on it.

Another issue that relates to retails is that there is a domination of franchise type retails and the small shop owners in Mafikeng; with no other alternatives. One option is that NWU Mafikeng campus perhaps in liaison with the provincial government needs to find alternatives like the Vaal University of Technology and its production of shoes that is now a successful business enterprise. Its industrial policy can be linked to the idea of the 'gateway to Africa' as was previously, as we are strategically located at the border of the frontline states and with the SADC just over the border in Botswana. The research reveals that with such pressures of low of industrial development in Mafikeng, it is difficult to offer skills and employment opportunities to graduates. From the researcher's perspective, this can affect the image of the university, as it might seem like it is not producing marketable graduates. Strategies need to put in place to strengthen skills development and to support graduates through improvement of job opportunities.

The study found that much stronger collaborations between the university, government departments and the private sector is the most important recommendation for improvement of skills development for NWU (Mafikeng campus) graduates. With regard to the curriculum of faculties of the NWU (Mafikeng campus), the academic curriculum of each qualification

offers everything that students should be able to do after completing the course, with module outcomes also being pertinent. A curriculum can be influenced by the academic administration and the lecturer-student relations. The majority of the graduate participants argue that theory in the teaching overtakes practical activities and experience. There seems to be more theoretical talk particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Interviewees suggest that a strong relationship of the university with the public and private sector will enable their engagement, when the university reviews its academic curriculum.

5.3. Conflict and Consensus and Structural Marxist theory.

Following the skills issues explored in the interviews with the participants, the researcher sees fit to locate her argument within the data provided therein, and also from a theoretical perspective of Conflict theory, Consensus theory, Structural Marxist theory, Human Capital theory and Dual Labour Market theory as indicated at the beginning of the study. The theories discussed in this study are in accordance with the findings of this study. The Consensus theory may aid in considering the relationship that the university, government and private sectors can form in terms of skills and job creation for the graduates as a common concern for the common values that those sectors can gain from such a common purpose of skilling students. University skills up-grade means a win-win situation through such a consensus perspective. It does not mean that such a perspective implies that the three parties share the same world view or even the use of such skills, but simply that the aim is to skill students as this secures the economy on a better platform, whatever the ideology of the three stakeholders. Thus responses from the data collected commend the university on entering in partnerships with government departments and the private sector, but this is only a start: other relations with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), civics, churches and other organizations can also be facilitated and be developed.

But, important as it is, it is also important to note the contestation between labour and management over the past few years, in the context of the merger. If capital in the form of campus management is predominant in its views, with the only representative of labour being marginalised, a one-sided development arises, and an important constituency is left behind. This may seem to be off track in the context of the focus in this dissertation of skilling, but there is a context: skilling is also related to staff, and if management predominates with little concern for staff issues, the impact on their concerns, their contributions and their skills is also impacted, and it is the children of such workers that are looking for a career through studying at NWU (which previously was gratis for any staff and their family but this has been discontinued after the merge). Still, a dualist model of labour-capital is assumed by management, this has a deep impact on the campus, and particularly

when it is the 'black' campus fast becoming a satellite of the 'head office' that is located at Potchefstroom, and where the other 'white' campus is situated (in close proximity, geographically, administratively and politically). This has an impact on how the university is run and impacts on curriculum and skilling, which is what this dissertation is about. Thus, post-graduate studies need to be funded more at the Mafikeng campus, to encourage its growth to develop its black post-graduates, but this does not seem to be a current priority.

The conflict perspective includes the stand-offs between students and management; however, one seeks to understand this conflict that is resulting in the form of a stymied development for the Mafikeng campus. Thus, while students are part of the core function of the institution, their political plight is marginalised with the constant axing of leaders, instead of developing their leadership skills and to use these as input into the skills and even for curriculum input where it is relevant. The history of these are documented but not sufficiently researched. The activists pushing for decolonization have contributed in their attempt to reshape higher education in South Africa. Part of this logic is the so called merger of Potchefstroom University and the University of the North West. So there needs to be much more research on the effects of the merger that has brought the Mafikeng campus to where it is now. Yet even within the merger effects, it can be used for development of skills across the university, including staff, student and curriculum exchange. From the data included herein, there is some discord between the labour market and the graduates; the data collected reveals that the university curriculum is not offering enough skills that the labour market requires from the graduates. Another notable point on the conflict perspective that is recognised from the data collected is that conflicts arise between graduates and their families. The pressure from their families is that they need to get jobs as soon as they are qualified and also the pressure to succeed raises the possibility of negative effects on the graduates' success. Such pressure may direct graduates to settle for a job that they did not study for, and this can lead to career suicide, only because they want to satisfy their families.

