



**UNIVERSITY OF
MPUMALANGA**

**The effects of Training and Development Strategies on Work Readiness of the
EPWP Employed Youth in Mpumalanga Province.**

By

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Declaration for plagiarism.

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Acknowledgement

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Abstract

A significant amount of research on the prevalence of unemployment in South Africa has been undertaken by academics. Youth unemployment is a problem in South Africa. A high proportion of youth unemployment suggests that young people are not gaining the skills or experience needed to boost the economy. This impedes the country's economic expansion and makes it more challenging for the government to provide social assistance. In recent years, several studies have highlighted factors that contribute to youth unemployment such as skills mismatch, higher education institution attended, lack of work experience, lack of employability and work readiness.

Work readiness is especially crucial in the fast-evolving dynamic and rapid changing economy. The nature of work, employment, careers, and competences necessary to succeed in the modern workplace have all changed. As a result, graduates who join the workforce are expected to work independently and take on more responsibilities to succeed in their careers journey. This emphasises the value of practical training and development as graduates are not always aware of how to put the knowledge, they have acquired from the Post School Education and Training (PSET), to use in the workplace. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the training and development programme provided by the EPWP on the work readiness of trainees.

This study used quantitative research and a survey research approach to collect data from the participants employed under the EPWP in Mpumalanga Province. The finding highlights that there is a statistically significant relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided the EPWP in Mpumalanga province. This shows that the training needs analysis of the EPWP programme is structured in a way that develops the skills, knowledge, and competence of the participants to be ready for the workforce. The study further found there are statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the effectiveness of training and development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on Age. Training and development strategy provided by the EPWP bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills necessary to succeed in the labour market.

Key Words

- Graduate Unemployment
- Work-Readiness
- Skills Development
- Training and Development
- Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)
- Employability

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

Abbreviation	Description
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CWP	Community Works Programme
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
EQ	Emotional Quotient
GDP	Gross Development Product
NDP	National Development Plan
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NYC	National Youth Certificate
PSET	Post School Education and Training
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
YES	Youth Employment Service
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WR	Work Readiness
T & D	Training and Development

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Youth unemployment remains one of the most serious economic challenges in developing countries like South Africa, posing threats to both social stability and economic growth (Seti et al., 2025). Between 2008 and 2018, South Africa's overall unemployment rate ranged from 25% to 29%, and the COVID-19 pandemic pushed it to approximately 35.3% by the end of 2021 (Mandlazi & Nyasha, 2023). Graduate unemployment rose significantly by 2023, affecting 11.9% of degree holders and 26.5% of sub-degree post-matric graduates (Seti et al., 2025). One of the key contributors to the issue of youth unemployment is the mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates and the demands of the evolving labour market (Pandya et al., 2021). Automation, artificial intelligence, and evolving job roles are transforming the labor market, reshaping workplaces and the skills required of employees (Hoaene, 2019). Globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution further challenge young workers to adapt to digital, knowledge-driven environments. As a result, work readiness has become an increasingly important focus of research (Magwenyana, 2020).

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In recent years, many developing countries have seen a significant transformation from manufacturing-based industries to service-oriented sectors (Lawton et al., 2023). This transformation is caused by automation, artificial intelligence, and the evolution of job roles. Furthermore, it has brought about an operational revolution supported by technology, social systems, and remote work enabled through information and communications technology (ICT) (Pianda et al., 2024). As a result, significant changes have occurred in jobs, workplaces, and the skills required in the labour market. This shift highlights the growing importance of training and skills development (Setlhodi, 2019). Skills development is increasingly recognised as a key strategy to foster economic growth, innovation and individual empowerment (Magwenyana, 2020). With ongoing technological advancements, evolving market

demands and industry changes, workers must continuously adapt, enhance their skills, and stay flexible to remain relevant in the workforce (Pandya et al., 2021). Building a skilled economy improves growth, inspires innovation and empowers individuals to be up to dates (Magwenyana, 2020). Investment in training and skills development programmes offers more than financial stability; it fosters a sense of self-worth and confidence, empowering individuals to take control of their futures and contribute positively to the economic growth of the country (Smith, 2023). Developing skills and providing training has been identified as a key strategy to reduce unemployment, especially in developing countries (Pianda et al.,2024).

Unemployment in South Africa is a complex problem that significantly impacts the country's economic growth and stability (Setlhodi, 2019). Despite various efforts by the government and private sector to address this challenge, the unemployment rate remains alarmingly high. This falls within the highest global rates and has been a major contributor to the country's social and economic instability. By the second quarter of 2024, South Africa's overall unemployment rate reached 33.5%, affecting 8.4 million people, including those without matric qualifications and discouraged jobseekers who had ceased actively looking for work (Statistics,2024). According to Seti et al. (2025) graduate unemployment remains a major concern. In early 2023, 11.9% of individuals with a bachelor's degree and 26.5% of those with post-matric qualifications below a bachelor's degree were unemployed, representing increases of 22.03% and 23.02%, respectively, since 2019. Kgotlhane et al. (2018) contend that youth unemployment in South Africa has escalated to a critical level. A high proportion of youth unemployment leads to a high rate of poverty, which has a negative impact on the economic growth of the country (Makhosathini,2015). This results in a lack of skilled workers, reduced economic growth and decreased productivity (Binaben,2023).

A significant amount of research has been conducted on the prevalence of unemployment in South Africa (Hoaene, 2019; Mungule, 2016; Kasonga, 2013). In 2018 South Africa accounted for 2% of the global unemployment rate but only 0.5% of the global labour force (Setlhodi, 2019). Despite having a low labour force participation rate, South Africa is characterised by high unemployment rate. Chivanga (2014) found that unemployment is above 50% in most South African provinces. Similarly, Ogujiuba and Agholor(2021) found that provinces with a large rural population, such as Mpumalanga in South Africa, have a higher

unemployment rate as it is regarded as being poor on the national average. Foko (2015) asserts that high unemployment rates are a result of the limitations left over from the apartheid era, including unequal access to quality training for specific population groups and an imbalance in the spatial distribution of employment and population.

In recent years, several studies have highlighted factors that contribute to youth unemployment such as lack of work experience, skills mismatch, and skill gaps (Ryk, 2020).Pianda et al.(2024) further indicates that high unemployment rate stems from unequal job opportunities for youth, low levels of employability limited access to information and career networks, and insufficient practical work experience. A study by Kgotlhane et al. (2018) also argues that youth unemployment is caused by the low quality of education provided by institutions of higher learning. Marumo and Sebolaaneng (2019) indicate that youth unemployment is largely driven by an excess of graduates with skills that are rarely needed in the job market. According to an investigation by the Syafira and Umam (2024) a high proportion of youth unemployment suggests that young people are not gaining the skills or experience needed to boost the economic growth. This impedes the country's economic expansion and makes it more challenging for the government to provide social assistance.

Sikhakhane (2011) indicates that the problem of youth unemployment can be solved by the need to revise the curriculum to align more closely with labour market demands, ensuring that graduates possess industry-relevant skills. Syafira and Umam (2024) further emphasize the importance of continuous monitoring and quality enhancement through mechanisms that incorporate student feedback and employment outcomes to improve the education system over time. A study conducted by Marumo and Sebolaaneng (2019) indicated that South African higher institutions of learning such as TVET colleges, private colleges and universities need to move away from traditional theory-based teaching and adopt more practical approaches. Practical work can enhance graduates' innovative abilities and make them more relevant in the labour market. The study further found that students are learning a significant amount of theory but not applying it in the corporate world. Universities and colleges should therefore focus more on practical work rather than theoretical teaching (Marumo & Sebolaaneng, 2019). Binaben (2023) indicates that to successfully provide the youth

with skills and training relevant to the workforce, calls for a collaborative approach between private sectors, public sectors and higher education institutions.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) set a mandate for TVET colleges to produce graduates that will either be self-employed, enter employment or be able to pursue further studies. According to a study by Ben-Africa (2021) access to knowledge and skills is essential for economic development. Basic literacy, numeracy, science and technical abilities are needed to boost corporate productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth. It was found that in 2021, 43% of companies could not find new entry-level employees with the necessary employability skills. Binaben (2023) reports that South Africa had a skills mismatch of more than 50% and the lowest productivity in the labour workforce compared to 30 other countries. This shows that much more work must be done to improve the skills of new graduates to prepare them for the work environment (Pandya et al., 2021).

Hall (2010) argues that there are work-readiness skills, knowledge, and competencies that young people need to demonstrate, such as meeting high management standards, consistently developing new skills to satisfy competitive demands, and understanding how to handle the challenges of work, that may lead to stress and anxiety. The ability to generate and implement ideas, including the persistence and capacity to translate technical solutions into practical terms, is necessary for graduates to succeed in the workplace. Given the rapid digital transformation of workplaces, the labour market has shifted significantly, leading to a cultural shift in many organisations (Mashigo, 2014).

Ngwenya (2016) reports that work regulations are evolving, and employers are now more interested in employees' technical, soft and hard skills rather than only high IQ. Employers are placing more emphasis on soft skills such as initiative, empathy, and adaptability than on knowledge and intellectual aptitude, meaning that new graduates are obliged to be prepared for the world of work. They must be equipped with the necessary skills to add value to the work environment (Uzodike & Naude, 2018). According to Deloitte report (2022) nearly 80% of employers believe that employees emotional intelligence is crucial for their career growth. 59% of employers won't hire someone with a high IQ but low EQ, and 75% are likely to promote someone with a high EQ. This highlights that today's fast-paced and ever-changing work environment

recognize the value of emotional intelligence, it has become a key factor in hiring, career development and leadership. Therefore, graduates and job seekers need to demonstrate appropriate professional attitudes, strong work ethics, and essential work readiness skills to adapt effectively and achieve success in the workplace (Pianda et al., 2024).

According to Manala (2014), work-readiness is divided into four components: personal traits, organisational skills, work competence and social intelligence. Personal traits refer to characteristics such as resilience, adaptability, maturity, and personal development. Organisational skills refer to understanding organisational structure, being knowledgeable about organisational culture, and being aware of rules and procedures, along with showing respect for others, having reasonable expectations, and demonstrating humility. Work competence is the ability to manage tasks, take initiative and apply theoretical and technical knowledge. Social intelligence involves communication abilities, social confidence, teamwork and building relationships with co-workers (Manala, 2014).

Research shows that the 21st century labour market is characterised by critical and unstable technological innovations more than ever before, which demands graduates to have flexible and adaptive abilities. As highlighted by Dlamini (2020), technical skills are the most crucial group of skills that young people need to increase their employability and to succeed in the workplace. This emphasises the value of practical training and development, as students are not always aware of how to put the knowledge, they have acquired in post-school education to practical use (Pandya et al., 2021). Training and Development play a crucial role in improving the employability of graduates by bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, making them more attractive to potential employers (Pianda et al., 2024). Moni (2021) submits that practical training and development enhance interpersonal skills, career development, awareness of workplace culture and the ability to meet workplace expectations. Similarly, Pandya et al. (2021) states that training and development focus on giving graduates the chance to gain professional experience so they can advance their knowledge and academic abilities. As mentioned above, studies have shown that employers expect new entry-level employees to be job-ready when they join organisations.

Notwithstanding thirty years of democracy, it is a sad reality that South Africa continues to struggle with serious socio-economic challenges. The country faces numerous economic and labour market contextual challenges that impact its overall development and stability. According to the World Bank (2024) South Africa's economic growth has been low, averaging around 1% annually in recent years. Factors such as a high unemployment rate, policy uncertainty, corruption, inadequate infrastructures and electricity supply constraints have hampered both public and private sector investment and suppressed economic expansion (Binaben, 2023). Hoaeane (2019) notes that the government is finding it difficult to come up with solutions to the challenges the country is facing.

However, to address the socio-economic issues of unemployment and employability, highlighted above, and to address skills shortages, the South African government has put in place policies, legislations, and comprehensive integrated and multi-facilitated strategies to promote employment and provide more opportunities for work-based training. These state efforts also seek to establish frameworks for collaboration between companies to strengthen the link between education and employment (Hoaeane, 2019). Among the strategies and legislation implemented by the government to address unemployment and skills shortages, are the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Employment Service Act of 2014, (Dlamini, 2020).

The Skills Development Act of 1998 intends to increase investment in education and training in the labour market and to improve returns on these investments, among other things. It also strives to broaden the knowledge and abilities of the labour force in order to improve productivity and employment (Skills Development Act 97 of 1998). The Employment Service Act 4 of 2014 was established to implement programmes that encourage the employment of young people seeking jobs and other vulnerable individuals and to fund public employment service (Department of labour, 2016). The focus of the current study is however on the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which is a government-initiated programme to reduce youth unemployment through various projects and programmes that offer young people temporary jobs to enhance their skills through training and development.

1.3. THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM (EPWP)

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a labour-intensive programme designed to provide public and community service through government initiatives and publicity funding (The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure Gazette, 2022). The programme, facilitated by the national Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, provides unemployed youth with work-based experience, training and development and small, medium, and micro enterprise opportunities. In the Mpumalanga province the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure offers the EPWP programme in four sectors namely: infrastructure, environment, and culture, social, and non-state (Moholi, 2014).

According to the Department of Public Works (2022), the EPWP National Youth Service is yielding a high number of work opportunities benchmarked to maximise youth intake across all sectors. The department targets at least 66% of youth in each province to participate in EPWP National Youth Service programmes. The programmes target unemployed youth who have the necessary qualifications such as N6 with Mathematics and Physical Science certificates or National Certification Vocational (NCV) and N4 Engineering. These programmes ensure that employment creation is maximised in the selected sectors.

The EPWP programmes aim to reduce the high rate of unemployment by creating temporary jobs while also equipping participants with the skills they need for future employment. To ensure excellent outcomes and that people really receive the chance to use the skills or training they acquire, the programmes emphasise and prioritise on-the-job training. In addition, the EPWP's priorities for local communities include financial support for the growth of local economic activity and capacity building through training and development (Moholi, 2014). In a nutshell, training and development programmes such as the EPWP National Youth Service aim to fill the gap between education and employment, are intended to give young people the skills they need to find jobs (Raftopoulos et al., 2009), and ensure that students can apply theory to practice and gain practical work experience (Moholi, 2014).

1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Competition in the job market is becoming increasingly tighter. With rapid technological advancement, many companies are restructuring, implementing mass layoffs, and redirecting resources toward artificial intelligence (AI) (Pianda et al., 2024). This shift is changing the role of humans in the workforce and contributing to rising unemployment (Syafira & Umam, 2024). Many graduates lack the skills and competencies required by the labour market, reflecting a persistent gap between the output of educational institutions and the needs of industry (Uzodike & Naude, 2018).

According to Lawton et al. (2023) The labor market demands workers who possess not only technical knowledge, skills, and experience but also essential soft skills. Abilities such as communication, leadership, adaptability, and teamwork are crucial for success in today's workforce. Reuben et al. (2025) argue that low quality of education system in higher learning institutions prevents graduates from meeting the job demands of the formal sector. Therefore, universities often fail to equip students to compete effectively after graduation by developing strong, resilient, and well-rounded human resources. Consequently, the number of unemployed graduates with higher education remains significantly high.

As indicated in the background section of this study, youth unemployment is a rising global phenomenon. South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates which currently stands at 32.6%, with more than 60% of the youth between the ages of 15-35 unemployed. South Africa is basically facing a crisis of high youth unemployment (Syafira & Umam, 2024). Despite government interventions to reduce youth unemployment through training and development programmes, especially amongst the youth, no major changes have been witnessed in the employability of young people (Moni,2021).

Kasongo (2013) indicates that the strategies of some of the training and development programmes fail to effectively address all the expected labour market criteria for workforce skills. Reuben et al.(2015) argues that the absence of properly executed training assessments leads to the program's content and strategies becoming obstacles that prevent training and development initiatives from effectively addressing high unemployment rates. Research findings by Makhosathini (2015) also indicate that

the weak point of most training and development programmes is that they focus on providing enough income to assist poor communities in escaping poverty and reduce unemployment. Shongwe (2023) confirm that training programmes in South Africa fall short of fostering long-term employment growth and instead offer temporary jobs that provide financial support for unemployed youth.

Windvogel (2018) points out that the training strategies for graduates are not job-relevant, which prevents graduates from acquiring the skills need for future employment. This means that the training strategies do not relate to the workplace or employers' levels of work-readiness but rather focus on immediate job-related training. Reuben et al. (2025) adds that the modern workplace is faced with challenges of high evolving technologies, the global economy and increased social diversity, which implies that graduates are expected to have some basic career skills to function effectively in the workplace and contribute positively to the economic growth.

The employability of South African youth continues to be a topic of discussion among academics, government officials and businesses, representing an ongoing developmental challenge for the nation (Uzodike & Naude,2018). Manala (2014) identifies basic work-readiness components such as personal traits, organisational skills, work competence, and social intelligence that the youth should acquire to be work ready. Only 42% of companies agree that current graduates are prepared for the workforce, while 58% companies disagree and 72% of educational institutions believe their graduates are environment (Deloitte,2022) This (Pandya et al., 2021) This means that most employers believe that graduates are not sufficiently ready for the workforce.

1.5. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the training and development strategies provided by the EPWP on work-readiness. The study also addressed the perceptions of trainees with regards to the alignment of the training strategies and employers' required levels of work-readiness.

1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the relationship between training and development and work readiness provided by the EPWP?
- What is the impact of training and development provided by the EPWP on work-readiness in?
- Are there differences in the perceptions of effectiveness of training and development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on demographic variables?

1.7. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the nature of the relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided by the EPWP.
- To investigate the impact of training and development provided by the EPWP on work -readiness.
- To determine the differences in the perceptions of effectiveness of training development on work readiness of EPWP participants based on demographic variables.

1.8. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis:

- H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between training and development, and work-readiness provided the EPWP.

Alternative Hypothesis:

- Ha1: There is a statistically significant relationship between training and development, and work readiness provided the EPWP.

Null Hypothesis:

- H02: There is no statistically significant impact of the training and development provided the EPWP on work readiness.

Alternative Hypothesis:

- Ha2: There is a statistically significant impact of the training and development provided by the EPWP on work-readiness.

Null Hypothesis

- H03: There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of effectiveness of training development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on demographic variables.

Alternative Hypothesis

- Ha3: There are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of effectiveness of training development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on demographic variables.

1.9. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a structured representation of the key variables, assumptions, and relationships that guide a research study. According to Maxwell (2005), a conceptual framework acts as a visual and explanatory system that connects the major concepts under investigation, helping researchers clarify how and why certain variables are expected to relate. Similarly, Ngulube et al. (2015) note that a conceptual framework functions as a roadmap that directs the research design, methodology, and interpretation of findings.

A conceptual framework provides a coherent structure that links theory to empirical investigation. It ensures that the study is grounded in relevant literature, reduces ambiguity around the variables, and strengthens the logical flow of the research process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It also helps the researcher specify what is being studied, why it matters, and how the variables interact within the broader context of the research problem.

The purpose of a conceptual framework is to clarify the relationships between the independent, dependent, and mediating variables, thereby guiding data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Imenda (2014), a conceptual framework helps researchers articulate and justify the theoretical basis of a study, enabling them to make informed methodological choices and link hypotheses to expected outcomes. Therefore, the conceptual framework serves as a blueprint that anchors the study and helps interpret how the interplay between variables contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

In this study the conceptual framework explores the relationship between training and development (T&D) and work readiness within the EPWP context. The framework incorporates mediating components such as training needs analysis, training planning and design, implementation, and feedback and support, which strengthen the link between T&D and work-readiness outcomes. Figure 1 below illustrates the visual presentation of the conceptual framework.

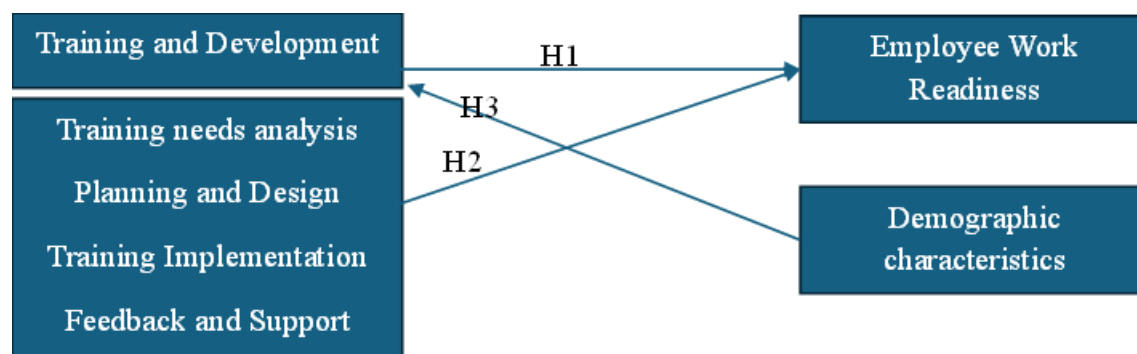


Figure 1. Visual Presentation of the conceptual framework

Input Variable: Training and Development

In this conceptual framework, training and development represents the primary input variable. T&D aims to equip participants with relevant skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance their ability to integrate into the labour market. Within the EPWP, training and development is structured to promote participants' employability and long-term career growth. For this study, T&D is understood through the following key components:

Training Needs Analysis

Training needs analysis ensures that the Training and Development offered aligns with participants' actual skills gaps and labour market requirements. A well-conducted Training Needs Analysis improves training relevance and effectiveness (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). It ensures that participants receive training that is directly applicable to job roles, thereby enhancing job readiness.

Training Planning and Design

This component focuses on how training programmes are structured, designed, and organised. Effective planning and design ensure that training content is clear, relevant, and aligned with learning outcomes. When programmes are well-designed, participants acquire skills more effectively and with greater confidence (Noe, 2020).

Training Implementation

Training implementation involves the actual delivery of training. High-quality implementation enhances participant engagement, knowledge transfer, and skill acquisition. Ahmed et al. (2019) emphasise that effective facilitation and delivery methods increase learner motivation and readiness for workplace demands.

Feedback and Support

Feedback and post-training support are essential for reinforcing learning, correcting misunderstandings, and building participant confidence. Continuous support strengthens the application of acquired skills and enhances workplace adaptability (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Outcome Variable: Work Readiness

Work readiness refers to the degree to which individuals possess the competencies, behaviours, and attitudes required for successful workplace integration. It includes confidence, adaptability, communication skills, professionalism, and the ability to manage workplace tasks effectively. According to Caballero and Walker (2010), work readiness is a holistic indicator of employability and transition-to-work success.

Mediating Role of Training and Development Components

The components of training and development Training Need Analysis, planning and design, implementation, and feedback/support act as mediating factors that

strengthen the relationship between Training and Development and work readiness. When these components are effectively managed, they ensure that the training is relevant, context-specific, and responsive to participant needs, thereby enhancing job readiness and employability outcomes.

1.10. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study intends to contribute to the current understanding and knowledge about the effectiveness of training and development on youth work-readiness provided by the EPWP in Mpumalanga Province. The study will also evaluate the literature with regards to the current perceived mismatch between the skills of new entry employees and the skills required by potential employers. The findings of this study will help various government-initiated training programmes to effectively design their training strategies to align with current labour market expectations and to prepare youth to be work-ready. This study will contribute positively to the training and development strategies provided by the EPWP in Mpumalanga Province.

1.11. CHAPTERS OUTLINE

The chapters of this thesis are presented as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces and gives the background of the study. It highlights the importance of training and development and how unemployment can be reduced. The problem statement of this research is presented together with the aims of the study. The research questions, objectives and hypotheses are presented.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature review of the study. It introduces the concept of training and development and gives theories of training and development provided by various scholars. The theoretical framework of training and development is explained in detail. The chapter further provides a detailed analysis of the concept of training and development.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of work-readiness and its definitions. Theoretical framework of work readiness is provided in detail. The chapter provides a

comprehensive overview of the nature and conditions of the 21st century work environment, which is characterised by technological advancement and globalisation.

Chapter 4 provides the research methodology employed in the study in terms of the research design, data gathering and measurement instruments as well as the ethical procedures and statistical analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the statistical findings of the research. It is presented through descriptive statistics which outlines the demographic variables and analyses the report of the mean and standard deviation of the constructs. It discusses inferential statistics which entails the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, multiple regression analysis and ANOVA.

Chapter 6 outlines the conclusions and limitations of the research and offers recommendations related to training and development and work- readiness.

1.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the value of training and development to improve the employability of and the work-readiness of young people. It points out the existing gap between the demands of the labour market and the educational system, implying that most of the current training initiatives frequently fall short of providing graduates with the competencies that employers demand. This chapter also outlined the research problem, aims, objectives, questions, and hypotheses of the study with an emphasis on examining the efficacy of the EPWP's training activities aimed at enhancing work-readiness. The purpose of the study is to evaluate how well the EPWP programmes meet the needs of the job market and how they affect young people's employability.

CHAPTER 2: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the job market characterised by rapid change and intense competition, training and development have emerged as vital tools for ensuring that the workforce remains relevant, adaptable and up to date (Pianda et al., 2024). Organisations operating in environments of technological disruption and structural change must invest in continuous learning and skills renewal among their employees (Chweu et al., 2024; Mobarak, 2019). Consequently, Training and Development initiatives are now considered strategic organisational investments rather than just routine HR activities they contribute to improved organisational performance and employee growth (Accelerate Management School, 2023; Bas, Bolos, Prieto et al., 2024).

For graduates entering the workforce, structured Training and Development programmes serve as a critical bridging mechanism between academic learning and the practical demands of the workplace (Reuben et al., 2025). Research shows that these programmes enhance graduates' work-readiness by equipping them with both technical competencies and behavioural skills required in professional settings (Mobarak, 2019). By incorporating experiential learning components such as hands-on projects, industry-aligned simulations, and mentorship, graduates are better able to translate theoretical knowledge into workplace practice, thereby narrowing the employment education gap (Ferreira et al., 2024).

In the South African context, this linkage between skills development and employability takes on special significance given persistent youth unemployment and mismatches between graduate skills and labour market needs (Chweu et al., 2024; Mobarak, 2019). Government initiatives such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) National Youth Service provide structured work-based experiences, training and development aimed at increasing youth employability, productivity and socio-economic contribution (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2024).

Given these dynamics, conducting a comprehensive literature review on training and development is essential for establishing the theoretical basis, empirical findings and

contextual relevance of how these initiatives employability of the youth. The following section will explore key theories, models and empirical studies that underlie the design and implementation of effective training and development programmes, with reference to youth-oriented initiatives in the South African environment.

2.2 DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and development are fundamental components of modern human resource management that aim to enhance employee effectiveness, performance, and future employability. In practice, training and development work together to equip employees with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to workplace changes (Nkwanyana, 2021). While the concepts are often used interchangeably, training typically focuses on short-term, specific skill acquisition, whereas development takes a broader, long-term perspective, preparing employees for future roles and responsibilities (Lawton et al., 2023; Nkwanyana, 2021).

2.2.1 Training

Various definitions of training provided by scholars emphasise that it is an intentional process aimed at enhancing employee skills, abilities and knowledge to perform tasks effectively. According to Nkwanyana (2021), training is a structured method for changing individuals' behaviours and attitudes to boost their capacity to achieve organisational objectives. Similarly, Binaben (2023) describes training as a method to enhance trainee's understanding of their roles by strengthening their knowledge, skills and abilities. Legodi (2019) presents a broader view, defining training as a deliberate effort to encourage learning in areas relevant to specific jobs. Likewise, Mabrouk (2021) describes training as an organised systematic approach that increases employees' abilities, skills and competency levels for more effective work.

2.2.2 Development

Lawton et al. (2023) describe development as a proactive approach aimed at enhancing future performance by equipping trainees with skills relevant for upcoming roles. According to Nkwanyana (2021), development is a comprehensive ongoing set

of activities designed to provide growth and enhancement of individuals' skills levels. Legodi (2019) suggests that interventions like training and development are important for enhancing the skills of individuals in an organisation.

2.2.3 Training and Development

Training and development are interrelated processes designed to improve both immediate job performance and future employability. They foster personal and professional growth, develop social intelligence, and enhance employees' adaptability to technological innovations and evolving workplace demands (Tahir et al., 2019; Gambo, 2015). Ngwenya (2010) defines the concept of training and development as intervention practices intended to improve the knowledge, abilities, and skills of participants. This author implies that training and development practices are meant to help individuals master defined areas of skills, knowledge, or tasks for long-term success. It gives participants an opportunity for growth to improve work-related qualities for the future. In the context of youth employability, structured training programmes, such as those offered by the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa, are crucial in preparing young people for workplace expectations and bridging the gap between education and employment.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of training and development has a long historical background unique from different concepts, and different researchers provide empirical theories of the construct. The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the Experiential Learning Theory and the systematic model of training and development. The following section will provide a detailed overview of the Experiential Learning Theory and Systematic Model of training and development.

2.3.1 Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)

Experiential learning theory, developed by psychologist David Kolb in 1984. Kolb's experiential learning theory highlights the crucial role of experience in the learning process, emphasizing both practical engagement and reflective thinking as essential for developing competencies. According to the theory, knowledge is constructed as

individuals gain and reflect on their experiences. David Kolb's experiential learning theory draws on pragmatic philosophy and early 20th-century psychological learning theories. Building on the ideas of thinkers like John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, Kolb argued that knowledge is generated through the process of transforming experiences (Kolb, 1984). John Dewey, a key figure in experiential learning, highlighted the centrality of experience in education, asserting that meaningful learning occurs when individuals actively engage with their environment and reflect on their actions (Dewey, 1976). Kurt Lewin contributed the notion that learning is a dynamic process shaped by interactions between the individual and their surroundings, while Jean Piaget focused on the influence of cognitive development and mental processes in knowledge acquisition (Piaget, 1976). Building on these foundational ideas, Kolb (1984) proposed a model that integrates concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, forming a continuous learning cycle.

The experiential learning model presents a holistic view of learning, linking experience, perception, cognition, and behavior, and serves as a framework for both educational practice and the enhancement of personal and professional development (Kolb, 1984). Supporting this view, Felder (1988) suggests that trainers should expose learners to diverse approaches to problem-solving and critical thinking, thereby preparing them to navigate real-world challenges with adaptability and innovation (Almeida & Nascimento, 2024).

Experiential learning is more than merely learning but doing; it involves a transformative process in which individuals implement, evaluate, and explore new possibilities to modify their behaviour and enhance their skills. Kolb emphasized that learning is an ongoing process grounded in diverse experiences. He argued that ideas are not static or unchangeable, but are continuously shaped and reshaped through practical engagement and reflection (Egan et al., 2023)

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model explains how individuals learn through a cyclical process of acquiring and transforming knowledge. The cycle consists of four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. Knowledge is gained through direct experience and reflection, conceptualized through analysis, and tested through practical application.

This model provides a systematic framework for understanding the iterative and integrative nature of learning.

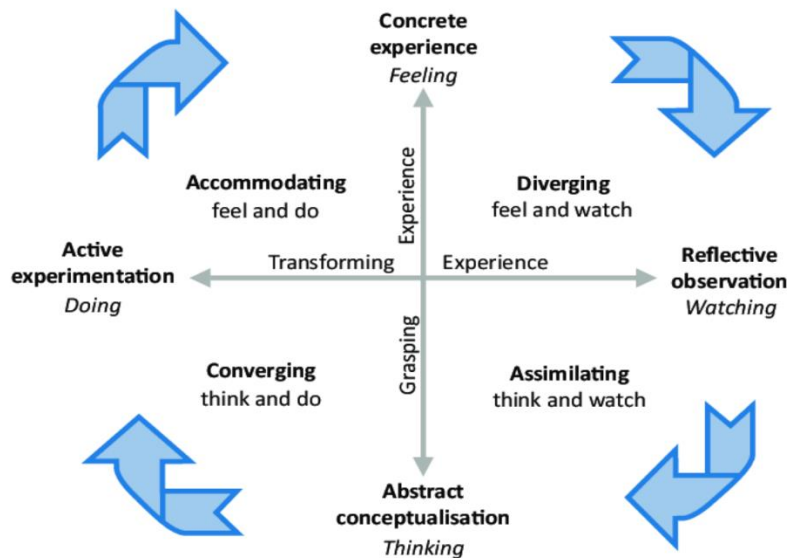


Figure 2: Experiential Learning Theory

Stage 1: Concrete Experience

In the initial stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Concrete Experience (CE), learners engage with new situations or revisit prior experiences. This phase emphasizes direct involvement and emotional engagement, with learners fully immersed in the present context (Kolb, 1984). Learning at this stage is grounded in interpersonal interactions and real-life experiences, with a focus on intuitive understanding rather than systematic analysis. The knowledge gained from these experiences provides the foundation for later reflection and conceptualization. Kolb (1984) asserts that learning is most effective when individuals actively participate in the experience, using their own perceptions and reactions as a primary source of understanding. This stage marks the entry point of the learning cycle, where information is acquired directly from the environment and social interactions.

Stage 2: Reflective Observation

The second stage of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Reflective Observation (RO), involves critically examining and analysing the concrete experiences previously encountered. At this stage, learners reflect on their experiences from multiple perspectives, integrating new insights with prior knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Reflection facilitates deeper understanding and the development of new ideas and concepts. During this phase, learners evaluate the significance of their experiences, consider alternative approaches, and explore different viewpoints. Kolb (1984) emphasizes that analytical thinking and the capacity to consider diverse perspectives are essential for converting experience into practical and meaningful knowledge. This stage serves as a period of introspection, enabling individuals to contextualize and fully comprehend their experiences.

Stage 3: Abstract Conceptualization

In the third stage of Kolb's learning cycle, Abstract Conceptualization (AC), learners convert their reflections into theoretical concepts and cognitive models. This phase is marked by the integration of ideas and the development of mental frameworks that can be applied in new contexts (Kolb, 1984). During Abstract Conceptualization, learners formulate hypotheses and construct theories, employing logic and reasoning to achieve a systematic understanding of their experiences. This stage emphasizes intellectual engagement, allowing individuals to interpret experiences in broader, more conceptual terms. Conceptualization is a critical and creative process, wherein reflections are organized into coherent structures that inform future experimentation. Ultimately, this phase prepares learners to apply their ideas practically and test their theoretical insights in real-world situations.

Stage 4: Active Experimentation

The fourth stage, Active Experimentation (AE), entails applying abstract concepts and theoretical models in practical, real-world contexts. In this phase, learners test their assumptions and implement solutions derived from the ideas developed during Abstract Conceptualization (Kolb, 1984). Active Experimentation enables knowledge to be applied, evaluated, and refined through direct action. Learners assess the

effectiveness of their theories in practice, adjusting as necessary based on immediate feedback. This stage represents the translation of theory into practice, completing the experiential learning cycle and initiating a new cycle with subsequent concrete experiences.

By embedding Kolb's experiential learning principles, training and development programmes such as those implemented through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) National Youth Service enable graduates to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and workplace practice. This alignment ensures that participants not only acquire technical and behavioural competencies but also develop adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities necessary in a rapidly changing job market (Kolb, 1984; Egan et al.,2023). Therefore, the experiential learning approach provides a robust theoretical underpinning for designing and evaluating youth-focused training initiatives that aim to enhance employability, productivity, and socio-economic contribution in the South African labour market.

2.3.2 Systematic model to training and development.

The systematic model of training and development was conceptualised during the 1950s and 1960s, a period marked by rapid industrial expansion and growing recognition of the need for a structured approach to employee learning. During this time, organisations began to shift from viewing training as a reactive or incidental activity to perceiving it as a scientific and goal-oriented process (Noe,2020). This transformation was strongly influenced by developments in systems theory, instructional design, and human resource development (HRD), which collectively underscored the importance of designing, implementing, and evaluating training in a methodical and evidence-based manner to achieve measurable performance outcomes (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Noe, 2017).

The theoretical roots of the model can be traced to early scholars such as Robert Mager (1962), who emphasised the importance of formulating clear and measurable learning objectives, and Donald Kirkpatrick (1959), whose Four-Level Evaluation Model provided a systematic approach to assessing the effectiveness of training interventions. These foundational ideas were later consolidated into a more

comprehensive framework that integrated training needs analysis, programme design, implementation, and evaluation into a continuous learning cycle (Noe,2020).

By the 1970s, the systematic approach gained substantial traction, particularly within military, industrial, and corporate training environments. Scholars such as Raymond A. Noe and Irwin Goldstein further advanced the model by formalising the process into four core stages Analysis, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation (ADIE) which offered a structured sequence for managing training programmes. Later developments extended this framework into the widely adopted ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), broadening its application to fields such as education, public administration, and organisational development (Salas et al., 2012; Armstrong, 2020).

Systematic model refers to training as a programme delivered in a methodical organised manner with the goal of increasing job performance (Noe,2010). According to Dhawan (2023), systematic approach is a technique for overseeing training initiatives. It is a rational approach to figuring out what people need to know and be able to do in a certain trade or career. A methodical approach to training guarantees that employees possess the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes needed to perform their jobs. Legodi (2019) submits that a systematic model to training guarantees that employees are prepared for their jobs by possessing the essential information, abilities, and attitudes. The goal of the model in the workplace is to enhance individuals' skills while ensuring the current and future performance of the workforce meets the business's needs. Systematic model is divided into four phases, namely need assessment, design evaluation (Ndou, 2015; Legodi, 2019; Noe,2010).