The data collected shows that there are perceptions of inequality of education, as the participants state that some of their courses do not offer practicals in order to equip them with skills while some other courses do. One may argue that perhaps some courses are given more recognition than others. There is also some assumed perception of inequality of education between the NWU campuses, as some of the data collected shows that Potchefstroom campus qualifications are given more recognition as compared to the Mafikeng campus, particularly when applying for jobs. Such perceptions need to be corroborated with research, but such perceptions do not indicate a healthy sign and can lead to conflict between the campuses. It can even lead to poor academic growth and could take a toll on the development of students. The perception of unequal education might go some

way towards explaining high levels of unemployment amongst Mafikeng graduates. Still, higher education is evidently a factor which makes a worker more competitive in the Mafikeng's tough labour market'.

From the data collected, one may argue that there is unequal access to employment for graduates as a result of their low or poor skills. The more skills you have the more job opportunities you have. This shows that graduates without skills are not given opportunities for employment as opposed to those with skills. While experience is a crucial factor, it is such unequal access to employment that leads the graduates to move to places like Johannesburg for better opportunities. One may argue that perhaps this is as a result of poor industrial development in Mafikeng because graduates end up competing for scarce jobs.

Structural Marxist theory is used in this study to explain the structures of a capitalist society, of black and white campuses, of their separateness, of the structures of capital such as farms, white capital, white towns and also the fact that this is now changing from white authorities to black local authorities. Skills from the higher education sector can solve problems of students, even when in fact the problem is structural unemployment as argued by Vally and Motlale (2014). The consequence of such structural unemployment is that there is a possibility that many students may be coming from homes with a low earnings and low skills set. This puts the university in a position to then also start with skills programs for such students, if not all the students.

With reference to the data collected, one may argue that structural Marxist theory gives some explanation to the argument that Potchefstroom campus dictates the structures of the NWU, in its position of dominance, with its head office located at the Potchefstroom campus (it's located on one ground separated by a bridge), with the Mafikeng campus becoming a satellite, despite the current rhetoric that professes that the institution is unitary institution. This is also documented but not sufficiently researched. Perhaps adding skills related modules, either as a comprehensive institution or a technikon may yield better results, if it is handled well enough. It is a structural problem that needs to be addressed at the institutional level. Furthermore, according to the data collected from graduates at Mafikeng campus, amongst other possibilities, one choice would be to give more exposure to their discipline through conferences, workshops, tutorial teaching and the like.

5.4. Levelling the playing fields across the campuses and joint development.

An interview with a psychology graduate revealed that practicals were only being done at the Masters level and this can be regarded as a structural problem. In this case, amongst other possibilities, one choice would be for the Psychology department to add in a practical component at the undergraduate or even the honours level in order to equip students with practical work and skills. It is also evident that most of the jobs in the field of psychology require post-graduate education, and thus some students interviewed have too high expectations since they are not suitably qualified. The fact that graduates find it difficult to do voluntary work as found in the data collected relates both to a structural problem and to their victimhood mentality. One does not have to join any organization to do volunteer work. The Institutional Office or the campus should do something in regard to this, but also many students use this as an excuse. They can do voluntary work near the campus or near where they stay with little costs.

This focus of the study on mismatch of skills is not only at the individual level but also at the structural level. Therefore, the researcher sees it fit to use the issue of transport as an example of structural dislocation. Mafikeng has witnessed a variety of structural problems, including public transport wars, empty public buildings and stadiums, useless recording studios and huge wastage of resources, but it has also seen other achievements in the arts, media and culture. More concentration is needed not just on economic development, on the arts cluster, on establishing heavy industry and boosting the local economy, but also on the mechanisms by which skills development can be garnered, established, developed and released to the world so as to allow national growth in the long run. Mafikeng campus can go some way to offer some of these so that local economies thrive. It means there has to be joint development across the town of Mafikeng, as well as at the university, for simultaneous growth. All such structural issues justify the theoretical perspective of structuralism as a theoretical perspective to understand and change the current state of affairs.

5.5. Human Capital, Dual Labour Market theory, and growth and development.

The Human Capital theory is applied to the findings of this study with particular reference to its perspective of investment in education and training. Knowledge, education and skills of graduates can improve and develop the economic growth of Mafikeng. Not everyone has the same skills but this can be improved by investing in education and training. Increase in human capital can lead graduates to develop new ideas, skills, goods and products and later also potentially use them to start their own companies. Investment in higher education and training and skills development can assist in developing the economy and enhance the productivity of projects. Human capital investment can increase the potential of employees in

the workplace, and contribute to the success of the goals and mission of the company or university. Such investment empowers the employees or graduates, improve productivity and performance in the workplace.