Figure 3. Systematic model to training

Phase 1: Need assessment.

The first step in every training plan is to identify the target groups and to evaluate their training requirements by using a variety of analytical techniques to accurately identify the nature of the problems. The training needs assessment process plays a strategic role by offering clear direction on which professional skill gaps need to be addressed and outlines the desired profiles of future trainees. It arises from underdeveloped skills, lack of knowledge, or inappropriate worker attitudes. Training needs refers to a gap between an employee's current performance and the level of performance expected by an organisation (Ferreira & Abbad, 2012). The methods used to evaluate training needs vary from general to specialised (Ndou, 2015). This phase is divided into three levels, namely organisational, operational, and individual analysis levels (Ndou, 2015; Legodi 2019; Sing, 2002).

Organisational analysis

New workplace demands and rapid technological advancements are transforming professional training, highlighting the importance of continuous learning for workers to keep pace with evolving production needs and shorter product life cycles (Ferreira & Abbad, 2012). Organisational analysis focuses on factors such as changes in the

organisational strategy or environment that may impact on training needs (Nkwanyana, 2021). Training needs analysis performed at the organisational level reviews the organisation's strategies and operational plans. It emphasises that trainers are required to have a strategic picture of the organisation's business purposes, performance, and impending direction. The purpose of such analysis is to pinpoint the organisation's main problem areas that might be solved by training). This 2002). This current study identifies lack of work experience and skill mismatch as a problem that most organisations are facing current study graduates. Training and development programme are regarded as the main strategy to equip young people with relevant skills to be productive within an organisation.

Operational analysis

Operational analysis is an analytical approach to assessing the jobs people do in greater depth. This includes details such as the duties they undertake, their regions of responsibility, and their relationships with others. The purpose is to define the job to be performed. According to Mabrouk (2021) this phase is a structured process that outlines and specifies the responsibilities and tasks associated with specific jobs, highlighting their requirements and significance in the organisational structure. It also assesses the job's level based on the activities involved, the tools needed to perform the activities, and the conditions under which the job is carried out (Legodi, 2019).

Individual analysis

This focuses on the employee and is used to identify employees for training. *Individual analysis* has two purposes: it determines which individuals currently require training and development and what skills, information, abilities, or attitudes must be acquired or developed now and in the future. *Individual analysis* is critical to ensuring that employees who require training receive it. According to Nkwanyana (2021), it is essential to focus on the specific skills and abilities a person requires to effectively perform their job. Nkwanyana (2021) emphasises that a personal analysis process should address not only the individual's current training needs but also identify specific training and development strategies to help them meet performance standards that align with organisational goals. To meet the goal of enhancing performance, training should improve professional knowledge and skills at both individual and team levels. It should prepare staff to effectively address new challenges, foster positive changes

in attitudes, and aim to blend individual competency development with the advancement of organisational goals (Mabrouk,2021).

Phase 2: Design

Designing a training programme is a key component in a structured training approach. The programme should be developed with active involvement from personnel across different levels, and consulting training experts is advisable when possible. The design should be tailored to meet the specific objectives of individuals or groups as required (Dhawan, 2023). Designing training programmes involves assessing participant skills levels, identifying resource individuals, and choosing suitable methods and techniques for the training. This is where subject matter experts and programme designers collaborate to create appropriate training materials aimed at achieving the intended training objectives (Mabrouk, 2021). According to Legodi (2019) this level of a systematic approach to training is focused on designing training activities that make the most use of available training resources. These must be planned within limits such as budgets, operational demands, facilities, and people availability. Planned training is a conscious effort to achieve the learnings required for better job performance. To properly administer a programme, the trainer and trainee need to adhere to the guidelines of the training plan.

Phase 3: Delivery

Delivery or implementation is the phase at which people engage in learning or training activities. This necessitates the trainee's full, wholehearted participation, aided by expert facilitation (Ndou, 2015). Delivery and implementation is the phase where plans are put into practice. Executing an organisational strategy for training, much like in strategic business planning, is arguably the most crucial step in training and development. This stage is overseen by a qualified, experienced, and skilled training team to ensure effective delivery of the training course (Mabrouk, 2021). The trainees are given the appropriate training; this part of the process incorporates the use of learning tools and materials that are created during the design.

Phase 4: Evaluation

The objective of this phase is to ascertain whether participating in the training and development programme resulted in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge for the trainees. This step appraises and measures the efficacy and outcomes of the training. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a training programme is determined by the participants' perceptions. Their feedback is valuable in the evaluation of current programmes and enhancing future ones. A standard feedback form is provided at the end of the training programme. To determine whether the trainee's performance is up to the standard, they evaluate it. This may depend on the measurement's terms of reference and data, as well as how extensively they are shared among the involved parties (trainers, trainees, general management, line management, training agencies, etc.)

The use of a systematic approach to training model provides notable advantages over traditional curriculum-driven training by enhancing consistency, efficiency, and management control. The model guarantees that employees are prepared for their jobs and possess the essential information, abilities, and attitudes they need. This model is relevant for the current study as it helps individuals anticipate and adapt to future competencies, attitudes and abilities needed to meet the objectives of organisations. Through a systematic approach to training, the competency and skill requirements for all roles within an organisation can be identified and fulfilled. The model guarantees that trainees can adapt to a constantly evolving work environment, emerging technologies and organisational structures (Noe, 2010).

2.4 YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The European Union's Strategy 2020 highlights three key dimensions of economic productivity: smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, each of which relies heavily on effective skills development and the widespread dissemination of information among citizens. Achieving these objectives necessitates a comprehensive education, training and development, the broad circulation of knowledge across multiple sectors, and targeted programmes designed to cultivate a research-driven and innovation-focused economy (Dhobha & Madondo, 2024). Economic growth strategies in many developed

nations have historically been driven by the Industrial Revolution, underpinned by deliberate and strategic efforts to foster indigenous innovation across various productive sectors, alongside substantial investments in skill development (Awode & Oduola,2025). These combined efforts contributed to significant gains in total factor productivity, ultimately stimulating sustained economic growth and development (Mabaso & Ontong ,2025). Similarly, as Awode and Oduola (2025) observe, the growth patterns of low-income countries follow a comparable logic. Economic advancement in these contexts relies on the integration of capital, skills, and knowledge, as well as the organisation and generation of localized expertise, which enhances the capabilities and competitiveness of organisations.

Skills development in South Africa represents a fundamental strategy for enhancing societal living standards (Nkwanyana, 2021). A skilled workforce allows South Africa to compete globally by attracting investment and fostering innovation. Companies with competent and skilled employees can adopt advanced technologies, improve processes, and produce high-value goods and services (Reuben et al.,2025). This enhances export potential, foreign direct investment (FDI), and overall economic expansion. Training and skills development ensure that the workforce is equipped to respond to global market trends and technological disruption, strengthening the country's economic positioning (Lawton et al.,2021). Consequently, continuous training and development initiatives are not only necessary for operational efficiency but are also strategically essential for achieving broader socio-economic goals (Pianda et al.,2024).

Furthermore, skills development is a critical mechanism for addressing youth unemployment and underemployment, which remain significant socio-economic challenges in South Africa. Reports from the Southern African Society for Cooperative Education (2017) emphasize that young people face considerable barriers to securing employment, necessitating comprehensive, multi-stakeholder interventions. By developing a coordinated national youth development strategy, government, industry, and labour sectors can collectively enhance the employability of young people, particularly those historically marginalized by apartheid-era inequities (Mayer et al. ,2011). According to Mabaso and Ontong (2025) skill development strategies not only facilitate youth participation in the labour market but also contribute to long-term

economic growth and social inclusion, demonstrating that skills development serves both immediate operational needs and broader national development imperatives.

According to Geza et al. (2022) Youth skill development is crucial for promoting accountability and demonstrates a commitment to creating conditions that enable young people to take control of their own lives and well-being. Mason (2024) emphasises that developing skills among youth is crucial for fostering social cohesion and societal stability. By equipping young people with the knowledge and capabilities needed to succeed, the likelihood of their involvement in criminal activities or persistent poverty is reduced. Education and targeted skills training offer direction and a sense of purpose, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient society. For numerous young South Africans, particularly those from underprivileged communities, participation in skills development programmes can be transformative. Such initiatives create opportunities to disrupt cycles of deprivation and lay the foundation for improved life prospects (Geza et al.,2022).

In conclusion, the strategic investment in skills development in South Africa is indispensable for strengthening human capital, improving socio-economic challenges, and promoting equitable economic participation (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016). According to Pianda et al. (2024) Training and development initiatives must therefore be systematic, targeted, and responsive to labour market demands to ensure that employees both current and future are equipped to meet the complex challenges of a dynamic socio-economic environment.

2.5 TRAINING INTERVENTION AND PROGRAMMES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

A defining feature of South Africa's post-apartheid democratic era has been the emphasis on developing the skills of public servants. This focus emerged from the recognition that a significant portion of black employees in public institutions historically lacked the required competencies. To address this challenge, various programmes and frameworks were established to guide skills development within the public sector (Gcezengana et al., 2022). The effective training and development of public servants is essential for delivering high-quality services to citizens, particularly in contexts characterised by socio-economic inequality and complex service delivery demands (Zweni, 2023). The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery

(1997) emphasizes that a reformed South African public service will be judged by its ability to provide effective, accessible, and citizen-centred services. Consequently, well-structured training and development programmes not only equip public servants with the skills required to perform their duties efficiently but also foster a shared understanding of organisational values and strategic objectives (Magwenyana, 2020).

Training and development in the public sector serve multiple purposes: they enhance individual competencies, strengthen organisational performance, and provide employees with a platform to address workplace challenges proactively. By promoting continuous learning and adaptability, Training and Development interventions prepare public servants to respond effectively to changing societal needs and evolving institutional mandates (Lawton et al., 2023). Employees who are equipped with the right skills, and who are willing to engage in lifelong learning, are better positioned to navigate structural changes and contribute meaningfully to public service delivery (Nkwanyana, 2021).

In South Africa, the government has implemented several policies and legislative frameworks to institutionalise skills development within the public sector. Key instruments include the Public Service Act, Section 197 of the Constitution, the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme, the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008, the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006, and the National Youth Commission Act, 1996. These frameworks collectively aim to address skill gaps, ensure compliance with service delivery standards, and promote lifelong learning among public servants (Magwenyana, 2020; Nkwanyana, 2021).

Training and development interventions extend beyond formal education systems and are designed to equip employees with practical skills that enhance employability and professional performance (Kluve et al., 2016). In the South African context, such initiatives are also a key strategy for integrating young people into the workforce. Mputle (2022) notes that Training and Development programmes serve as vehicles to impart relevant workplace skills, yet challenges remain regarding accessibility and effectiveness, particularly for youth-focused employment services. Ismail (2015) highlights that existing job services programmes are often neither widely accessible nor adequately tailored to meet the specific needs of young job seekers.

To address these challenges, the establishment of youth-oriented training and skills development programmes has become increasingly important. Nyangani (2022) asserts that such initiatives aim to bridge the gap between education and the labour market by providing practical work experience and fostering social and human capital. Similarly, Setambule (2022) emphasises that targeted Training and Development programmes enable young people to leverage their socio-economic potential, improve their employability, and pursue opportunities for self-employment and income generation. These efforts are particularly relevant in contexts of high youth unemployment and labour market mismatch, as they equip graduates with the competencies required to compete effectively for both short-term and long-term employment.

Overall, training and development in the public sector functions as a strategic tool not only for enhancing service delivery but also for empowering employees, particularly the youth, to navigate dynamic labour market conditions (Gcezegana et al., 2022). By embedding Training and Development within institutional frameworks and aligning programmes with societal needs, the South African public service can strengthen workforce capacity, promote innovation, and improve organisational performance in a competitive global environment (Kluve et al., 2016). The South African government has implemented several targeted training programmes in the public sector such as the Community Work Programmes, Expanded Public Works Programme and Youth Employment Service to enhance the skills of youth people in South Africa. The following section will provide a detailed explanation of the Training and Development programmes.

2.5.1 Community Works Programme (CWP)

The South African government launched the Community Works Programme in 2006 to address the ongoing problem of high unemployment, poverty, and inequality. This programme offers a safety net for individuals residing in marginalised areas with limited access to employment opportunities. The CWP gives eligible members an employment safety net by guaranteeing them a minimum number of regular workdays per month. The minimum CWP pay is set by law, and individuals put in two days of work per week. By concentrating on tasks that communities require, sometimes

referred to as 'useful work', the CWP has evolved into a tool for community development that enhances living standards in underprivileged areas.

Participants receive a basic level of income security to supplement their current means of subsistence. The National Youth Development Agency played a huge role in making sure that all the significant stakeholders the public, commercial and civil society sectors prioritise youth development and work together to find and execute long-term solutions. Through local reference committees (LRCs), the CWP employs community engagement procedures to determine 'useful work'. 'Useful work' is defined as any action that advances general social welfare. The activity is multi-sectoral, spanning departmental mandates and domains and addresses local objectives established through community engagement procedures.

The Cooperative Governance Report (2023) highlights the creation of training programs that link participants to opportunities and training institutions, enabling them to gain further education and skills. They should also help participants to identify potential career routes that they can pursue after completing the CWP. It is not necessary for training programmes to be SAQA accredited because of the nature and scope of CWP training.

2.5.2 Expanded Public Work Programme (EPWP)

The government programme known as the EPWP was built on the reconstruction and development plan (1994), the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), and Chapter 11 of the National Development Plan (NDP). The programme is a medium- to long-term plan to establish a foundation for the battle against unemployment, crime, and corruption as well as for the establishment of decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods, health, education, and rural and food security. The EPWP was created during the Growth and Development Summit (GDS) in 2003. It is a programme run by provincial governments to provides employment opportunities to assist young people in developing their skills through temporary work, therefore facilitating their entry into the workforce (Hoene, 2019). The National Department of Public Works, Road and Infrastructure oversees the programme.

The EPWP programme is implemented in five sectors, namely infrastructure, environmental and culture, social and non-state. To increase the number of job

opportunities available to young people across all sectors, projects with high employment potential are selected and benchmarked.

- The infrastructure sector involves the building and upkeep of public infrastructures using labour-intensive techniques. This means giving local unemployed people employment chances by using labour-intensive construction techniques. It offers participants instruction and skills development.
- The social sector focuses on enhancing the quality of life and achieving human development goals in the fields of education, health, welfare, safety, and protection. The sector's participants are given the chance to pursue training to strengthen their capacity to provide social services while offering possibilities for career paths or graduation to pursue formal and self-employment.
- The environment and culture sector engages individuals to work on initiatives that improve local environments through programmes led by specific agencies. Building South Africa's natural and cultural heritage allows the industry to dynamically utilise it to provide both short- and long-term employment opportunities and social benefits.
- The non-state sector programme was added to the EPWP as the fourth sector during Phase 2 so that collaborations with non-profit organizations (NPOs) could be used to provide job opportunities. Two programmes, namely the Community Work Program (CWP) and the Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) Programme, make up this sector. Since 2009, the EPWP expansion strategy has included the NPO Programme, which uses a wage subsidy to aid non-state organizations in creating job opportunities. The following programmes have been established by the culture and environment sector: the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), Beautification, Working on Waste (WOW) and Food for Waste (FFW).

2.5.3 Youth Employment Service (YES)

The Youth Employment Service (YES) is a cooperative effort involving public and private sectors, labour unions and civil society. The Youth Employment Service (YES) was formally launched and founded as a business-led non-profit organisation (NPO). It was mandated by President Ramaphosa with the goal of enabling one million

unemployed African youth (between the ages of 18 and 35) by getting them into their first respectable paying jobs.

The YES initiative encourages corporations to support youth up-skilling through job placement and empowerment in areas of national concern (Roosevelt, 2020). The youth's employability for economic prosperity is the main goal of the YES initiative. Designing learning and development programmes in the form of approved and non-accredited training courses is one way that YES provides employment and training opportunities for unemployed youth. YES, encourages a culture of ongoing innovation and thinks that disruption can alter the status quo.

Ismail (2017) highlights that the aim of the YES programme is to provide young people with training inputs that change their behaviours through acting as teachers, mentors and role models in addition to providing them with work experience. Content from the YES digital job preparation programme fills in the gaps in important socio-emotional skills and useful work-readiness abilities. The YES has adhered to multiple educational trends through a learning model that incorporates bite-sized micro learning through social e-learning and mobile learning.

2.6 POLICIES AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Since 1994, following centuries of colonial and apartheid-era policies that marginalized and limited the ability of the black majority to participate in socio-economic development, South Africa has established a supportive legal and policy framework aimed at restoring and strengthening the nation's human capital capacity (Khunoethe & Reddy, 2023). Governments and institutions have made some progress over time in trying to come up with practical solutions for the lack of skills development which has led to critical unemployment. Unemployment and poverty are two major problems South Africa faces as a developing nation. As a result of this scenario, the government must now use scarce resources to try and address the demands of an increasingly vulnerable population (Habiyaemye et al., 2022). The South African government has emphasised training and development as a strategy to promote economic growth and sustain a skilled and capable public service. This commitment is evident in the various laws and policy measures the government has implemented to tackle skills shortages (Nkwanyana, 2021). The numerous laws, legislative policies and regulations that have

been passed to support skills development, demonstrate the importance of the topic (Hoaeane, 2019). The following section presents South Africa's legislation and policies.

2.6.1 National Development Plan 2030

The National Development Plan (NDP), which was approved by the National Cabinet in 2012, provides a framework for the efforts needed to significantly lower poverty and inequality in South Africa by 2030. The strategy acknowledges that creating a future for South Africa's youth is crucial and that the country's youth are currently disproportionately affected by unemployment. The proposal offers a chance to strengthen employment, accelerate economic growth, and lessen poverty. (National Development Plan, 2011:30).

2.6.2 The National Youth Commission Act, 1996

Former President Mandela and the South African government formed the National Youth Commission (NYC) as a statutory entity on 16 June 1996. The National Youth Commission Act (1996) established it as a regulatory agency as part of the government's effort to create a comprehensive plan to address the problems and difficulties that South African youth face. The NYC acts as a hub where the combined efforts of government, businesses, and training providers enable programmes to assist in finding jobs for thousands of young underprivileged South Africans. The NYC encourages the cross-sector cooperation of all stakeholders for the progress of young people to guarantee integration of youth development initiatives across the nation.

2.6.3 White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994

The WPRDP seeks to establish a policy framework that fosters human resource management practices to create efficient and effective public services capable of driving economic and social transformation. In 1997, national departments and regional governments employed around 1.2 million citizens, representing over 50% of total public spending (Nkwanyana, 2021). People are the most valuable asset of a country, and the effective and strategic management of human capital should be the foundation of broader transformation in public service (Legodi, 2021). For public service to achieve operational and developmental objectives largely depends on how

efficiently and effectively employees perform their roles. Regular training for employees is essential to attain this goal (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997). Therefore, to achieve departmental results and workforce development, the WPRDP should be viewed in a holistic manner.

2.6.4 The Higher Education and Training Act no 101 of 1997

According to sections 3 (1) and (2) of the Higher Education Act no 101 of 1997, the minister of education must decide on higher education policy after consultation with the council on higher education (CHE), then publish it in the government Gazette and present it to parliament. To govern higher education by establishing, organizing, and carrying out the responsibilities of a council on higher education, as well as to establish, supervise, and fund public higher education institutions. According to section 3 (1) and (2) of the Higher Education Act, each national and provincial department of state, each publicly funded science, research and professional council, as well as each higher education institution are required to give the CHE any information that it may need to carry out its duties under the Act.

2.6.5 The National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a system that formally documents the credits associated with various levels of learning achievement, ensuring that the skills and knowledge gained are recognised nationwide. It comprises a set of principles and guidelines for recording learner achievements, facilitating the national acknowledgment of acquired skills and knowledge and promoting an integrated system that supports lifelong learning. The NQF aims to establish a unified integrated national framework for learning achievements (SABPP, 2019). The NQF is a unified, integrated national framework for educational success, simplifying access, mobility, and progression within career, training, and educational pathways. The South African Qualification Authority is provided by the Minister of Higher Education and Training through the National Qualification Framework to expedite the elimination of past unjust discriminations in jobs, training, and educational opportunities.

2.6.6 Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006

The purpose of this Act is to ensure that students gain essential knowledge, practical skills, and applicable vocational and occupational competence, equipping them with the attributes needed for employment, entry into specific vocations, occupations, or trades, or admission to higher education institutions (SABPP, 2019). This Act is applicable to all established educational institutions. The Act governs continuing education and training by establishing public technical and vocational education and training colleges, as well as public community education and training colleges. It outlines the governance and funding of these institutions, ensures the employment of staff at these colleges, and provides for the registration of private colleges offering continuing education and training qualifications and partial qualifications (Sing, 2002). Additionally, continuing education and training promote quality education, facilitate transitional arrangements, and include provisions for the repeal or amendment of existing laws.

2.7 PRIVATE SECTORS INTERVENTION ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Youth unemployment remains a critical socioeconomic challenge in South Africa, necessitating interventions beyond government-led programmes. The private sector plays an increasingly significant role in complementing public efforts by providing innovative solutions to enhance the employability of young people (Reddy et al., 2022). These interventions often target skill development, entrepreneurship, and practical work experience, addressing both the lack of skills and limited labor market exposure among youth (Ismail, 2017). This section critically examines the strategies employed by the private sector to support youth employability skills, focusing on entrepreneurship promotion and on-the-job training initiatives.

2.7.1 Access to Finance and Business Support Services

Access to finance remains one of the most significant barriers to youth entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging economies such as South Africa. Young entrepreneurs often lack collateral, credit history, or financial literacy, which limits their ability to secure traditional bank loans (Fatoki & Garwe, 2010). The private sector has

responded to this gap by providing a variety of financial and non-financial support services aimed at enhancing youth entrepreneurial capacity.

Microfinance institutions, venture capital funds, and corporate foundations increasingly target youth-led start-ups by offering small loans, seed funding, and grants designed for high-risk entrepreneurs (Ogujiuba et al., 2025). For instance, the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation in South Africa provides both financial support and structured mentorship to young entrepreneurs, enabling them to launch and scale businesses successfully (Setambule,2022). Similarly, the SAB Foundation's Tholoana Enterprise Programme combines financial assistance with business advisory services, such as business plan development, market access facilitation, and financial management training (Nyangani,2022).

Beyond financial support, private sector initiatives increasingly focus on capacity building through training, coaching, and access to professional networks. Business incubators and accelerators provide infrastructure, mentorship, and exposure to investors, fostering innovation and sustainable growth among young enterprises (Zwane et al., 2021). These interventions are crucial for transforming entrepreneurial ideas into viable businesses, thereby enhancing youth employability and contributing to national economic growth.

2.7.2 Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a key mechanism for fostering youth employment and driving economic growth. By cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset, young people can create employment opportunities for themselves and others, contributing to broader socioeconomic development (Nyangani, 2022). In South Africa, private sector initiatives, such as financial support, incubator programmes, and mentorship opportunities, aim to enhance youth entrepreneurial capacity. For example, the SAB Foundation's Tholoana Enterprise Programme provides funding, mentorship, and business development support to small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), with a focus on women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities (Mputle,2022).

Research underscores the critical link between entrepreneurship and job creation. Chidiebere et al. (2014) argue that entrepreneurial activity stimulates economic

productivity, enhances the utilization of labor and capital, and improves overall quality of life. Similarly, Zwane et al. (2021) emphasize that nurturing youth entrepreneurship is essential for addressing structural socioeconomic challenges and promoting economic development. This requires supportive policy frameworks, regulatory environments, and education systems that integrate entrepreneurship skills into curricula.

Empirical evidence also demonstrates a negative relationship between entrepreneurship and youth unemployment. Kheriravar and Qazvini (2012) note that increases in entrepreneurial activity reduce unemployment levels, both through the creation of new businesses (the “entrepreneurial effect”) and by offering alternative employment opportunities for the unemployed (the “refugee effect”). The Global Employment Trends for Youth (2024) further highlight that fostering high-growth and innovative entrepreneurship significantly contributes to private sector strategies aimed at reducing unemployment. By incentivizing youth to start and scale businesses, private sector initiatives have the potential to lower unemployment rates sustainably while contributing to broader economic empowerment (Mabeba, 2019).

2.7.3 On-the job learning and training

Beyond entrepreneurship, the private sector plays a pivotal role in skills development and practical training, addressing the persistent skills mismatch in the South African labor market. Private enterprises are often better equipped than government institutions to align training programmes with industry requirements and technological advancements, thereby enhancing the employability of young workers (Mputle, 2022; McGlick et al., 2015).

Apprenticeships, internships, and learnerships represent key mechanisms through which the private sector provides structured, paid work experience. Incentive schemes, such as tax deductions for firms offering learnership programmes, further encourage private investment in youth skills development (Roosevelt, 2020). Partnerships between businesses and educational institutions facilitate practical training in areas such as coding, plumbing, welding, and fashion design, offering youth critical skills that directly respond to labor market demands. These initiatives also

address broader social challenges, including poverty and crime, by providing pathways to stable employment and economic inclusion (Roosevelt, 2020).

Critically, such interventions underscore the complementary nature of private sector engagement with national employment strategies. By providing targeted skills training and workplace exposure, private enterprises enhance the capacity of young people to secure employment, while simultaneously contributing to national economic competitiveness and workforce development (Mejia et al., 2015).

2.7.4 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for Youth Employability

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) represent a strategic approach to addressing youth unemployment by combining the resources, expertise, and networks of government, private firms, and civil society. These partnerships leverage private sector efficiency and innovation alongside government support, creating programmes that are both scalable and sustainable (Ismail, 2017).

For example, in South Africa, initiatives such as the Youth Employment Service (YES) programme involve collaboration between large corporations, SMEs, and government departments to place young people in structured employment or learnership opportunities. These programmes provide training, mentorship, and paid work experience, effectively bridging the gap between education and labor market demands (Roosevelt, 2020).

The success of PPPs in enhancing youth employability is closely linked to their scalability and sustainability. Scalable interventions are those that can be replicated across regions or sectors, while sustainable programmes maintain impact without continuous external support. Critical factors for success include shared objectives among stakeholders, clear governance structures, effective monitoring systems, and the alignment of interventions with labor market needs (McGlick et al., 2015). PPPs also benefit from private sector investment in technological infrastructure, training facilities, and mentorship networks, which strengthen the employability pipeline for youth.

2.7.5 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Policy Implications

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential to determine the impact of private sector youth employability interventions and inform policy development. Monitoring and Evaluation systems assess outcomes such as increased employability, business sustainability, entrepreneurial growth, and reductions in unemployment rates among youth participants (Zwane et al., 2021).

Studies indicate that while many private sector programmes yield positive short-term outcomes such as skill acquisition, entrepreneurship development, and job placements long-term sustainability remains a challenge due to inconsistent funding, limited scalability, and weak integration with national labor policies (Mabeba, 2019). Lessons learned suggest that programmes should adopt evidence-based strategies, integrate continuous feedback mechanisms, and align objectives with broader socio-economic goals.

Policy implications of these findings are significant. Governments are encouraged to provide enabling environments through regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, and integration of private sector programmes with national youth employment strategies. For example, embedding entrepreneurship education in schools and tertiary institutions, providing tax incentives for firms offering youth apprenticeships, and supporting microfinance access can amplify the impact of private sector interventions (Mejia et al., 2015).

Ultimately, rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation allows stakeholders to identify gaps, replicate successful models, and scale interventions that demonstrate tangible improvements in youth employability. Such alignment between private sector initiatives and national strategies ensures that interventions are both effective and sustainable in addressing youth unemployment in South Africa (Mabizela & Zwane, 2023).

2.8 ORGANISATIONAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and development (T&D) represent a critical strategic tool for both organisational growth and national economic advancement (Khunoethe & Reddy, 2023). A skilled workforce not only enhances individual employability but also strengthens the competitiveness of businesses and industries, contributing to broader societal benefits such as poverty alleviation and social mobility (Lee, 2025). As global economies shift towards knowledge and technology intensive industries, organisations that prioritise skills development are better positioned to maintain competitiveness, innovate, and respond to rapidly changing market demands (Nkwanyana, 2021).

2.8.1 Organisational Benefits of Training and Development

From an organisational perspective, training and development serve as a cornerstone for maintaining and enhancing human potential within the workforce. Mason (2024) asserts that training and development programmes ensure employees acquire relevant knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing productivity and overall organisational performance. Similarly, Gcezengana et al. (2022) notes that such programmes enable organisations to maximise employee potential, improve operational efficiency, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

Well-designed training and development initiatives equip employees with the technical and managerial competencies required to navigate dynamic work environments. In modern workplaces, characterised by rapid technological innovation and global competition, employees must continually adapt to new tools, systems, and processes (Nkwanyana, 2021). By providing targeted training, organisations enable employees to maintain high performance standards, improve problem-solving capabilities, and contribute meaningfully to organisational goals.

Furthermore, training and development positively influence employee motivation, engagement, and morale. Geza et al. (2022) emphasises that investment in employees' professional growth fosters commitment, loyalty, and a sense of value, which in turn drives innovation and enhances organisational culture. Trained employees demonstrate improved decision-making, collaboration, and adaptability, which are critical in sustaining long-term organisational performance.

2.8.2 Economic Benefits of Training and Development

The economy of South Africa relies on three types of capital: physical, financial, and intellectual, with intellectual capital encompassing non-financial intangible assets, including human capital, as a fundamental component. Human capital represents investments in people's skill (Dhobha & Madondo, 2024). Skill development, improves the quality of labour, facilitates the dissemination of new knowledge, and strengthens workers' capacities to adopt and apply emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and blockchain (Mabaso & Ontong, 2025). Training and development programmes have substantial macroeconomic implications. A well-trained workforce contributes to higher productivity, increased competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth (Lee, 2025). Skilled employees enhance the efficiency of production processes, reduce operational errors, and drive innovation, thereby contributing to higher output and profitability. These benefits are especially relevant in emerging economies like South Africa, where bridging skills gaps can facilitate industrial growth, promote entrepreneurship, and create high-quality jobs (Nkwanyana, 2021).

Empirical studies highlight the multifaceted economic impact of training and development. For instance, training improves employees' habits, attitudes, knowledge, and experience, all of which collectively enhance job performance and organisational outcomes (Lee, 2025). By investing in employee development, organisations can transform low-skilled, underperforming workforces into high-skilled, high-performing teams, ultimately increasing competitiveness at both the sectoral and national levels. This transformation supports broader economic objectives, such as moving beyond the middle-income trap, promoting innovation-driven growth, and reducing unemployment through the creation of skilled employment opportunities (Awode & Oduola, 2025).

Moreover, training and development programmes are closely linked to long-term workforce sustainability. Mabaso and Ontong (2025) argues that such programmes enhance the future capacity of employees, ensuring organisations maintain a talent pipeline capable of meeting evolving industry demands. Continuous learning initiatives prepare employees to take on more complex roles, assume leadership responsibilities, and contribute to strategic organisational objectives, thereby reinforcing both economic stability and organisational resilience.

2.9 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

While training and development offer significant organisational and economic benefits, the successful implementation of these programmes often encounters multiple barriers. These challenges can undermine the effectiveness of training and development initiatives, limiting the return on investment for organisations and reducing the impact on employee skills and employability (Lee, 2025). Understanding these barriers is critical for designing more effective training strategies.

2.9.1 Limited Financial Resources

One of the primary challenges facing entrepreneurs in South Africa particularly within the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector is limited access to adequate funding. Although SMEs play a vital role in stimulating economic growth and creating employment opportunities, financing remains a persistent barrier (Spiteri Axiak, 2025). Despite post-apartheid financial reforms intended to improve inclusivity, disparities in funding access remain widespread. Entrepreneurs from historically disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth, continue to face systemic barriers that restrict their ability to secure credit and expand their enterprises (Ogujiuba et al., 2025).

A lack of financial resources remains one of the most significant obstacles to effective training and development, particularly within the public sector and among small to medium-sized organisations. Limited budgets often restrict access to modern learning technologies, high-quality facilitators, and comprehensive capacity-building programmes, which are essential for equipping employees with up-to-date skills and competencies (Salas et al., 2012). In South African municipalities, budgetary constraints are a persistent challenge; training allocations are frequently underfunded, delayed, or reprioritised toward urgent operational expenditures, leaving training and development initiatives sporadic, fragmented, or entirely neglected (Zweni, 2023).

The consequences of insufficient funding extend beyond short-term skill gaps. Without sustained financial investment, organisations struggle to maintain continuity in training, implement refresher courses, or introduce advanced learning platforms such as e-learning, simulations, or blended training methods. This not only limits employee competency development but also affects institutional capacity, reducing the

organisation's ability to deliver services efficiently and adapt to technological and societal changes (Van der Walt, 2018).

For youth-targeted initiatives, financial limitations are even more critical. Public employment and skills development programmes, such as learnerships, internships, and the Youth Employment Service (YES), require dedicated resources to provide stipends, mentoring, and supportive learning environments. Inadequate funding in these programmes can result in low participation rates, diminished learning outcomes, and a failure to equip young employees with the skills needed to transition into sustainable employment (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016). Furthermore, under-resourced training may exacerbate existing inequalities, as youth from disadvantaged backgrounds often rely on public sector opportunities to acquire market-relevant skills (Zweni, 2023).

Addressing this barrier requires a strategic allocation of resources, prioritising skills development as a long-term investment rather than a discretionary expense. Governments and public institutions must explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, donor funding, and sectoral levies, to ensure that training and development programmes especially those targeting youth are adequately funded, sustainable, and aligned with national development objectives (Hoaeane, 2019; Pianda et al., 2024).

2.9.2 Poor Training Needs Analysis

Effective training and development (T&D) is grounded in a systematic and accurate Training Needs Analysis (TNA), which identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and competencies required by both the organisation and individual employees to meet strategic objectives (Noe, 2010). Despite its importance, many organisations, particularly within the public sector, fail to conduct comprehensive TNAs. As a result, training programmes are often generic, ad hoc, or misaligned with employees' actual roles, leaving critical skill gaps unaddressed (Reuben et al., 2025).

In the South African context, this challenge is particularly pronounced among public sector institutions and youth-targeted programmes. For instance, initiatives such as municipal learnerships, internships, and public works training are sometimes designed without sufficient alignment to labour market demands, emerging technologies, or

specific departmental service delivery requirements (Zweni, 2023; Hoaeane, 2019). Consequently, young employees may complete training programmes that provide limited practical skills or fail to enhance their employability in either the public or private sector.

A poor training need analysis can also lead to low employee engagement. When participants perceive training as irrelevant to their roles, they are less likely to fully participate, apply learned skills, or integrate new knowledge into daily work practices. This not only diminishes the return on investment for the organisation but can also demotivate employees, creating a culture in which training is viewed as perfunctory rather than developmental (Ngwenya, 2010).

Moreover, inadequate training need analysis often result in the misallocation of scarce financial and human resources, exacerbating existing challenges such as limited budgets and high unemployment rates among youth. To maximise the effectiveness of training and development, organisations must employ evidence-based approaches, such as competency mapping, performance appraisals, and stakeholder consultations, to accurately assess skills gaps. This targeted approach ensures that programmes are relevant, impactful, and aligned with organisational objectives, while also enhancing the employability and career progression of young employees (Pianda et al., 2024).

By prioritising thorough training need analysis, public sector organisations can design youth-focused training interventions that are both practical and strategic, bridging the gap between formal education and the skills required in the labour market. Such alignment is critical to equipping young employees with competencies that meet both current operational needs and future organisational demands, thereby contributing to sustainable workforce development.

2.9.3 Lack of Management Support

Training and development (T&D) initiatives require active and visible support from organisational leadership to be successful. Managers and supervisors play a pivotal role in promoting a learning culture, encouraging participation, and ensuring that training outcomes are integrated into daily work practices (Ngwenya, 2010). When leadership does not prioritise training and development, employees may perceive

training as optional or peripheral, leading to low motivation, disengagement, and limited application of newly acquired skills.

In many South African public sector institutions, the absence of managerial support has been identified as a key barrier to effective training. For example, in municipal and departmental learnership programmes, supervisors often lack the time, expertise, or commitment to provide guidance, coaching, and post-training follow-up (Zweni, 2023). Without such engagement, youth participants may struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills, reducing both their employability and their contribution to service delivery objectives (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016).

The lack of management support can also manifest in insufficient alignment between training and organisational priorities. Managers who are disengaged may fail to identify the strategic skills required for departmental performance, leading to training programmes that are irrelevant or poorly targeted (Pianda et al., 2024). Furthermore, the absence of mentoring, feedback, and accountability mechanisms prevents employees from consolidating learning, diminishing the return on investment in training initiatives.

Youth employees are highly dependent on managerial guidance to navigate workplace expectations, acquire practical competencies, and develop professional networks. Leadership support, such as mentoring, structured supervision, and recognition of training achievements, significantly enhances the ability of young employees to gain confidence, apply new skills, and transition into sustainable employment (Hoaeane, 2019).

To overcome this barrier, organisations must foster a culture of learning and accountability, where managers actively champion training and development initiatives, monitor the application of skills on the job, and integrate learning outcomes into performance evaluations. By embedding management support into the structure of training programmes, public sector institutions can increase engagement, improve skill transfer, and strengthen the professional development of youth employees, ultimately contributing to both organisational performance and broader socio-economic objectives.