In addition, with reference to the data collected there is low encouragement and development of skills and work experience for the graduates in Mafikeng, as a result of poor industrial development. Human capital development can liberate graduates potential and encourage them to stay empowered, and it could result generally in the interests of the communities and the economy. Poor investment in training of skills usually results in low production, lower economic growth and poor industrial development, as the number of graduates continue to grow in our society. Automatically, graduates can also develop experience, knowledge and skills on how to develop themselves, with empowerment from human capital development. Regardless of the benefits of the human capital, it is not well fully recognised, conceived or implemented in an appropriate manner as it could be in a variety of areas so that it can provide national and regional economic spin-offs. The university and government seem to fall short of investing together in skills training which will have an appropriate economic impact on the skills-match of the graduates. With the economic status of Mafikeng, as the capital city of the province and the North West province at large great demand for the development of human capital. Extensive scope of opportunities can be developed through growing or developing an economy that can be placed in the hands of African people in general, who are so economically marginalised. Manufacturing projects can enhance graduates to acquire experience, soft and high-end skills. This can create an environment where graduates can exercise their potential to develop productive and creative skills.

With reference to the Dual Labour Market theory, in this study, government departments or the public sector are classified as the primary-sector, while retail or the private sector are characterized as the secondary-sector. The workers in the primary-sector are paid well as compared to those in the secondary-sectors, an example being that the workers in retail are paid according to the shifts they have worked, as revealed in the findings. The more shifts you work the more salary or wage you will get, while in the primary-sector employees have a stable and standard wages. One may argue that the difference between the two is due to the hours they work, most of the workers in the primary-sector work for almost eight hours a day, while in the secondary-sector it depend on their shift schedules which changes from time to time, with the number of work hours changing. Yet there is a need for solutions to be found to such kinds of employment practices as it does not engender stability on the part of the employee. The data collected also reveals that apart from the working hours, skills and work experience also play a bigger role in relation to the wage issue. The more skills and work

experience you have the more chances of getting a better wage, and this applies to both primary and secondary sectors.

Equally important, the working conditions are also different in both sectors. In the primary sector working conditions are encouraging, employment is steady and there is job security. For example, those who are working in the public sector know that their jobs are more secure as compared to those in the retail or private sector. For instance, if it happens that a retail company shuts down, there is no guarantee that they will still have jobs or be compensated. The secondary-sector (retail or private sector) have more power as compared to the primary sector (public sector) in terms of economic development and where production is booming. Most of the hard work is done in the secondary-sector, while in the primary-sector implementation is the hardest challenge.

Wages can be regarded as job rewards. In this view there is no difference between the primary and secondary-sector workers because they both have to be rewarded for the job they have done. Yet it can be argued that some employees do less work or have poor performance and continue getting better wages, while those who work hard get lower wages. One may argue that it could be better if people (both in the primary and secondary-sector) are paid according to their monthly performance in the workplace. This can motivate the employees and boost the morale in the workplace. This approach can be disadvantageous for workers who may be threatened when they do not perform as per their performance criteria even if it was not their fault. In the case of the primary sector, it may be useful due to the negative public perceptions of the efficiency and work ethic there.

The findings of the study shows that the public sector requires people with high skills, tertiary qualifications and work experience, while on the other hand, in the private sector or retail a person with only matric or even without it, can be hired, as long as he or she is able to do the duties allocated to them and able to read, write and communicate well. With reference to the data collected from the participants of the study, there are graduates or employees with qualifications and skills, who are working in the retail sector and still being paid low wages regardless of their qualifications and skills. One may argue that segmentation in the labour market occurs because of the job description rather than differences in one's education and training experience.

5.6 Mafikeng campus to re-focus on adaptation to skill students and provide academic exposure.

Historically, the Mafikeng campus, previously University of Bophuthatswana was connected to about a dozen colleges, but this relationship has been neglected and the collaboration fell away. From the data collected, there is a question why in the new dispensation, NWU is not linked to any of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, since they provide the practical skills that are necessary for graduates. There is also a possibility of the NWU Mafikeng campus curriculum being properly aligned with the sister campuses (Potchefstroom and Vaal); and thus there may need to be more inter-disciplinary modules that can attempt to reach some form of high level skills. The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are more involved in producing skills whereas a university is more intellectually based. There is a need to bridge that gap without sacrificing either the potential intellectual growth of academic work, and the skills transfer that Technikons effects.

In addition, the findings show that universities can have a strong relationship or collaboration with the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, whereby modules or courses that are offered at these colleges can be applicable to the university. For example, one can study Human Resources at a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College then some of the modules studied there could be transferred or applicable to the university, in case one wants to proceed to university studies. This partnership can be the best way to skill university students. The economy of Mafikeng and the country at large is currently in dire straits, and the unemployed youth is growing, but there is very little that university does to provide practical skills. One may argue that if you study at college and obtain national Diploma, you are way better than a student who studies for a Diploma at university. The reason being that the first preference is work based experience, which you obtain at Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College rather than a person who studies theory and obtains credential achievements. It can thus be agreed that practical experience can motivate students or graduates very much, to be part and parcel of people who succeed academically and in the workplace.

Equally important, is a possibility that perhaps NWU Mafikeng campus may have to adjust its mission towards such an orientation, without losing its core academic focus in order to deal with the skills problem. In other words, the faculties on the Mafikeng campus (and the Potchefstroom campus too) may need to adapt to this lack of skills of youth, and introduce more skills orientation into their curriculum (obviously, related to their field but also the more generic types of skills that graduates need). It means that the university should shift its orientation towards Technical Vocational Education and Training and a University of

Technology style orientation and still keep up with the academic focus. Similarly, amongst possibilities one option would be that hard skills need to be taught in the social sciences and humanities, such as statistics, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) as well as problem based learning, so as to easily translate these into practical terms, or to change the low level of work based learning that remains marginal to most of the curriculum at Mafikeng campus, as the findings reveal. Perhaps, also the curriculum of the NWU and other universities in South Africa could include work-based learning or internships as part of the degree, and module outcomes have some practical component. Work-based learning can include workshops, work-shadowing, external projects and curriculum-linked visits. Another option would be that the university can teach students skills that are needed in the job market through introducing mixed technology courses such as taking writing or public speaking courses to boost their communication skills, encourage them to seek mentors and volunteer with non-profit organisations in order to build their skills.

5.7. National leadership, private sector and programmes for the youth.



The National Development Plan (NDP), State of the Province Address (SOPA) and State of the Nation Address (SONA) all relate the crucial idea of job creation, yet unemployment continues as a concerning issue for society as a whole. The data collected shows that the public service is providing graduates with internship programmes and after completing the programme, they do not hire them permanently. This leads to qualified graduates with only 12 months of work experience, which is insufficient for the job market in terms of years of work experience. Budgets are also constrained to increase the period of such internships further, and somehow skills are necessary for the economy. One may argue that government only focuses on temporary solutions for skills development and unemployment, without looking at the bigger picture. Billions of rands wasted on such temporary solutions, as in the case of the Community Work Programme (CWP). Such programmes could be turned into permanent jobs or the money could be used to create concrete and valuable jobs and skills development programmes or centres, instead of the tunnel vision of creating short-term jobs with a short-sighted vision, as a temporary solution. More attention is needed on skills development for the graduates and encouragement for those without tertiary qualifications, because we are living in the era where tertiary qualifications are key when applying for a job. However, one may also argue that graduates and youth should stop depending only on government for jobs; they should go out there and create their own initiatives. They need to be encouraged, through formal means (university, private or public sector based) to come up with ideas for businesses, projects and create jobs for themselves and others, because there are funding programmes such as the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and Industrial Development

Corporation (IDC) that are all in place to assist young people that want to start their own business.

The political and economic contributions made by the North West provincial government with a vision of developing skills for the youth is both a threat and an opportunity for the graduates. One may argue that poor skills development and unemployment in Mafikeng may not be resolved without a change of political leadership of the government, but one can also argue that national corporates are making vast profits even in recessionary times, and poor governance and lack of skills developments also lies is one factor at the basis of this situation.

Moreover, the data collected found that while internship programmes offer some work experience, they do not offer enough exposure to skills and development. It may be said that such internships do not give enough tasks that relate to skills acquisition, because graduates in such internship posts, are simply observers during the duration of the internship programme. Their tasks are limited, and they are not actively involved and not encouraged to do independent work. This may be due to the fact that perhaps the government internship programmes are not well organized, and the solution may be to have university faculties monitoring them, with regular external (examiner type) approval. One possible form of monitoring is the African monitoring mechanism that is in place currently which might be used, if it is applicable. Also, possibly government internship programmes can be used as a pathway to jobs in government, yet this can ultimately lead to a bloated government sector. Jobs need to be created in sectors other than in government.

5.8 Resuscitating Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) for revival of Mafikeng campus.

Equally important, according to the data collected, internship programmes must be more formalized in order to monitor and track graduates. One may argue that perhaps the NWU Mafikeng campus needs to have a stronger relationship with the public and private sector, and sign some Memorandums of Understanding (MoU). The MoU can involve internship programmes where government departments and the private sector have a particular understanding with the university regarding internship programmes. For example, government with academic departments can monitor or control those internship programmes under the auspices MoU. Through that MoU the university may, for example, be able to be innovative through the music industry, instead of the current grey status of the music recording studio in Mmabatho (that is, the public does not know who owns it and whether it is being used). It can be used to nurture the talent that we have in Mafikeng, including the Mafikeng campus choir. The Mafikeng campus choir, among a number of local artists can

use the studio to record music and venture into using the studio to develop academic aspects of music, apart from the skills the studio can transmit to its various clients. One option is that the Communication Department on the Mafikeng campus could assist with relations with the studio. Another effort could be to reinvent a regional TV station for Africa (like the erstwhile BopTv) and work on its spin offs, such as journalism, media studies, broadcasting and the like for students to get exposure to what is appealing to them as youth. NWU needs to work closely with the government and private sectors, for economic benefits since South Africa is still emerging economically, but retain its autonomy too.