2.9.4 Employee Resistance to Training

Employee resistance to training is a significant barrier that can undermine the effectiveness of training and development initiatives. Resistance to change is a natural human reaction, often rooted in fear of increased accountability, anxiety about learning new technologies, or skepticism regarding the relevance and applicability of training content (Armstrong, 2020). Such attitudes may lead to low participation rates, disengagement during training, and limited application of newly acquired skills on the job, thereby reducing the return on investment for organisations.

In the South African public sector, employee resistance can be particularly pronounced among youth entering the workforce through learnerships, internships, and public employment programmes. Young employees may experience uncertainty in adapting to formal workplace structures, limited confidence in their abilities, or perceived disconnects between training content and career aspirations (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016). For example, youth participating in municipal EPWP projects, or the Youth Employment Service (YES) may view short-term training interventions as temporary obligations rather than long-term developmental opportunities, affecting their motivation and engagement (Zweni, 2023).

Resistance may also be exacerbated by inadequate communication and poor change management strategies within organisations. When employees are not clearly informed about the purpose, benefits, and expected outcomes of training programmes, they are more likely to question their relevance and resist participation. Additionally, lack of reinforcement from supervisors, minimal feedback, and absence of post-training application opportunities can intensify reluctance to engage with new learning initiatives (Pianda et al., 2024).

Addressing employee resistance requires a multi-faceted approach. Organisations should establish a supportive learning culture that encourages experimentation, rewards skill acquisition, and links training directly to career progression and employability. Mentoring, coaching, and peer support mechanisms can help youth trainees overcome anxiety and build confidence in applying new skills. Furthermore, involving employees in the design and planning of training programmes can increase ownership, reduce skepticism, and enhance participation (Hoaeane, 2019).

By proactively addressing resistance, public sector organisations can ensure higher engagement, better knowledge transfer, and sustained application of skills, particularly among young employees who represent the future workforce and a key driver of socio-economic transformation in South Africa (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016).

2.9.5 Inadequate Training Design and Delivery

The effectiveness of training and development (T&D) is heavily dependent on the design and delivery of programmes. Well-structured training that balances theoretical knowledge with practical application, experiential learning, and hands-on engagement is essential for developing competencies that are directly transferable to the workplace (Salas et al., 2012). Conversely, programmes that rely exclusively on classroom-based lectures or outdated content often fail to equip employees with the skills needed to perform effectively in real-world contexts.

In the South African public sector, inadequacies in training design and delivery are commonly observed in youth-focused initiatives such as municipal learnerships, internships, and the Youth Employment Service (YES) programme. Training content may be generic, misaligned with the specific needs of departments, or insufficiently tailored to the skill levels of young participants, many of whom are recent school or tertiary graduates with limited practical experience (Lolwana & Ngcwangu, 2016; Zweni, 2023). Without opportunities for experiential learning, mentorship, or workplace integration, youth participants may struggle to apply newly acquired knowledge, limiting both employability outcomes and organisational benefit.

Additionally, poor delivery methods such as inadequate use of technology, limited interaction, and insufficient engagement strategies further reduce learning retention and participant motivation (Pianda et al., 2024). For instance, training programmes that fail to incorporate blended learning, simulations, or problem-solving exercises may not develop critical thinking, decision-making, or technical competencies that are required in dynamic public sector environments.

The consequences of inadequate training design extend beyond individual performance. Organisations may experience low productivity, ineffective service delivery, and diminished employee morale. For youth, poorly designed programmes

can reinforce skill gaps, perpetuate unemployment, and reduce the likelihood of transitioning into sustainable, long-term careers (Hoeane, 2019).

By improving the design and delivery of training, public sector organisations can enhance employee engagement, promote effective skills transfer, and equip young employees with the competencies needed to contribute meaningfully to service delivery and national development objectives.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Training and development programmes improve the standards of living, better quality of life and an increase in the level of economic welfare of the poor. Economic growth and social development can also be achieved through training and development of employees' skills. According to Gambo (2015), training programmes such as those offered by the EPWP, improve economic growth and social development by transferring skills to participants while they are gaining work experience and are prepared for long-term employment. This chapter has explained the concept of training and development by providing a literature review and outlined the definitions of training and development provided by different scholars as well as the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework was explained in detailed such as the experiential learning theory and the systematic model to training and development. This chapter provide an overview of skill development, training and development legislative, policies, programme and barriers to effective training and development.

CHAPTER 3: WORK-READINESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing global labour market, work-readiness has emerged as a critical focus area for governments, educational institutions, and organisations seeking to enhance employability and sustain productivity (Peersia et al., 2024). As countries and organisations compete to attract, develop, and retain talented and skilled workers, the demand for graduates and new entrants who can immediately contribute to organisational performance has intensified (Gutterman, 2023). According to Attaran et al. (2019) Factors such as technological advancement, globalisation, economic restructuring, and the pursuit of competitive advantage have reshaped the nature of work, consequently the competencies required for successful workplace integration.

In this evolving environment, employers increasingly expect new entrants to demonstrate not only technical proficiency but also a diverse range of soft skills, including problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork, and communication (Mwita et al., 2024). Hussein (2024) reported that these expectations underscore the need for a holistic understanding of work-readiness that goes beyond academic achievement to encompass practical, behavioural, and attitudinal competencies. As Mashigo (2014) notes, employees must possess the necessary abilities, skills, and knowledge to respond effectively to dynamic workplace demands and contribute meaningfully to organisational goals.

Therefore, this chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of work-readiness. It explores its definitions, dimensions, and determinants, drawing on theoretical and empirical perspectives to highlight how work-readiness develops, is assessed, and influences employability outcomes. Through this review, the chapter aims to clarify the conceptual foundations of work-readiness and establish its significance as a critical factor in shaping workforce effectiveness and career success.

3.2 DEFINING WORK READINESS

In the field of career development, work-readiness is a relatively recent concept, and its theoretical development is still in its infancy. As a result, researchers often face

challenges in reaching a consensus on what constitutes work-readiness and which skills, attributes, or qualities define it. Various terms, including employability, graduateness, work-readiness, and work-preparedness, are frequently used interchangeably to describe the general competencies that new graduates or entry-level employees must possess to succeed in the workplace (Suarta et al.,2017).

While employability is commonly understood as the possession of skills that enhance the likelihood of obtaining employment, it is not in itself sufficient to ensure workplace success (Soproni,2023). In contrast, Römogens et al. (2019) defines work-readiness as degree to which graduates demonstrate the competencies, skills, and personal attributes necessary to function effectively in employment contexts. From a practical standpoint, addressing both employability and work-readiness is critical for enhancing graduates' ability to secure and succeed in jobs.

Several scholars have offered definitions that highlight different aspects of work-readiness. Fajaryati et al. (2020) describes work readiness as the degree to which graduates are perceived to have the competencies, skills, and characteristics necessary to succeed in the workforce. Rowe and Zegwaard (2017) frames work-readiness as a set of hard and soft skills sought by organisations in prospective employees. Expanding on these perspectives, Janeke (2021) provides a more comprehensive definition, describing work-readiness as the degree to which graduates possess the skills, attitudes, characteristics, worker traits, and coping mechanisms necessary to succeed in employment. Importantly, this definition underscores not only technical and soft skills but also the emotional intelligence required to manage workplace stress and adapt to dynamic environments.

From this discussion, work-readiness can be conceptualized as a state in which graduates demonstrate the expected work-related behaviours, attitudes, and competencies essential for career success (Borg et al., 2025). It encompasses personal, organisational, academic, technical, and social skills, all of which are regarded as critical for thriving in contemporary labour markets.

For the purposes of this study, the definition by Janeke (2021) is adopted, highlighting work-readiness as the degree to which graduates possess the attitudes, characteristics, worker traits, and coping mechanisms necessary for workplace success. This focus is particularly relevant in the South African context, where many

young graduates face a skills mismatch between the competencies acquired through Post-School Education and Training (PSET) and the demands of the labour market. Ensuring that new entry employees are equipped with the requisite attitudes, traits, and coping mechanisms is therefore essential for enhancing their work-readiness and employability.

3.3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR WORK READINESS

As already mentioned, work readiness is also referred to as 'graduate employability' and 'graduateness.' These terms overlap in abilities and characteristics that signify graduates' preparedness for the workforce. The following section explain Tomlinson's graduate capital model that relates to work-readiness.

3.3.1 Tomlinson's Graduate Capital Model

In today's educational landscape, higher education institution are increasingly committed to meeting the varied needs of their student populations. Among these groups, mature students often encounter distinct challenges as they pursue educational and career paths (Maselela, 2024). Effectively supporting these students requires an understanding of the various forms of capital that contribute to their success. According to Wood et al. (2017), the graduate capital model offers a comprehensive and wide view of graduate employability. This model addresses the difficulties in supporting graduate transitions and early career management and plays an important part in helping graduates become more employable (Wood et al., 2017) Michael Tomlinson's Capital Model provides a valuable framework, outlining five essential components for navigating the job market such as: human, social, cultural, identity, and psychological capital (Tomlinson, 2017).

Human Capital

Human capital is based on the information and abilities that graduates have attained through both formal and informal educational experiences, and it is formalised through educational credentials. Human capital is the approach most closely aligned with skills, both in specific occupational fields and overall (Wood et al., 2017). This form of capital is particularly relevant to skills-based approaches because it emphasises how

graduates can link their formal education to future job outcomes (Maselela, 2024). Human capital theory refers to the 'marginal' productive value that higher level credentials have in the job market. Higher education provides graduates with a broader range of technical and embedded knowledge that is useful in higher-end professional labour (Pham et al., 2018). Human capital represents the skills acquired through formal education, encompassing the technical abilities graduates possess. While certain degrees may be more specialised than others, effectively communicating one's skills remains crucial (Benati & Fischer, 2019).

Social Capital

The relationships and networks that help graduates mobilise their pre-existing human capital and get them closer to the labour market and its opportunity structures, is referred to as social capital (Yuzhuo & Tomlinson, 2023). It also refers to the resources that people have access to because they are members of or connected to specific people. Student experiences in their social and cultural surroundings contribute to their knowledge, which is also connected to prominent social factors including peers, family and community members. To obtain employment, it is crucial to figure out how to use these resources (Benati & Fischer, 2019). Graduates can improve their access to opportunities and comprehension of possible labour markets by strengthening their social capital. Social capital focuses on building connections and understanding potential career paths. Because interactions between students and employers boost familiarity and exposure, professional networks can grow via the use of platforms like LinkedIn and job fairs. By fusing theoretical knowledge with practical applications, experiential learning opportunities like internships can also improve social capital (Janeke, 2021).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital refers to the development of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that are culturally valued and compatible with the kind of jobs that graduates want to work in (Janeke, 2021). The strength of cultural capital is found in the methods through which graduates can pick up and impart suitable personality. The concept of cultural capital was introduced by Bourdieu (1984), who discussed the transfer of highly valued cultural knowledge between the educational system that legitimized it and the socio-

cultural environments of individuals. Formal qualifications that serve status-enhancing purposes and grant preferential access to the labour market further institutionalise this. This method is still useful, especially when examining how access to employment might be facilitated by the relative accumulation and application of cultural capital which is frequently produced outside of formal education (Pham et al.,2018). Understanding organisational culture is vital for graduates to integrate successfully in their work environments. Beyond technical competencies, recognitions like awards and cultural insights help individuals stand out. Developing self-awareness and adaptability aids graduates in navigating diverse workplace cultures and overcoming socio-economic barriers (Yuzhuo & Tomlinson,2023).

Identity Capital

Identity capital emphasises the psychological components of a graduate's life story, their experiences and how much they define and invest themselves in connection to their careers (Maselela, 2024). Graduates may find it helpful to match their experiences and profiles to the kinds of jobs they are interested in through self-perception and the concept of self they develop regarding their future careers. A graduate's ability to develop a new identity and to justify and execute this in the early phase of the job market, is crucial (Yuzhuo & Tomlinson, 2023). Establishing a professional identity involves aligning current actions with future goals. Crafting a strong career narrative through storytelling can open doors to opportunities. Engagement in university life supports self-reflection, allowing graduates to project a confident and cohesive self-image in their careers (Pham et al., 2018).

Psychological Capital

Psychological capital is also crucial to interactions in the labour market. The ability to adjust to difficult personal and professional situations is known as psychological capital (Tomlinson, 2017). The path to employment is filled with uncertainties, requiring resilience and flexibility (Benati & Fischer, 2019). Psychological capital equips graduates to recover from setbacks and stay focused in challenging situations. Navigating the intricacies of the labour market requires a focus on proactive decision-making and preserving a sense of control (Tomlinson, 2017).

By using Tomlinson's graduate capital model, organisations can create welcoming and inclusive environments that help mature students achieve their academic and professional goals. By providing focused resources such as workshops, counselling, and networking opportunities, students can maximise their special talents and capabilities. All students, regardless of age or background, can benefit from fostering an environment of success and fulfilment by adopting Tomlinson's model (Wood et al., 2017).

The diverse abilities and resources that people bring to their academic and professional endeavours are highlighted by Tomlinson's capital model (Benati & Fischer, 2019). This model considers a broader range of elements, including personal traits, cultural backgrounds and life experiences in contrast to traditional models that mainly concentrate on academic ability or professional networks (Wood et al., 2017). One of the main benefits of Tomlinson's model is that its emphasis on appreciating and acknowledging the special talents that students contribute to their academic paths. The wealth of life experience, professional abilities and practical knowledge that mature students frequently possess can enhance class discussions and improve everyone's educational experience. A more welcoming and encouraging learning environment for graduates can be created by recognising and making use of their resources (Yuzhuo & Tomlinson, 2023).

3.3.2 Employability Theory

Employability theory emerged as a response to growing concerns about the gap between higher education and workplace expectations. Mick Yorke (2006) is widely recognized for formalizing employability as a theoretical framework within higher education. During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, studies highlighted that while graduates possessed academic qualifications, they often lacked the practical skills, personal attributes, and adaptability necessary for successful workplace integration (Harvey, 2001). This discrepancy, often termed the “graduate skills gap,” prompted scholars and policymakers to conceptualize employability as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond formal education to include a range of competencies valued in professional contexts.

Yorke (2006) advanced this framework by defining employability as “a set of achievements skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy”(P.8) Yorke(2006) work positioned employability as a holistic concept, integrating cognitive abilities, technical knowledge, transferable skills, and personal qualities, and emphasizing both potential and actual workplace performance. Employability theory emphasizes that work-readiness is a subset of employability, focusing specifically on graduates’ ability to function effectively upon entering the workforce. The theory identifies several interrelated components such as knowledge and cognitive skill, transferable skills, personal attribute, workplace awareness and adaptability. The following section will provide an overview of the components.

Knowledge and Cognitive Skills

Knowledge and cognitive skills represent the foundational academic and technical competencies required for professional performance. These include disciplinary knowledge, analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to apply theoretical concepts to practical workplace contexts (Fugate et al.,2004; Yorke, 2006). Research shows that graduates with strong cognitive skills are more likely to adapt to complex tasks, make informed decisions, and contribute effectively to organizational goals (Tomlinson, 2017). Studies consistently shows that graduates who possess strong cognitive competencies such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to apply disciplinary knowledge in novel contexts are more likely to succeed in the workplace. For instance, Coetzee et al. (2017) found that analytical thinking and decision-making formed key components of graduate employability capacities and were strongly associated with career adaptability. Similarly, a review of employers’ perspectives identified analytical skills as a dominant dimension of employability (Espinoza et al., 2021). These findings align with the conceptualisation under Mick Yorke’s Employability Theory, which emphasises that foundational knowledge and cognitive skills form part of the holistic set of attributes graduates must possess (Yorke, 2006).

Transferable Skills

Transferable, or “soft,” skills are critical for success across different organizational and occupational contexts. This category encompasses communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and digital literacy, enabling graduates to perform effectively in diverse roles (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Yorke, 2006). Employers consistently highlight that while technical expertise is important, the ability to collaborate, adapt ideas, and problem-solve is often more predictive of workplace performance (Jackson, 2016). These skills are particularly vital in modern work environments that are increasingly dynamic, technology-driven, and team-oriented. The necessity of transferable skills often labelled as “soft,” “generic,” or “key” skills is well documented in employability literature. According to a recent semi-systematic review, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability and ICT skills were consistently identified as the most sought-after attributes by employers (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). Similarly, research comparing employer and educational institution perspectives found that critical thinking and motivation were rated as highly foundational for graduate success (Nold, 2017). In the context of digital workplaces, digital literacy and virtual collaboration have become integral to the employability skill set (Jackson, 2016). These findings reinforce the proposition under Mick Yorke’s employability theory that transferable skills are essential components of workforce readiness, enabling graduates to perform effectively across diverse roles and adapt to dynamic work environments.

Personal Attributes

Personal attributes refer to intrinsic qualities and behaviours that influence graduates’ employability. Motivation, resilience, adaptability, ethical conduct, and a commitment to lifelong learning are fundamental to navigating workplace challenges and sustaining professional growth (Yorke, 2006; Fugate et al., 2004). Emotional intelligence is closely linked to personal attributes, as it enables individuals to manage stress, interact effectively with colleagues, and maintain performance under pressure (Goleman, 1995). Research increasingly identifies personal attributes as a critical dimension of employability and work-readiness. For example, Ismail et al. (2023) demonstrate that grit (a combination of perseverance and sustained interest)

strengthens the relationship between self-regulatory employability attributes and employability competencies. Similarly, Ismail (2017) found that lifelong learning orientation, ethical behaviour, and goal-directed behaviour significantly predict graduates' career adaptability.

Employers also emphasise attributes such as adaptability, continuous learning, and time-management as key employability qualities (Coetzee et al., 2017). Conceptual work further embeds personal attributes within graduate employability frameworks, viewing dispositions like self-confidence, resilience and lifelong-learning commitment as essential (Hager & Holland, 2007). These findings support the proposition that personal attributes, alongside knowledge, skills and adaptability, are central to the framework of Mick Yorke's employability theory (2006).

Workplace Awareness and Adaptability

Workplace awareness and adaptability refer to a graduate's understanding of organizational culture, expectations, and dynamic environments. This component emphasizes the capacity to interpret workplace norms, manage ambiguity, and respond flexibly to changing circumstances (Knight & Yorke, 2004; Yorke, 2006). Graduates who demonstrate high adaptability are better able to integrate into teams, learn new processes quickly, and contribute to organizational objectives despite evolving demands. Workplace awareness and adaptability refer to a graduate's capacity to understand organisational culture, expectations and dynamic work environments, and to manage ambiguity, change and complexity.