According to the data collected, if there is Institutional Office buy-in, Mafikeng campus can invest in entrepreneurship education that can enrich skills and experience of the students; they can use their qualifications by being involved in the business sector. This could help to prepare them for the corporate world. Students can participate in the social entrepreneurship business, where the university partners with businesses and through that, students could work temporarily as interns in such businesses. Entrepreneurs can also serve as mentors and deliver guest lecturers in order to give the students the real perspective of the corporate world. The university can form a special consulting service point for small businesses and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), consultations for logistics, business strategies and marketing campaigns. A lecturer can be appointed to lead that consulting service point while students work as consultants. This is a win-win situation for both the students and the university, as the students learn practical skills and the university makes extra capital. Students should also be encouraged to take part in entrepreneurship by offering more practical coursework on business. Technology entrepreneurship could help students to develop technology-based goods and services that can offer skills for students to succeed in the industry and start their own technology companies.

In addition, another area of intervention could be in the sports cluster at the Mafikeng campus, where diplomas and degrees offered could include sports diplomas in coaching. South Africa may be a football nation yet it is short of soccer coaches, by certification through the federations and the Department of Higher Education (DoHE). Similarly, arts programmes can also be developed as there is much talent in Mafikeng, and yet the campus does not have an Arts faculty, and it is left to the local Mmabana Foundation as an institution of arts in Mafikeng, but there is little in the form of degrees or formal qualifications contributing to the skills of students in those areas.

5.9 Thoughts on industrial development.

The subject of industrial development was not tested on the participants, but it became an emerging subject from the responses of the participants. With reference to participants' views, industrial development is seen to be needed in Mafikeng. Therefore, many employability skills can come out of this industrial development and the university can thereafter liaise with such an industry. The findings shows that innovation hubs and science parks are also needed in Mafikeng with the university, government, private sector and civics being part of them, for new ideas to emerge and to be applied practically. Also, the development of the Mafikeng Airport needs to be fast tracked and articulated as part of the new connection port with other Southern African countries and a railway train route can also be re-introduced, if the political will is there. In the current stage of politics in the province, being under administration, such ideas may be seen as idealist, yet it is incumbent upon the two largest institutions in the town to take this forward. The university could get involved in the re-invention of the town. This can help to boost the economy of the North West Province, particularly the Mafikeng region, in terms of export and import of goods. Through this Mafikeng can re-generate its economy, not only will the economy grow but jobs and skills will be created in the area and the campus and town becomes a hub again. This is what Potchefstroom campus is ironically creating for its white constituencies through the merger process (a simple example will suffice here: study guides are all printed in Potchefstroom: if Setswana ones are written alongside the English ones, they could be printed in Mafikeng and assist local and capital reproduction in Mafikeng).

In addition, the town of Mafikeng is bloated with foreign entrepreneurs, importing products and goods with no local exports being done through their businesses; this only benefits them while delaying economic recovery and harming local entrepreneurship. Amongst other possibilities, one choice would be for the government to introduce a strategic plan such as opening a school for short courses on sewing, clothing and footwear in order to produce local products and encourage entrepreneurship. This can be empowerment for the youth, skills can be created and shared in order to a eradicate unemployment. It could also provide workshops for business, marketing, teaching and research, problem solving and skills. Through industrial development graduates or citizens can be independent, instead of depending on government, or blaming government for the high unemployment.

From a macro-economic perspective the findings show that, if we want economic growth we need to change the capitalist system, especially in the rural areas. Skills can be developed through production of an alternative rural economy. Mafikeng is classified as a rural area with villages mostly consisting of farms that can be used for commercial farming projects as

part of agricultural renewal. The rural economy can contribute to other sectors such as for food production, tourism, timber production, community development programmes and education or tertiary sector. Such sectors can introduce export markets and earn foreign currency for the province, even if only in the SADC region. A rural economy could also go some way to reduce poverty, promote environment sustainability, and create jobs and skills. It can also be related to physical environment such as infrastructure and health facilities development; and even impact on the non-physical environment such as social and political development. The findings show that it is also high time for graduates to develop skills in the rural economy sector and not depend only on office work. They can use their skills, talents and capabilities to shape the rural North West rural economy. Using natural resources as a way to develop knowledge, intensive industries could support economic development strategies, skill and jobs. Technology innovation can be considered in rural economy development by improving cropping practices and an increased labour productivity. Yet, one can argue that technology can also create unemployment because when new machines are being introduced, the chances of people being retrenched are higher, since those machines can do the job of such people. In other words technology can replace the workers.

Based on the findings, it is clear that implementation of employability skills modules at the undergraduate level is very important and can possibly make a difference to the graduates in terms of getting jobs. Grooming students from the undergraduate level is another option so that they can work effectively and efficiently instead of being taught skills at the workplace. This can prepare them both physically and psychologically, and they will be able to cope with challenges at the work place. Funding agencies may need to be approached by establishing a fund-raising office for this purpose.

According to the findings, practical work exposure of the students during their course of study is another form that can be used to gain skills (apart from some news and some older ones that have outreach, capacity building, internships, mentoring, SETAs work, government, and private sector/Mafikeng campus links). Science practicals are only one form, doing research is another form, but there are also various other forms: problem-solving in small groups to tackling medium scale issues (local consumer rights, for example) or through the campus liaising with NGO's, hospices, hospitals, mines and the like); larger issues that are national can be tackled at the local level, such as corruption and accountability in provincial government with the backing of sound research; regional issues relating to SADC problems that the university may get involved in with, links to SADC universities and their civics, cultural and government counterparts. All these can lead to a more skilled population within the region, as Mafikeng students come from all over Africa.

5.10. The need for hard skills and for a general academic education.

Moreover, for skilling possibilities one may argue that qualities that the participants state they bring to the employers are not hard skills. More emphasis should be placed on hard skills like statistics research, quantitative research, research on institutions, innovation and adaptation of curricula and learning and teaching, practical skills that go with faculties adopting rural villages, so that students partake in resolving their problems with them (instead of for them), learning to work in schools, churches or tribal areas. One simple policy decision is an option that can be made at NWU to adopt a school, village, institution and the like, by each faculty and the work programme can come out of there. There are also other skills such as problem-solving skills, leadership skills, communication and media skills that can be passed onto schools and villages.

The Sector Training Authorities (SETAs) can be used to skill students and make them employable and earn the university some financial and skilling credits. In addition, there are 23 SETAs which get a certain percentage of money from every company in South Africa and they are supposed to use that money to skill people, yet they have little capacity to do so. The data collected show that there are also low development relationships between universities and SETAs; however billions of rands have been spent to create SETAs. Universities need to work or liaise with SETAs, as universities are more than just about skills enhancement and development, as they also give academic and theoretical education and a formative and general education. A lot of skilling can be produced through SETAs if higher education institutions relate to their relevant SETAs. Mafikeng campus remains a historically black campus that needs to redefine itself and to change the perceptions of government and the private sector, to be able to convince them that its graduates are multi-skilled and do have cutting edge knowledge that is practical (and to put in programmes various faculties to do this, so that the graduates are armed with such skills). This is one of the things that can be a possible area of growth for Mafikeng, the capital of North West province, with its lack of such development: one can even point out that there was much more happening when Mafikeng was under Bophuthatswana in this regard (though this should not be seen as harking back to a dictatorial or sanction busting regime) but simply that there was ongoing small scale economic activity.

In relation to the data collected, participants mostly mentioned only soft skills (such as communication skills, computer literacy, time management skills and the like). Yet there is a need for the higher end skills that are also important. Still the university may argue that it provides education, training or any kind of exploration in the area of higher skills that no other work-related form of education can match. Such special higher skills can be critical thinking or analytical skills, creative skills and social intelligence. Graduates with such skills may not have what is related to the job requirements but these are important skills that the university provides to its graduates. For example, if one has social intelligence he or she can be able to work in teams, which is a good thing from the labour market or industry point of view, whereas for someone with no social intelligence is not able to relate in the workplace. Critical thinking is also one of the major skills that are included in the Education White Paper. Critical thinking relates to a problem where one has to use analytical skills to solve a problem. Analytical skills include the ability to gather the accurate information required for specific circumstances, working with numbers and figures, being detail-oriented and with an ability to build up strategic plans. Such skills can be learned or improved through memory training courses, books or simply by being more observant (which is also a skill). In many jobs, particularly where one is involved a leadership role or in high positions, one has to make difficult decisions. And if one has not developed critical thinking capacity, it can be difficult to make some crucial decisions. Unquestionably, it is true that a potential employee without either of these skills cannot succeed in the workplace.

From the data collected, in the coming generations of graduate will have to change occupations throughout their journey of work or a career. They have to be prepared to shift from one position to another. They might get to learn new skills and broaden their experiences. Such transition requires higher skills in order for one to survive the duties of the new position and the work environment. For example, one might have studied Sociology but that does not mean they will end up being in the field of sociology or a researcher, but one carries such skills after they are acquired, but it also very important for graduates or students to be ready for a multi-skilling shift.

The literature review points to the connecting relationship between higher education and the labour market is weak. The focal point of this study is based on the skilled labour market. From the researcher's perception skilled labour is a segment of the work force with a high skill level that creates significant economic value through the work performed (human capital). Skilled labour is usually a result of higher education or skill levels and high wages. Skilled labour performs complicated tasks that require specific skill sets, education, training and experience, and may involve conceptual thinking capacity. Mafikeng is supported mainly by three things: students, government and small shopkeepers, with some private and service

sector companies. One may argue that the NWU Mafikeng campus is supposed to service the needs of at least some parts of the labour market. The key aspects of the economy of capital may be necessary to uplift as a strategic priority. The university also needs to provide student and entertainment services, and facilitate research parks, have positive recreation for residents, facilitate and get involved in crucial elements of industrial development, and possible linkages to the SADC states in the economy, work on farming aspects (animal farming is one area that Mafikeng campus can develop further), or innovate cultural and other ties.