Empirical studies show that career adaptability the individual's readiness and resources to cope with changing work conditions is positively associated with employability outcomes (Ismail, 2017; Chen et al., 2024). Further, learning experiences in authentic work settings improve graduates' capability to interpret workplace norms and respond flexibly to evolving demands (Mahfud et al., 2024). In the context of modern workplaces characterised by rapid technological and structural change, adaptability is increasingly recognised as a core competency enabling graduates to integrate into teams, acquire new processes rapidly, and contribute meaningfully (Bhashanjaly, 2024).

Collectively, these components highlight that work-readiness is multidimensional, encompassing not only knowledge and skills but also personal attributes and the ability to adapt to complex workplace environments. Employability theory provides a framework for both higher education institutions and employers to assess and enhance graduate preparedness, ensuring alignment between educational outcomes and labor market needs (Yorke, 2006). Employability theory provides a robust framework for examining graduate preparedness for the workplace. It informs curriculum design, guiding higher education institutions to integrate experiential learning, internships, and skills development programs that enhance both technical and soft skills. In research, it offers measurable indicators of work-readiness, including teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and self-management capabilities (Knight & Yorke, 2004). Policymakers and employers also leverage this framework to define graduate outcomes, address skills mismatches, and enhance workforce planning.

By situating work-readiness within the broader employability construct, Yorke's theory highlights that graduates' success in the workplace depends not only on academic knowledge but also on transferable skills, personal attributes, and adaptability. This perspective underscores the multidimensional nature of workforce preparedness and provides a foundation for both empirical research and practical interventions aimed at enhancing graduate employability.

3.4 THE NATURE OF THE 21ST CENTURY LABOUR MARKET

Over the last few decades, the nature of work, employment, careers and the competences necessary to succeed in the modern workplace have all changed because of technological advancement, globalisation and culture developments (Van Rensburg, 2022). Recent studies confirm that globalisation, technological advancement, new manufacturing and economic systems are all key elements influencing the continuous transformation process, which affect the structure and requirements of the labour market (Stone et al., 2017). These important elements have influenced how the modern economic view of the workplace. They have an impact on the characteristics of the workplace, the size and makeup of the labour force, and pay plans that companies offer (Lynn et al., 2004).

3.4.1Technology

Several ethnographic studies have demonstrated how different new technologies have changed how work is done, the role that employees play in the division of labour inside a corporation and how these evolving roles impact organisational structures (Pianda et al.,2024). By 2017, over 95% of North Americans had used the internet, bringing the total number of users to over four billion. Both office and factory floor work environments were transformed by this access to technology (Bolton, 2019). A report by Deloitte (2022) indicated that more than 64% of South African organisations such as banks and finance, media and entertainment, retail and health science sector activities are open to automation. According to the Department of Labour (2022) existing jobs and occupations are constantly changing and new ones are being created. A major factor altering the type and content of work is technology. Technological advancements in the workplace affect the nature of labour, culture and worker productivity by altering the process of creating goods and services (Lynn et al., 2004).

Rasool (2021) argues that the threat of lay-off is ever-present in the global workforce. To adjust to new technological developments or fit into new job profiles, workers need ongoing training for long-term employment. Rasool (2021) further states that the positive side of technological advancement is that new industries, employment opportunities and occupations are being created. The development of the micro-computer sparked the emergence of the information technology sector, which has transformed all other sectors. Automation has the potential to eliminate up to 3 million jobs, yet the labour market still demands high-skilled employees. As technology progresses, the demand for skills in organisations, particularly in high-tech industries, is increasing (Weaver & Osterman, 2013).

Deloitte (2018) reports that the current labour market requires lifelong learning as a means to assist employees in adjusting to and engaging with the evolving nature of the labour market. Fostering lifelong learning is essential to ensuring participation in the dynamic workforce. This study identified qualities such as courage, resilience, adaptability and resourcefulness as important, particularly in the young generation in the ever-changing nature of work. The report further indicated that organisations and companies are under pressure to remain competitive, which may require them to

modify their organisational structures, culture and procedures to accommodate current technological trends. The rate at which new technologies develop frequently exceeds the speed at which talent both present and future can be enhanced.

In 2017, The World Economic Forum reported that the 21st century labour force significantly needs workers who can combine digital, analytical and technical skills with traditional subject knowledge to quickly adapt to organisational strategies and the evolving nature of the workforce. In addition, the demands of a technologically advanced workforce have led to a heightened need for user interface specialists who can facilitate seamless communication between humans and machines. Another global competitiveness report by the World Economic Forum (2016) stated that the key success of the current workplace is the ability of available talent to adapt and become more resilient, to take risks, and to adjust to continuous changes.

Reuben et al. (2025) submits that technological transformation is not just where but also how and with whom we collaborate to open new avenues for work-life balance. The ability to adapt is required due to the growing necessity of collaborating with individuals in various time zones and enterprises. Even when disconnected from a physical location, complex and interconnected tasks can now be carefully coordinated. Advanced knowledge-sharing capabilities are provided by new technological platforms which cut across boundaries and organisational silos. Moreover, adaptability enables peer-to-peer collaboration through taking advantage of cutting-edge technologies.

3.4.2 Globalisation

Globalisation has profoundly reshaped labour markets, particularly in developing countries, producing both opportunities and challenges. One notable effect is the diversification of labour skills and knowledge across national and regional boundaries, which has fostered a more interconnected and competitive workforce (McGowan & Andrews, 2015). This interconnectedness has necessitated that organisations adapt to a workforce that is not only multigenerational but also multicultural and diverse in terms of skills, expectations, and values (Stone et al., 2017). Consequently, management strategies and employment regulations must evolve to accommodate these shifts, promoting flexibility, inclusivity, and responsiveness to market demands.

The modern globalised workplace is characterised by intense competitiveness and a premium on specialised knowledge, particularly in sectors such as information technology, where skilled workers leverage automation, advanced communication systems, and innovation to sustain productivity and competitive advantage (Pradeep & Priya, 2022). In this context, organisations increasingly rely on employees who can navigate complex, technology-driven environments while collaborating effectively across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.

Globalisation has also influenced the economic view of the workplace by redefining the relationship between workforce composition, productivity, and market responsiveness. According to the World Economic Forum (2017), South Africa exemplifies these dynamics with a high labour force participation rate, particularly among women. Despite this, the creation of high-quality formal sector jobs remains limited, highlighting the tension between workforce potential and labour market absorption. Lauri (2023) argues that diverse teams are essential for organisations to build trust with clients and stakeholders, as employees who reflect the communities they serve can better anticipate needs, deliver personalised solutions, and enhance organisational competitiveness (Modise, 2023).

The 21st-century workplace has undergone a substantial transformation in its demographic and structural composition (Doe, 2014). Minority racial and ethnic groups, while historically underrepresented in formal employment due to lower educational attainment, are now entering the workforce at faster rates. Simultaneously, managers increasingly expect employees to assume greater responsibility, participate in decision-making, collaborate within teams, and navigate flatter organisational structures. These expectations reflect the influence of globalisation on workplace dynamics: the demand for flexibility, adaptability, and collaboration has grown as organisations compete in an interconnected global economy.

Globalisation has therefore shifted the economic view of the workplace from a static, hierarchical system focused on uniformity and local productivity, to a dynamic, merit-based, and diverse environment in which organisations seek competitive advantage through human capital. Modern organisations require employees who are skilled, culturally aware, and able to deliver value in diverse contexts. Success depends not

only on individual capabilities but also on the strategic management of diversity, meritocracy, and inclusivity (Ismail, 2017). In essence, globalisation has transformed the workplace into a global ecosystem where knowledge, adaptability, and collaborative competence determine organisational performance and economic competitiveness.

3.4.3 Gender shift

During the apartheid era in South Africa, black people and other minority groups were systematically subjected to institutionalised discrimination that permeated employment, career advancement, and educational opportunities. These groups were often categorised as “designated people,” a classification that entrenched structural inequality and restricted access to meaningful economic participation (Labour Guide, 2023). In stark contrast, the white population, particularly white men, benefited from preferential access to career opportunities, professional networks, and positions of influence, consolidating socio-economic power along racial lines (Quanson, 2014). South African society was further shaped by patriarchal norms, in which women were considered subordinate to men, and legal protections for women were minimal. Societal expectations relegated women primarily to domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles, effectively excluding them from formal economic and professional spheres. The combination of racial and gender-based discrimination thus created a deeply inequitable labour market that systematically prevented large segments of the population from accessing opportunities for advancement and wealth accumulation (Van der Westhuizen & Izan, 2021).

The advent of democracy in 1994 marked a turning point in the transformation of South Africa’s labour market. The post-apartheid government introduced progressive laws and policies aimed at redressing historical injustices and promoting inclusion. The Employment Equity Act of 1998 stands out as a cornerstone of these reforms, seeking to eliminate unfair discrimination and foster equal opportunities for all workers, irrespective of race, gender, or disability (Labour Guide, 2023.). These legislative interventions facilitated the gradual but steady integration of women, particularly those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, into the formal workforce, thereby expanding their access to professional careers, decision-making roles, and leadership positions (Moshoeu, 2021). Furthermore, affirmative action measures embedded in

the Act provided organisations with a framework to actively redress imbalances in representation, particularly in middle and senior management levels, which historically had been dominated by white men (Department of Employment & Labour, 2023).

Over the past two decades, the labour market has witnessed a notable increase in the participation of married women and single mothers in professional sectors. This trend reflects not only the dismantling of structural and societal barriers but also the growing effectiveness of policy measures and organisational diversity initiatives. Doe (2015) observes that the 21st-century labour market has seen a marked rise in the representation of women in professional and service industries, including finance, education, healthcare, and management. The growing presence of women in these sectors contributes to gender equity in the workplace and provides tangible economic benefits, as organisations can now leverage the previously untapped skills, knowledge, and perspectives of women. Additionally, female participation enhances organisational performance through diverse leadership styles, innovative problem-solving approaches, and broader representational legitimacy in serving increasingly heterogeneous clientele (Gibbens, 2024).

Despite these positive trends, challenges remain. Women from historically disadvantaged backgrounds often encounter barriers such as wage disparities, underrepresentation in executive leadership, and limited access to high-impact networks (Van der Westhuizen & Izan, 2021). However, ongoing legislative support, combined with organisational policies aimed at mentorship, skills development, and career progression, continues to improve opportunities for women and promote inclusivity in the South African workplace. Collectively, these shifts underscore how post-apartheid reforms have not only expanded access to professional opportunities for historically marginalised groups but have also reshaped the modern South African labour market to be more equitable, dynamic, and productive.

3.4.4 Flexible workforce

Globally, workforce flexibility has become the new norm in the 21st century work environment (Huckle, 2020). Employers are changing employment systems and work processes across time zones and cultures while also experimenting with a wide range of flexible work schedules. There is a growing prevalence of more diversified and

flexible work schedules for members of organisations (Choudhary, 2016). Organisations are unwillingly implementing procedures to manage flexible workforce and flexible working hours due to the changing nature of the labour market. According to Choudhary (2016) the new work practice is characterised by self-regulated work, teamwork and teleworking, greater reliance on computerised technology and a shift toward a more flexible workforce in terms of both the number of workers and their roles and abilities. It was found that 77% of employers offer flexible work schedules, while 63% provide flexible work locations (Moshoeu, 2021).

According to Deloitte (2018) report the lessons learnt during the breakout of Covid-19 pandemic have shown that most organisation that they can be just as productive and effective whilst working remotely, and in a more cost-effective manner (less expensive) and whilst in a comfortable or conducive environment as applicable. Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) is a Talent Management strategy aimed at recruiting and retaining talented employees (Huckle, 2020). Talented employees have an innate desire to be as productive as possible at work; Flexible Work Arrangements allows employers to organise working hours to promote organisational effectiveness. This is based on mutual trust between employees and their managers who are responsible for tracking flex time use among their teams (Moshoeu, 2021).

According to a Skills Development for Economic Growth (2024) report, flexible work schedules benefit working parents in balancing their work schedules with those of day-care centres and schools, and they also significantly impact employee work-balance satisfaction. Employers can benefit from flexible working arrangements by using them to attract and retain employees while lowering turnover and absenteeism rates. The report further emphasised that implementing changes in workplace practices can result in short-term expenditure and, flexible working arrangements may boost employee and overall company productivity. Flexible work arrangement increases employee engagement and loyalty (Women Bureau, 2015).

Based on the above-mentioned factors, there is an increasing need for new entry employees or graduates to possess the skills required to succeed in this fast-evolving workplace (Skills Development for Economic Growth,2024). Employees are increasingly expected to be problem solvers, critical thinkers and innovators due to evolving work dynamics. This means that individuals entering the workforce need to

be ready to continuously enhance their skills and maintain flexibility to stay competitive (Marock, 2008). Technological transformation underscores the need for lifelong learning, cautioning that static skill sets can pose significant risks in an environment of constant change. The key to success in today's workplace is the capacity of available talent to adapt and demonstrate resilience in taking risks to navigate ongoing changes. Work-readiness is thus essential for employees entering the workforce, as they need to develop skills that extend beyond their academic backgrounds to be prepared for real-world work environments. New entry employees must build abilities, competencies, and knowledge to be considered work-ready and effectively respond to workplace challenges.

3.5 THE STATE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Africa consists of fifty-four countries and a population of more than two hundred billion, yet 43% of the population are unemployed. According to the International Labour Organisation (2022) report, more than 70.9 million of young people are unemployed in Africa. Research has shown that the likelihood of unemployment among young people is three times higher than among adults (Moyo, 2019). Mthlane (2020) states that the countries in Africa where it is most difficult for young people to get employment are South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Youth unemployment is 25% in Sub-Saharan African countries. The greatest challenge facing young people in Sub-Saharan Africa's labour market is shortage skills and productive employment opportunities (International Labour Organisation, 2024).

Mhazo (2019) points out that Zimbabwe has rich soil and good farming conditions, making agriculture the country's major economic sector and that this sector impacts other economic sectors. It is essential to Zimbabwean trade, particularly foreign trade, as well as the general welfare of the entire country. In Zimbabwe, tobacco accounts for 60% of total agricultural products including fruit and vegetables, dairy products and meat from animals and poultry farming. However, Mhazo (2019) states that despite Zimbabwean government interventions to increase economic growth through youth programmes, launched in 2000 with the primary goal of implementing youth land distribution and micro-grants to encourage youngsters to start agribusinesses and pursue agri-based livelihoods, the sector has had relatively little success in providing

young people with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Studies show that the use of machinery in agriculture has decreased the number of labourers required for planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting. More efficient and effective methods are rapidly replacing human labour, leading to the unemployment of millions of young people (Mago,2014).

Although employment in agriculture has been gradually declining, it nevertheless remains the primary source of jobs for youth in Sub-Saharan Africa (International Labour Organisation, 2024). In 2021, nearly 60% of young people were employed in agriculture, the highest proportion among all regions. Additionally, Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the slowest reduction in youth agricultural employment among developing regions. Between 2001 and 2021, the share of youth working in agriculture fell by 8 percentage points (Mago,2014). In contrast, in South Asia, this share dropped by 21 points over the same period, highlighting limited structural transformation in Africa compared to Asia (International Labour Organisation,2024).

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, boasts a diverse and dynamic economic landscape, marked by both strengths and challenges (MacGinty, 2024). While the country remains heavily reliant on the oil and gas sector, it is making significant strides in other sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and services, aiming to diversify its economy and reduce dependence on oil revenue. While oil and gas have traditionally been the backbone of Nigeria's economy, the telecommunications, entertainment, and financial sectors have become crucial contributors to economic growth (Fasae,2012). The telecommunications sector has seen explosive growth, with Nigeria now having one of the largest mobile networks in Africa. The entertainment industry, especially Nollywood (Nigeria's film industry), is also a major global player, and the country's financial sector is increasingly becoming a hub for investment and innovation, with fintech startups flourishing and youth people are given opportunities (Shiferaw et al.,2024).

Nigeria is endowed with vast natural resources beyond its well-known oil reserves. With a population of over 200 million, Nigeria has one of the youngest populations in the world (Fasae,2012). This demographic advantage presents a tremendous opportunity for economic development. The youth are a source of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial energy, driving growth in sectors such as technology,

fashion, entertainment, and startups. However, the challenge remains in providing adequate education, employment opportunities, and infrastructure to harness this potential (Mago,2014).

Ohlmann (2022) reports that several legislative initiatives have been introduced in African countries, namely tax breaks for hiring young people, funding for small and youth-owned businesses, public sector internships, and greater participation of young people in public work programmes. Yet these strategies have not significantly reduced youth unemployment. Policies have not addressed the problem. According to Setambule (2022) many funding for small businesses initiatives and projects in Botswana failed to last more than five years because most young people lack the necessary business skills to manage financed projects. The failure of youth entrepreneurial firms is frequently caused by obstacles such as lack of managerial experience, fierce competition, and market restrictions. Recent studies affirm that young people are only motivated to start their own businesses by financial rewards (Ndebele & Ndlovu ,2020).

Unlike decades ago, where majority of the unemployed individuals had little education and no useful skills and the work force offered employment opportunities to those with university and college qualifications, the current state of unemployment is mostly structural and affects graduates as well (Setambule, 2022). Structural unemployment is defined as unemployment that results from a mismatch in the skill sets that employers demand and the educational backgrounds which potential employees offer in the labour market (Gwala et al., 2023). According to Baldry (2013) education has traditionally been a tool for bringing about change, generating fresh concepts and building professional behaviours that lead to economic growth. However, statistics from South Africa (Stats SA) show that the unemployment rate for graduates is rising by 1.9% every year. This means that unemployment among graduates is rising at a faster rate than among those who are not educated (Baldry,2013).

Setambule (2022) points out that it has been challenging to assess the degree of success because there is no built-in mechanism for monitoring and evaluating. The study indicated that a lack of or inadequate mentoring and job shadowing arrangements is the primary reason most young people taking part in skills development programmes are not receiving adequate professional training and

abilities. Setambule (2022) further states that certain organisations take advantage of recent graduates by using them as skilled, low-cost labour. Some of the young people participating in the programmes leave before their terms end because they are dissatisfied with harsh working conditions and lack of mentorship.

Gwala et al. (2023) conducted a study examining the factors, impacts and experiences related to graduate unemployment in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. The finding of the study demonstrate that the five main causes of graduate unemployment are skills mismatch between jobs and employers demand, a lack of work experience, the effects of COVID-19, the type and weak economic growth, and the education system. Furthermore, the study recommended that institutions must provide sufficient assistance with career management and employability programmes to students to enhance their likelihood of aligning their skills and abilities with industry demands. The following section will provide details of the factors contributing to youth unemployment in South Africa.

3.6 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO UNEMPLOYMENT IN SA

South Africa's youth face the highest impact of extremely high unemployment rates. While individuals with higher education typically have better economic prospects, unemployment among graduates is showing an upward trend (MacGinty, 2024). This increase could be attributed to several factors, namely reduced returns on graduate education, changes in labour demands or a decline in the quality of qualifications (Ohlmann, 2022).