5.11. SUMMARY.

In sum, what this study has highlighted is the need for all kinds of skills development, and the role and importance of skills in the workplace in order for graduates to be able to get jobs. Skills develop knowledge that is used to solve problems that are even not work related, and they offer a platform for new discoveries. Skills have a remarkable impact because one can discover other things which one was not initially looking for, and they expand one's expectations. Skills are also a vital input to industrialisation, which is needed to accelerate manufacturing in the country (for local consumption and export). Competitive access to skills for being employed is one of the key success factors for the country's industrialisation initiatives. Employability skills are an important focus area in the process of conversion, development and augmentation of individuals and organizations. Employability skills provide what is required to uplift the quality of professionalism in the work place. They offer foundation in the corporate and public sector employees and help to understand the work environment. Skills opportunities need to be seized by the graduates in order to lessen the unemployment rate. Graduates need to desire to use skills to develop communities, economic growth and therefore build our nation.

In chapter 6 the researcher will discuss conclusion and recommendations based on her findings.

CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY.

6.1. Conclusion.

With reference to the literature review and findings, it is the researcher's view that skills are very important for anyone who is looking for a job. Employability skills are very valuable and they make a difference in our country but they need to be monitored and the process of evaluation should take place in trying to see whether they are really addressing the situation or problems they are supposed to address, particularly the problem of unemployment and time taken for graduates to get jobs.

So far the North West University (Mafikeng campus) and NWPG have made a great impact in trying to solve issues of skills of the graduates, as they offer opportunities for employability skills for graduates, yet still more is needed to be done in terms of skills development for the graduates. Hopefully by the end of 2030, the vision of the NDP on employment will be achieved.

Therefore, from the findings the study concludes that, firstly, lack of employability skills-match can lead to graduate unemployment, and also that employers are looking for people with appropriate skills and experience when hiring. Furthermore, there seems to be little partnership between the higher education institutions, government departments and the private sector in terms of ensuring that the institutions produce graduates with skills required by employers. Secondly, the study concludes that industrial development in the Mafikeng region can certainly make a difference to the quality of graduates' skills development. In addition, the challenges that graduate without jobs faces lower their ambitions to study further. They settle for jobs that are not related to their field of studies. Thirdly, the study concludes that graduates from NWU (Mafikeng campus) are in need of training on employability skills and practice, particularly those in humanities and social sciences, although this is based on a limited sample. And lastly, skills development can be used as a weapon to fight unemployment among graduates and youth in general, poverty and against inequality in South Africa. Tertiary institutions and government should engage public society organizations in rendering skills development services with particular reference to fighting poor or low employability skills and unemployment amongst the youth of South Africa. Skills development services should be made more inclusive in order for graduates to be able to be employed.

6.2. Recommendations.

From the research findings and conclusion, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Capital injections need to be made in various projects, with the assistance of the private sector, to create projects that lead to sustainable job creation. A skills development centre is crucial and practical skills programmes for graduates so that they can be marketable and alleviate the skills shortage amongst them.
2. Mafikeng airport needs to be revamped to offer more, for business in Southern Africa and particularly in the SADC region, and to reshape Mafikeng as the hub for this region. A good start would be to re-establish the train route from metropolitan centres through Mafikeng and on wards to the SADC region.
3. Internship programmes need to be more formalized with the university, so as to be able to monitor and track graduates' pathways to some form of skills enhancing jobs.
4. Various arts programmes need to be considered by Mmabana Foundation and various civics in the region, for resuscitation of the sector and for university involvement in this through an arts programme in a new faculty of Arts, Drama and Music.
5. Some of the envisioned projects include voluntary work for undergraduate and post-graduate participation in such projects. With the establishment of adopted villages in Mafikeng, in partnership with various stakeholders, there could be practical training in the various curricula of the different faculties, as and when this is appropriate. Partnerships between the university, public and private sectors should be more active, especially to constantly re-curriculate at the university, and to use some of the impetus of decolonization to adapt its curricula to solve local problems with local solutions without losing sight of the global forces.
6. Small, medium and micro enterprise development is needed through an innovation hub and the industrial zone for an emerging industrial sector. A zone for heavy industries is also needed for job creation rather than just opening shopping centres in the area.
7. Multi-disciplinary degrees could be introduced and the merger used for the development of skills across the university, including staff and student exchanges, curriculum exchange, job and internship exchanges. It has to be noted that such ideas have limitations too in the light of restructuring currently underway on the NWU campuses.
8. Finally, an assessment needs to be done on whether the merger can be useful for a project of skilling, and if so, what are the disadvantages for the Mafikeng campus and

the students in the currently merged institution, and what are the forces at play in this takeover by Potchefstroom campus with its assimilation elements.