3.6.1 Skills demand and supply in SA

As highlighted earlier, unemployment in South Africa is mostly a structural issue. Structural unemployment is defined as unemployment that results from a mismatch in the skill sets that employers demand and potential the employees offer to the labour market (Gwala et al, 2023). According to an African Development Bank (2020) survey on school-to-work transition in 10 African countries, the widespread mismatch between skills and education of employed young people shows that 17,5% were over-skilled, 28,9% under-skilled, 8,3% overeducated and 56,9% undereducated. The results further showed that under-education results in a salary premium whereas over-

skilling and over-education are linked to wage downgrades. This means that having too much knowledge or training lowers job satisfaction and makes young people more likely to look for alternative work.

Oppong and Sachs (2015) reported that approximately 60.6% of graduates lacked the skill that businesses were looking for. The high rate of graduate unemployment has been attributed to a skill mismatch. The report suggested that governments ought to offer training programmes that give new graduates the kinds of skills that companies are looking for through training and development. Moreover, to create more marketable educational programmes, higher education institutions ought to create curricula that give graduates the skills they need in the workplace.

Ohei and Brink (2019) investigated the prevailing problems surrounding ICT graduate employability in South Africa. Their study found that that ICT graduates were unable to secure employment because the ICT programmes and courses offered to students at different universities were not creating skilled graduates. The study further indicated that 34.6% of ICT graduates with honours degrees were likely to secure permanent employment while 37, 3% of graduates with bachelor's degrees were unemployed. The findings indicated that graduates with honours degrees were the ones who had employment while enrolled.

A similar study was conducted by Booyens (2020) on education and skills in tourism in South Africa. The results showed that there was a clear mismatch between the demands of the tourism industry and the results of education and skills development in the tourism sector. The tourism industry complains that programmes in South African higher education institutions do not meet the skills requirements of the industry. The study suggested that to advance youth in tourism, more opportunities for skills development, learning routes, labour market access, and upward career advice must be created. Soft skills education and training programmes in the tourism industry were identified as a critical area for improvement because the work environment values customer care. Booyens (2020) further suggested that to offer young people in the tourism industry greater opportunities, public and private sectors must collaborate. Similar sentiments were shared by Neboh et al. (2023) who recommend that future programme development will require cooperation between academics and industry professionals to incorporate business needs into university curricula and to establish

connections between academic and industrial learning. Such partnerships will help graduates to develop and explore the skills that are necessary in the labour market.

3.6.2 Unequal employment opportunities

Labour discrimination and unequal access to work have long plagued South Africa's labour sector. According to Ndebele and Ndlovu (2020) numerous market misrepresentations are caused by the industrial and social policies of the apartheid administration, and the impacts of these misrepresentations can still be seen in South Africa today. The majority of South Africans, especially young black South Africans, were not allowed to work in well-paying jobs. This reality can be linked to apartheid education programmes, which provided black South Africans with sub-optimal education with the goal of turning them into low- and semi-skilled gears in the National Party's industrialisation machine.

Although apartheid ended in 1994, its economic after-effects have had a significant impact on the rise in unemployment, especially for black people. In the past white people had far better employment rates than African and coloured people who experienced far higher rates of unemployment. The government administration sector was one area where this racial disparity was most noticeable, with all positions save the lowest ones being held by black people. In the overall economy, white people were given preference for skilled jobs, while African workers were paid less for comparatively greater rates of unemployment and poorer salaries for those who were employed (Leibbrandt et al., 2010). As a result, South Africa became one of the world's most unequal societies with extremely high rates of poverty and unemployment amongst people of colour (National Development Plan, 2017).

Malakwane (2012) argues that black people have been subjected to deliberate mediocre education programmes for nearly fifty years. They have been prevented from advancing in their careers by labour laws, many forms of business ownership are prohibited by business regulations, and they are prohibited from residing in or conducting business in metropolitan areas that are the hubs of commerce. Even though the black population has seen major improvements in many areas since 1994,

unemployment has nearly doubled, and the same population that suffered under apartheid now regrettably endures most of the rising unemployment trend. Malakwana (2012) further noted that, due to several fundamental imbalances in the labour market, South Africa faces exceptionally high unemployment, and social and economic policy initiatives designed to address these imbalances have not been effective enough in reducing the unemployment rate.

According to Mthlane (2020) the unequal distribution of employment possibilities throughout the provinces is the main cause of the rising unemployment rate. The reason for the uneven allocation of chances across provinces is that some regions such as Gauteng and the Western Cape serve as the nation's economic hubs and facilitate better access to employment for job seekers. For example, in South Africa, underdeveloped regions such as Limpopo and Mpumalanga contain dense population of both young and old people, which has an impact on the unemployment rate. Some people move to regions that are major economic employment centres. However, KwaZulu-Natal only saw a 2.6% increase in youth employment and the Eastern Cape a 0.5% increase out of the nine provinces.

The findings of a study conducted by Baldry (2013) indicate that graduates with the highest unemployment rates were black and had low socio-economic standing or trouble obtaining resources. The study further identified three factors as the root causes of unemployment: discriminatory hiring practices, a lack of resources to hunt for jobs, and a lack of connections to the labour market. Baldry (2013) discovered that 6% of graduates were unemployed a year after receiving their degrees and that graduate employment prospects were significantly influenced by race, gender, and the institutions they attended. Graduates who were African and Coloured, female, and from historically black universities were most likely to be unemployed.

Oyedemi and Choung (2020) note that, although the economy has an uneven impact on unemployment, structural factors contribute more significantly to unemployment in South Africa than economic considerations. The reasons include concerns about the systemic structure of inequality and its impact on unequal access to digital communication technologies as well as the intrinsic nature of technological development. According to Oyedemi and Choung (2020) digital platforms have brought about a transformation in the hiring process. Jobs are more frequently being

offered online and job searches and applying for jobs are also mostly done online now. This has, as could be predicted, led to a pattern of disparity between those who can access and use digital communication technology for job searching and application processes and those who cannot. Essentially, it illustrates how digital inequality may makes employment disparities worse.

3.6.3 Economic growth

Sustainable employment in any country is driven by economic growth, which in turn reduces poverty and inequality. According to the National Development Plan (2011), when the GDP of a country decreases, the chances of creating jobs in industries are hampered. The effects of the worldwide economic recession in 2009, which caused the economy to contract and many jobs to be lost, have made youth unemployment trends worse. According to Africa's development dynamics (2021), COVID-19 also created a significant risk to South Africa's labour market. Empirical studies predicted a 40% drop in active employment in 2020, with half of the losses resulting from job terminations, indicating the long-lasting repercussions of the crisis on the labour market (Mayer et al.,2011).

A key component of tackling unemployment is maintaining employment, with a focus on permanent work. According to Van der Walt (2018), the two consecutive periods of economic deterioration in South Africa's fourth quarter of 2016 and first quarter of 2017 were described as a technical recession with negative economic growth, which increased the unemployment rate. It is evident that economic growth plays a significant role in job creation. Malakwane (2012) affirms that improved economic growth correlates with higher employment and a corresponding decline in unemployment.

According to the results of a study conducted by Banda et al. (2016) there is a long-term relationship between economic growth and employment opportunities. The study used a vector error correction model to determine the effect of macro-economic factors such as GDP on unemployment in South Africa. The results showed that the GDP has a positive long-term effect on unemployment, and the study further suggested that the South African government should refocus its funding on initiatives that directly and indirectly support the creation of decent jobs. Additionally, the government should give

priority to labour intensive industries and create policies and laws that facilitate the labour market and foster a favourable environment. All of this will contribute to absorbing sizable portions of the jobless population and lowering South Africa's unemployment rate (Banda et al., 2016).

Training and development interventions refers to training and skills development, which consists of programmes outside the official schooling system that gives people skills and training to increase their employability and make it easier for them to get jobs (Kluve et al, 2016). Mputle (2022) shows that in South Africa, youth-focused interventions most commonly involve skills development and training programmes. Interventions that target employment services are, however, less prevalent in South Africa. Ismail (2017) claims that job service programmes in South Africa are neither accessible nor beneficial for young people.

3.7 THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHAPING EMPLOYABLE GRADUATES

Higher education has historically served as a cornerstone for socio-economic development, contributing to national growth, social cohesion, and the cultivation of human capital (Ali & Jalal, 2018). In the context of South Africa, higher education institutions (HEIs) have an explicit mandate to equip students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that align with the dynamic demands of the labour market. With rapid technological advancement, globalization, and structural economic shifts, the skills required by employers have expanded beyond technical knowledge to include soft skills, critical thinking, adaptability, and digital literacy (Attaran et al., 2019; Gonzales, 2017).

Research indicates that higher education contributes significantly to the development of work-ready graduates. Doe (2015) emphasizes that modern higher education policies aim to cultivate lifelong learning, problem-solving abilities, and practical competencies that facilitate employability. Similarly, Ali and Jalal (2018) provide empirical evidence of a strong positive relationship ($r = .69$) between higher education and employment outcomes, demonstrating that HEIs are instrumental in enhancing graduates' skills, competencies, and career readiness.

Globally, HEIs are increasingly encouraged to implement strategies that align curricula with labour market demands. Mgaiwa (2021) highlights that higher education can foster employability by integrating quality assurance measures, conducting market needs assessments, and embedding industry-aligned skills within curricula. This approach ensures that graduates possess the competencies required to contribute effectively to the knowledge economy and national development goals.

However, there is an ongoing debate regarding the responsibility for preparing graduates for the workforce. Essilfie (2014) and Mgaiwa (2021) question whether it is solely the responsibility of HEIs to align education with market needs, or if the labour market should adapt to the skills provided by graduates. Despite this debate, there is consensus that HEIs must proactively prepare graduates to navigate the changing nature of work, emphasizing employability as a central goal of higher education.

In practice, universities are increasingly embedding experiential and interdisciplinary learning opportunities within their programmes. Kundaeli (2015) emphasizes that curricula should balance hard and soft skills, include career guidance services, and integrate experiential learning to enhance students' career readiness. Moholi (2014) further stresses that HEIs should equip students with critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy to meet the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Mona (2019) and Suarta et al. (2017) reinforce this, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary competencies, systems thinking, and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world problems.

Moreover, employers expect graduates to possess both technical competencies and interpersonal skills that enable them to integrate into professional settings effectively. Gonzales (2017) reports that students value career development opportunities that enhance employability, including resume writing, interview preparation, and professional conduct. HEIs thus have a dual responsibility: to provide students with deep disciplinary knowledge and to cultivate employability skills that ensure they are work-ready upon graduation.

In conclusion, higher education institutions are central to developing work-ready graduates. Through aligned curricula, experiential learning, career guidance, and the integration of transferable skills, HEIs play a decisive role in equipping youth to meet

labour market expectations and contribute meaningfully to economic and social development.

3.8 THE COMPONENTS OF WORK READINESS

The following section provides a detailed description of the components of work-readiness, namely such as personality traits, organisational skills, work competencies, and social intelligence.

3.8.1 Personality traits

Personality is a key attribute that influences every area of a person's life. Various factors, including family, social circles, peers, religion, and socio-economic background contribute to shaping an individual's personality. Employers often seek candidates with appealing personalities (Manala, 2014). There is a strong link between unique personalities and the employment skills that contemporary companies require. Therefore, it is essential for students to cultivate their personalities to meet the expectations of their future employers. An individual's personality is what sets them apart in any social setting. Demonstrating traits like interests, values, and skills can influence one's self-esteem, both positively and negatively, and shape how one is viewed by others. Moshoeu (2021) defines personality as 'a range of significant characteristics that influences how people engage with one another.' Human personality consists of a blend of various traits. According to Setambule (2022) work-ready employees show awareness of their adequacies, acceptance and confidence in themselves and their capabilities, their self-efficacy.

Saranya et al. (2022) indicate that the work-readiness traits that can help individuals effectively tackle the challenges of today's workplace include the ability to adapt to a new work culture, awareness of their own skills and an eagerness to learn new ones, the ability to collaborate with others, flexibility in responding to changes, a clear understanding of their expectations for themselves and others, maintaining physical fitness and mental alertness, and demonstrating a strong work ethic. Skills development programmes are playing a vital role in enhancing personality traits and equips them with the abilities and attributes that employers value in today's competitive job market. Skills development programmes help young people identify

and use their strengths while addressing areas for improvement. These programmes foster positive attitudes, and confidence and resilience when facing challenges, thereby enhancing employability. Employers increasingly value candidates who possess well-rounded personalities and a diverse range of skills (Essilfie,2014).

3.8.2 Organisational Skills

Companies frequently look for quality employees with strong organisational skills, which are most effective when integrated into daily routines. These skills can be cultivated through practice and self-discipline (Birt, 2024). Organisational skills are abilities that help create structure and order in daily life. They enable individuals to work more efficiently and effectively, ultimately boosting their productivity and performance (Pinnington et al., 2022). When an employee demonstrates strong organisational skills at work, it usually indicates that they also possess a solid aptitude towards time management and goal setting and can achieve their objectives. Individuals with strong organisational skills are crucial for a business's successful operation, as they promote operational efficiency. These skills also enhance productivity and ensure that company goals are consistently achieved. Skills development supports employees and organisations in getting ready for growth, expansion, and adapting to market trends (Essilfie,2014). Skills development focuses on enhancing abilities in areas where organisation have identified gaps, with an emphasis on both immediate and long-term benefits that align with the organisation's future objectives (Kim & Jung, 2022).

3.8.3 Work Competence

In today's workforce that is characterised by rapid technological progress and changing economic conditions, the importance of work-readiness is undeniable. As the gap between education and the professional world narrows, individuals are increasingly expected to possess work competency skills to succeed in the modern workplace (Naong,2014). By focusing on developing competencies such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, alongside job-specific technical abilities, work-readiness training strives to cultivate a well-rounded, adaptable, and capable workforce (Karimzadeh et al., 2012). Additionally, it covers the important elements of workplace culture, etiquette, and digital literacy, ensuring that individuals

are not only prepared to enter the workforce but also positioned to excel and innovate in their respective fields (Essilfie,2014).

According to Kim and Jung (2022) work-competency has significantly influence on performance. It refers to an individual's capacity to respond effectively to new environmental conditions. Specifically, adaptability involves how well employees adjust to changes and manage dynamic situations. Those with strong adaptability skills are typically more flexible in handling various circumstances, making this competency increasingly vital in fast-paced environments compared to other personal competencies. They guide employees on the behaviours that are valued, recognised, and rewarded in the company. The range of competencies that employees can develop are grouped into three main categories, namely behavioural, functional, and leadership.

Behavioural competencies refer to the soft skills and behavioural attributes expected of employees, regardless of their roles or position in the organisation. These foundational human skills are essential for thriving in a collaborative and competitive work environment. General competencies are crucial for effective performance in the organisation. Examples include creativity, compassion, originality, self-awareness, self-motivation, ambition, career aspiration and time management. Just as a backbone supports a person, these competencies support an employee's workplace success. Teamwork, problem-solving, customer service, communication, results orientation, decision-making, self-motivation, and integrity (Manala,2014).

Functional competencies are specific to a particular industry, department, or job type. As market demands evolve, businesses face various challenges to remain competitive. These competencies are essential for business success, focusing on specific knowledge, technical skills, and expertise needed for smooth operation. Employees are expected to have the relevant skills aligned with their job type, job description and place in the organisational structure. Leadership skills are essential, particularly for roles that involve team management and senior responsibilities (Manala, 2014). Numerous competencies contribute to effective leadership, often incorporating both behavioural and personality traits. However, there are core competencies crucial for holding a leadership position, based on five key areas, namely conceptual skills, integrity, impact and influence, communication skills, and

business acumen. While the first four foster good leadership, business acumen is especially vital. A leader with strong communication and management abilities but lacking in business knowledge or industry expertise may struggle to succeed (Birt, 2024).

3.8.4 Social Intelligence

Social intelligence, a popular term today, is essential in many workplaces. Vernon (1933) defines it as a person's ability to get along with others in general, including social techniques, social awareness, an understanding of group dynamics and the ability to perceive temporary moods or hidden personality traits in strangers (Karimzadeh et al., 2012). This type of intelligence reflects a person's capacity to recognise and understand social myths that circulate in society and to rise above these misconceptions, biases, or irrational beliefs often reinforced by influential figures and societal conditioning. Social intelligence also refers to professional networking. The ability to network is particularly important in today's job market, it's a 'buyer's market' where employers can join pick and choose from many candidates (Baldry, 2013). Up to a third of jobs are never advertised. Employers prefer to hire people based on references or recommendations that people in your network can provide. Managers and recruiters who must fill a position will first consider their own network of candidates before they consider applications from the public. Gaining access to key stakeholders and hiring managers in your desired field will depend on your ability to establish and maintain a professional network (Mgaiwa, 2021).

Social Intelligence in the workplace enhances individual professionalism and creates a balance between work and personal life (Birt, 2024). Strong social intelligence also boosts individuals' self-confidence, support career advancement and help to achieve long-term career objectives. Skills development programmes are important to enhance social intelligence as it fosters greater respect for colleagues by deepening understanding of their emotions and motivations. This also boosts collaboration and productivity through encouraging co-workers to share their thoughts and ideas openly. Such respect can contribute to a positive work environment where team members are united in their aim to improve professional performance (Naong, 2014).

3.9 THE LINK BETWEEN TRAINING INTERVENTIONS AND WORK READINESS

The relationship between training, development, and work readiness is fundamental to addressing persistent youth unemployment and skills mismatch challenges in South Africa and across Sub-Saharan Africa. Historical inequalities rooted in colonisation and apartheid continue to constrain South Africa's economic development and perpetuate high levels of unemployment and inequality (Ausker & Rothman, 2015). As Mgaiwa (2021) notes, the enduring effects of economic inequality among the black majority have influenced both individual livelihoods and community dynamics, raising critical questions about the efficacy of post-apartheid socio-economic reforms. One of the most prominent barriers to employment remains the vertical skill mismatch: the disparity between the competencies required by employers and those possessed by young graduates (Habiyaemye et al., 2022).

Training and development initiatives have therefore become strategic tools to bridge this gap by enhancing employability and workforce adaptability. Nyangani (2022) asserts that youth-focused training and skills development programmes are designed to respond to labour market demands by providing opportunities for young people to gain work experience and strengthen their human and social capital. Similarly, Setambule (2022) emphasises that such interventions not only improve youths' income-generating capacity and self-employment prospects but also foster socio-economic inclusion. Mamburu (2020) concurs, highlighting that access to training and skills development empowers historically disadvantaged groups by enhancing their productivity and employability, contributing to broader social well-being.