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Appendix A



CONSENT FORM

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

The aim of the research.

The aim of this study is to analyse the employability skills-match of graduates of North West University in Mahikeng campus, and to be able to isolate the important skills that are needed in the job market.

Confidentiality agreement.

As the researcher in charge, I agree to keep individual responses confidential, and I further agree not to disclose names and any information as emerging from individual participant's responses.

Your participation is appreciated.

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MS. M. KGOSIEMANG

NWU
LIBRARY

Appendix B: Interview scheduled for graduates.

Questions

1. What are your qualifications (Diploma, Degree, Honours, Masters or PhD)?
2. Which faculty did you enrol in?
3. What is the name of the course that you have studied?
4. When did you graduate from the program?
5. Sex: Female or male.
6. What qualities and skills do you bring to an employer?
7. What job would fit your abilities, skills and interests? Please explain.
8. Do you think the education you got at university is relevant to the labour market needs in general? Please explain.
9. Describe what you think is NWU's responsibility, in relation to employability skills?
10. If applicable, what challenges are you now facing as a graduate without a job?
11. How does the issue of employability skills demanded by the labour market affect you personally?
12. Should employability skills be implemented in the undergraduate curriculum? Please explain.
13. Have you worked and done internships or learnerships?
14. If yes to Q13, what did you gain from them?
15. What in your own view is the most effective method to promote graduate employability?
16. What are your views about internships and learnerships that the government and private companies are offering to graduates?
17. Ideally, what changes/recommendations would you recommend to higher education institutions that could improve the employment opportunities of future graduates?

Appendix C: Interview scheduled for government and private sectors participants.

Questions.

1. What skills do you require from university graduates?
2. Do you offer internships and/or learnerships for graduates?
3. If yes to Q. 2: what skills do you offer during internship/learnership or to the employees?
4. Do you have any graduates (as employees) in your department/company?
5. What challenges does your department or company face in the context of the alleged labour market/higher education mismatch of skills of graduates?
6. What are your views on engaging with university graduate's employability skills?
7. Ideally, what changes would you recommend to higher education institutions that could improve the employment opportunities of its future graduates?
8. What do you think can be done in terms of skills development of NWU graduates?

Appendix D: In text quotes reference.

Interviewee	Date	Time	Venue of the interview
Interview Graduate 1	07 April 2016	10:00 AM	NWU Mafikeng campus
Interview Graduate 2	08 April 2016	15:30 PM	Garona building in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 3	11 April 2016	11:35 AM	NWU Mafikeng campus
Interview Graduate 4	11 April 2016	15:30 PM	Mafikeng library
Interview Graduate 5	13 April 2016	09:30 AM	Department of Education offices in Montshiwa
Interview Graduate 6	13 April 2016	13:00 PM	Garona building in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 7	15 April 2016	11:30 AM	Provident house in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 8	17 April 2016	14:00 PM	NWU Mafikeng campus
Interview Graduate 9	21 April 2016	10:15 AM	NWU Mafikeng campus
Interview Graduate 10	26 April 2016	13:30 PM	Megacity in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 11	28 April 2016	10:50 AM	Mafikeng library
Interview Graduate 12	30 April 2016	12:00 PM	Megacity in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 13	04 May 2016	10:00 AM	Lichtenburg public park
Interview Graduate 14	05 May 2016	09:45 AM	Department of Tourism offices in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 15	05 May 2016	13:30 PM	Department of Public Works offices in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 16	12 May 2016	11:00 AM	Provident house in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 17	13 May 2016	15: 35 PM	NWU Mafikeng campus

Interview Graduate 18	18 May 2016	12:00 PM	Mafikeng library
Interview Graduate 19	26 May 2016	13:00 PM	Megacity in Mmabatho
Interview Graduate 20	04 June 2016	11:30 AM	Mafikeng library
IDoFEED: Interview Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development	25 July 2016	10:30 AM	Department of Finance, Economy and Enterprise Development offices in Mmabatho
IDoH: Interview Department of Health	27 July 2016	11:14 AM	Department of Health offices (next to the crossing shopping centre)
IDoJCD: Interview Department of Justice and Constitutional Development	04 August 2016	15:30 PM	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development offices in Mafikeng
IOOP: Interview Office of the Premier	22 July 2016	13:00 PM	Garona building in Mmabatho
IDoL: Interview Department of Labour	12 July 2016	12:45 PM	Provident House in Mmabatho
IDoRDLR: Interview Department of Rural Development and Land Reform	12 July 2016	10:00 AM	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in Mmabatho
IDoSD: Interview Department of Social Development	12 July 2016	09:00 AM	Provident House in Mmabatho
IPS 1: Interview Private Sector 1	25 August 2016	10:30 AM	Mafikeng library
IPS 2: Interview Private Sector 2	31 August 2016	09:15 AM	Mafikeng library
IPS 3: Interview Private Sector 3	31 August 2016	14:30 PM	Megacity in Mmabatho