In the mid-2000s, many Sub-Saharan African governments introduced youth employment programmes as part of a broader theory of change aimed at dismantling barriers to labour market entry (Ismail, 2017). These initiatives acknowledge that while higher education imparts theoretical and technical knowledge, graduates often lack the interpersonal and foundational skills required to secure and sustain employment (Mavunda, 2022). The contemporary labour market demands multi-skilled graduates who possess a blend of academic competence, adaptability, creativity, and social intelligence to meet dynamic industry expectations (Suarta et al., 2017). According to Kis (2016), skills development programmes play a crucial role in re-engaging youth by

connecting them with employers, providing industry-relevant competencies, and serving as an effective bridge between education and employment.

Empirical evidence underscores the effectiveness of such initiatives. In South Africa, Mavunda (2022) evaluated the Graduate Training Programme (GTP) and found that participants benefited significantly from one- to two-year placements that allowed them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. Graduates reported enhanced professionalism, improved analytical and problem-solving skills, and increased alignment with organisational goals and values. Core employability skills such as teamwork, communication, and technical proficiency were among the most developed competencies, and many participants secured permanent employment thereafter.

Similarly, a study conducted in Malaysia by Puad (2015) found that training and skills programmes effectively prepared graduates for the workforce by correcting competency gaps and promoting smoother workplace integration. Employers observed improvements in graduates' motivation, professionalism, and innovation qualities essential for navigating the competitive global labour market. The study further identified discipline, integrity, and creativity as key attributes that enhanced graduate employability. In line with this, Ahmid, Tiew and Abdullah (2023) argue that continuous investment in graduate skills development is vital for fostering a skilled, innovative, and future-oriented labour force capable of advancing national development in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The World Economic Forum (2017) similarly recognises that collaborative skills development initiatives linking government, business, and educational institutions are central to preparing youth for future work. These partnerships not only align training with industry trends but also promote reforms in education and labour policies to ensure relevance and sustainability. Supporting this perspective, Ryk (2020) found that youth participants in various skills development programmes, such as hospitality training, reported increased technical competence, confidence, and entrepreneurial capacity, highlighting the transformative potential of structured training interventions.

Furthermore, as Suarta et al. (2017) argue, the accelerating pace of technological change in the 21st century demands that graduates develop lifelong learning capacities and transferable competencies such as time management, innovation, and resilience. Complementing this, Manala (2014) identifies core dimensions of work

readiness personal traits, organisational competence, and social intelligence as essential components of effective workplace integration.

In summary, training and development play a decisive role in enhancing work readiness by bridging skill gaps, fostering adaptability, and equipping youth with both technical and soft skills necessary for employability. Effective training interventions not only improve individual career prospects but also contribute to national economic productivity and social cohesion. As the nature of work continues to evolve, sustained collaboration among governments, educational institutions, and industry remains essential to ensure that training and development initiatives remain responsive to labour market realities and future skill demands.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the concept of work-readiness by providing different definitions and approaches. It provided a comprehensive overview of the nature and conditions of the 21st century work environment, which is characterised by technological advancement and globalisation. The state of youth unemployment was also explained in detail. A discussion of the role of higher education in shaping the employable graduates was provided. The components of work-readiness such as personality traits, organisational skills, work competencies, and social intelligence were also explained. And finally, the link between training interventions and work readiness was provided.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Different research techniques provide distinct perspectives that shed light on certain aspects of reality and delivers conclusions better suited to applications than others. This chapter presents the research methodology chosen by the researcher to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives. It further presents and justifies the selected research methodology, explaining how the study was conducted. This chapter discusses the research approach, research design, population, sampling technique and size, data gathering, survey instruments, statistical analysis, and ethical considerations.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACHES

Research methodology is described as a roadmap that outlines the rules and methods researchers can use to analyse, critique, replicate, adapt, or select appropriate research techniques (Bryman & Bell,2015). According to Saunders et al. (2023) for a methodology to be applied effectively, it must withstand scrutiny and produce trustworthy results. The research design, methods, approaches, and procedures are key elements that define a study's methodology.

Kothari and Gaurav (2021) explain that research methodology encompasses the processes of data collection, selection of participants, research instruments, and data analysis. Bryman and Bell (2015) frames it as a paradigm that structures the logic and sequence of systematic procedures followed to gain knowledge about a research problem. According to Hughes and Sharrock (2016), research methodology should include reflection on the assumptions made, limitations encountered, and how these were addressed. Moreover, it highlights how individuals understand or acquire knowledge about the social world (Kothari & Gaurav,2021). When planning a research proposal, researchers should critically consider how they will gather the data, insights, and understanding necessary to answer their research questions and contribute to new knowledge.

There are three important types of research approaches, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approach. The selection of a research approach for a study is determined by the type of research being conducted and the potential constraints associated with the project. The following section provide a detailed description of the three-research approach.

Quantitative research is a methodical and evidence-based approach that seeks to measure and analyse relationships, behaviors, or phenomena using numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It generally adopts a deductive approach, starting with a theory or hypothesis and structuring a study to test it. According to Patten and Newhart (2018) quantitative research method employs organized techniques such as surveys, experiments, and structured observations to collect data that can be quantified and analysed statistically to uncover patterns, relationships, differences, or causal links between variables. Quantitative research prioritizes objectivity, reliability, and generalizability, aiming to generate results that can be applied to larger populations (Kothari & Gaurav,2021). Its structured methodology and emphasis on numerical evidence make it especially effective for studies focused on measuring, comparing, or predicting outcomes, including evaluating interventions, monitoring performance, or examining trends in social and business settings (Bryman & Bell,2015).

Dobbie, Reith, and McConville (2018) discussed that qualitative research is a method used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups attach to social or human issues. The research process is flexible, with questions and procedures often emerging during the study. Data are typically gathered in the natural setting of participants, and analysis involves moving from specific observations to broader themes, with the researcher interpreting the significance of the findings. Kothari and Gaurav (2021) note that qualitative research helps uncover the underlying reasons behind human behavior and is particularly valuable in the behavioural sciences. Patten and Newhart (2018) emphasizes that qualitative research involves iterative processes of classifying and linking data variables rather than following a strictly linear path. To address the “why” of phenomena, researchers generally use non-numerical, descriptive data collected through methods such as interviews (Bryman & Bella,2015). Creswell and Creswell (2018) points out that qualitative methodology is grounded in interpretivism or constructivism, which views reality as socially constructed. As such, qualitative research is fluid in nature, emphasizing the

researcher's perspective and recognizing multiple constructed realities that cannot be fully captured through numerical analysis (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Common qualitative approaches include grounded theory, ethnography, and action research.

Mixed methods research is an approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques within a single study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2017). It leverages the strengths of both approaches, incorporating the numerical measurement and generalizability of quantitative methods with the rich, contextual insights of qualitative methods (Kothari & Gaurav, 2021). This approach enables researchers to validate findings across methods, explore complex phenomena from multiple perspectives, and answer research questions that cannot be fully addressed by a single method. Designs often follow structured models such as convergent, explanatory sequential, or exploratory sequential, depending on the order and integration of data collection. Careful planning ensures rigor and coherence throughout the process (Patil & Aditya, 2020). Creswell and Clark (2017) describe mixed methods research from a pragmatic perspective, emphasizing the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches at various stages of the study. Similarly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlight its application across theory development, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Patil & Aditya (2020), this approach involves collecting, analysing, and integrating qualitative and quantitative data within a single study, with integration occurring throughout the research process. Creswell and Clark (2017) notes that mixed methods allow flexibility in applying multiple strategies to answer research questions rather than being confined to one method.

This current study employed a quantitative research design to determine the nature of the relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided by the EPWP because the researcher sought to understand the perspectives of the participants without influencing them. The researcher aimed to control and ensured an objective understanding of the phenomenon without displaying personal bias.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

To fulfil the main aim of this study, a particular philosophical framework and specific methods were applied to the research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), research design refers to the strategy or blueprint for how the researcher intends to carry out an investigation to address the issue at hand. It can be viewed as the overall strategy that unifies the various elements of research logically and coherently with the ultimate objective of answering the research questions. On the other hand, Patten, and Newhart (2018) view research design as a detailed plan that one intends to incorporate into a particular methodology to address the question of how the research was performed in relation to the main problem statement. A research plan outlines the techniques and steps taken to gather and analyse the data in line with the study's objectives and aims.

This study employed a non-experimental research design to examine the relationships and impacts of the variables. Non-experimental research is descriptive in nature and aims to provide an accurate portrayal or depiction of a specific variable (Patil & Aditya,2020). The non-experimental research design used in this study was a cross-sectional design. According to Kothari and Gaurav (2021) a cross-sectional design explores the relationship between relevant variables within a population at a single point in time over a brief period, typically around two or three years, and may take the form of a description or analysis. This study implemented a cross-sectional research design, and information was collected from a diverse group of participants without influencing their responses (Creswell & Creswell,2018).

4.4 POPULATION

To ascertain the parameter or characteristics of a sizeable population, a sample is taken from a group of people who share specific traits, which is referred to as the target population (Bryman & Bell,2015). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) a population is the group of objects or people on which a research endeavour will centre and whose qualities the researchers plan to ascertain. Tan (2017) views a population as the entire group of individuals or the entire collection of things or elements to which

the study relates. Population is a complete set of participants from which the researcher hopes to extrapolate the study's findings.

In this study the target population consisted of trainees employed by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure under the Expanded Public Works Programme, specifically the National Youth Service project in Mpumalanga Province. The study targeted the participants of the EPWP's National Youth Service project. According to the project plan of the EPWP, the National Youth Service Project participants' intake and demographics were regulated to recruit youth between the ages of 18-35, with the requirement of 60/40% female-male, and 2% people with disability. In the Mpumalanga province, the EPWP National Youth Service project covers four regions, namely Gert Sibande, Bohlabela, Nkangala, and the Ehlanzeni region. The project consisted of 283 participants who are active on site in Mpumalanga Province. Table 1 below indicates the intake summary of the EPWP National Youth Service.

Table 1. Intake summary of the EPWP

INTAKE SUMMARY

REGION	TARGET	ACTUAL INTAKE	DECLINED OFFERS	ACTIVE ON SITE	PWD	RESIGNATION/DROP OUT (SO FAR)
GERT SIBANDE	85	84	01	70	00	14
BOHLABELA	90	90	00	81	01	09
NKANGALA	85	77	08	68	00	09
EHLANZENI	90	84	06	64	00	20
TOTAL	350	335	15	283	01	52

4.5 SAMPLING

A sample is defined as a portion of the population chosen for analysis and the population of the items under consideration. Goertzen (2017) refers to a sample as the group of individuals who will participate in a research study. Tan (2017) asserts that sampling is the process of choosing the aggregate or totality of the things or people based on a study. The most used sampling techniques in research are non-probability and probability.

In a probability sample, the likelihood that any given example will be chosen from the population is known and is typically the same for all cases. This indicates that it is possible to respond to research questions and accomplish goals that demand statistical estimation of the population's attributes from the sample (Hughes & Sharrock, 2016). According to Goertzen (2017) probability sampling techniques use mathematically sophisticated methods for selecting sample elements with the goal of generalising the results to the entire population under observation.

Probability sampling techniques involve:

- Simple random sampling
- Interval or systematic sampling
- Stratified sampling
- Cluster or multi-stage sampling.

In contrast, non-probability sampling is a technique for selecting units from a population in a non-random subjective manner. Goertzen, (2017) give a variety of alternative methods for choosing a sample depending on the researcher's judgment. Non-probability sampling is a quick, simple, and affordable method of collecting data because it does not call for a whole survey frame. However, it must be assumed that the sample is representative of the population to infer anything about the population.

Non-probability sampling techniques involve:

- Accidental or availability sampling
- Purposive or judgemental sampling
- Quota sampling
- Snowball sampling

In this study, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was chosen because the researcher was looking for people or a group that would be knowledgeable about the training and development programme, were available and eager to participate and would be able to effectively describe their experiences, perceptions, and opinions. This method has the advantage of offering useful data, allowing the researcher to comprehend the subject more thoroughly and to meet the objectives of the research. The selected participants were trainees between the ages of 18 and 35.

4.6 SAMPLING SIZE

One of the most important decisions in any research is choice of the sample size. The number of research participants that are part of an investigation is referred to as the sample size. The quality and generalisability of the data as well as the intended statistical analysis are impacted by the size of the sample (Kothari & Gaurav, 2021). Theoretically, there is no one sample size that will always produce the data needed for statistical analysis (Goertzen, 2017). The researcher is led by a variety of factors and must consider non-response, time, and money. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) researchers can decide on the sample size based on the population as shown in Table 2 below.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) contends that a bigger sample size decreases the likelihood of producing errors, and a smaller sample size could weaken the capacity of the statistical test to discover significance. Creswell and Clark (2017) indicate that a larger sample size or a smaller sample size have equally good sample, because the more the population increase the less the accuracy returns. To conduct the statistical analysis for this study, 162 employees under the National Youth Service were considered a sufficient sample size. The choice was made based on the Sekaran Table 2 shown below, which indicates that a population size of more than 280 leads to a sample size of 162 participants.

Table 2. Sekaran Table

<i>Table for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population</i>									
N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

4.7 DATA GATHERING

Data gathering refers to the process of collecting information from all the relevant sources to find answers to a research problem and to test hypotheses (Patil & Aditya, 2020). It consists of two methods, namely primary data and secondary data collection. Primary data collection refers to the data that is directly collected from the subject of interest, and secondary is the data that has already been gathered by someone else, which may include data from previous studies or report (Tan,2017). The methods used by qualitative researchers to collect data are interviews, documents, photography, observations and participation. Quantitative researchers usually use survey questionnaires. Interview refers to collecting data by having direct dialogue with a participant (Patten & Newhart, 2018). A survey is a set of questions that provides participants with options to measure their abilities.

For this study, the researcher collected data using a paper-based survey method, where questionnaires were distributed to research participants. A survey questionnaire was used to gather primary data to assess participants. A detailed explanation of the instrument is provided in the following section.

4.8 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Survey instrument refers to a questionnaire that is used as the main method of collecting data from participants. It is often designed to evaluate participants perceptions, attitudes, values and personalities (Goertzen, 2017). The selection of the psychometric tools was determined by the validity and reliability of each tool. The degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure is known as validity, whereas the 'repeatability or consistency' of an individual performance on a test or other assessment method is known as reliability (Tan,2017). The research instruments that were used to collect data in this study are adopted from previous studies, and the researcher modified the items of the questionnaires to address the research problem of this current study.

4.8.1 Training and development scale

The instrument used to assess training and development in this study was an adapted scale derived from the systematic approach to training. Originating in the 1950s and 1960s, this model reflects a shift from informal training practices to a structured, goal-oriented process aimed at improving employee performance (Noe, 2020). It is grounded in principles of systems theory, instructional design, and human resource development, which emphasise the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of training programmes. According to Sekaran and Bougie, (2016) a systematic model refers to the use of structured methods to provide knowledge and equip individuals with the skills they need to effectively carry out their job responsibilities. The model consists of four integrated phases, namely needs analysis, design, implementation, and feedback. Several studies and organisations have used the systematic model to facilitate and deliver effective training programmes to improve the skills of individuals in the work environment. The item of the instrument used in this study consists of dimensions that were adapted for the systematic model to training. The instrument used to measure training and development in this study was adapted, and the items of the questionnaire were modified to address the objective of the study. The questionnaire consisted of subscales, namely general assessment (8-items), needs analysis (5-items), planning and design (11-items), implementation (6-items), feedback (9-items) and relevance and usefulness (9-items).

4.8.2 Work-readiness scale

The instrument used in this study to measure work-readiness was adapted from Caballero, Walker, and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2011). Caballero et al. (2011) developed a 4-dimensional work readiness scale to assess personality traits, organisational skills, work competence and social intelligence. The Work Readiness Scale was developed to assess and address graduate work-readiness worldwide and in Saudi Arabia, to intensify competitiveness and tighten hiring standards for the labour market. The measurement is popular and used internationally as well as in South African studies (Manala, 2014). Caballero's work-readiness scale assesses four qualities in graduates, namely work competence, social intelligence, organisational acumen, and personal characteristics. According to Lawton et al. (2023) the work-readiness scale

demonstrates good reliability. The WRS with 32-items confirms that work-readiness is a multi-dimensional construct.

4.8.3 Structure of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this study consists of different sections. The first section (A) contains demographic questionnaires which assess the following: gender, highest qualification, duration of work experience, age category, and race. The second section (B) involves the work-readiness scale. This instrument consists of the four (4) dimensions of work-readiness, namely personality traits (9-items), organisational skills (9-items), work competence (8-items), and social intelligence (7-items). The items consisted of 33 open-ended questions measured via a Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The last section of the questionnaire includes a training and development instrument which consists of 6 dimensions, namely general assessment (8-items), needs analysis (5-items), planning and design (11-items), implementation (6-items), feedback (9-items) and relevance and usefulness (9-items). The questionnaire items consisted of 48 open-ended questions measured via a Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity is the degree to which a measurement process is free from both systematic and random errors and accurately assesses what it is intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It pertains to the outcomes of the measurement rather than the instrument itself. In quantitative research, the key consideration is whether the study allows for valid conclusions based on the research design and the controls implemented. Bryman & Bella (2015) highlight that a valid questionnaire should meet several criteria: it should be relevant, capturing the information it was intended to collect; complete, obtaining all necessary information; and accurate, ensuring that responses can be trusted.

Tan (2017) describe reliability as the extent to which a measurement of a construct yields consistent and dependable results. Reliability emphasizes consistency rather than accuracy and reflects how much the measurement is free from random errors. It also indicates the degree to which the obtained scores can be generalized across

different measurement conditions. Typically, reliability can be assessed by administering the same instrument multiple times to see if consistent results are produced; however, this approach is often impractical (Goertzen, 2017). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha is commonly used to evaluate the reliability of a measurement tool. According to Kumar (2019), a measuring instrument is considered reliable if it achieves a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.50. The internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The results demonstrated satisfactory reliability across all constructs, with training needs analysis ($\alpha = 0.81$), training design ($\alpha = 0.84$), training implementation ($\alpha = 0.79$), and training evaluation ($\alpha = 0.86$). All values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, thereby confirming acceptable internal consistency, as supported by Sekaran and Bougie (2016).

Construct validity refers to how well an instrument measures a concept, behaviour, idea, or quality; in other words, the theoretical construct it is intended to assess (Kumar, 2019). In simple terms, it is the instrument's ability to differentiate between participants who possess the behaviour or quality being measured and those who do not. For instance, the measuring instrument in this study was used to assess the perceptions of trainees about their alignment of training with their levels of work readiness.

4.9.1 PILOT STUDY

According to Kumar (2019) the primary goal of a pilot study is to distribute a questionnaire to a small group of individuals with similar traits to the target population. This helps ensure that respondents can complete the questionnaire without issues and that the researcher can analyse the responses without difficulty.

In this current study the researcher provided standardised questionnaires to 20 EPWP trainees in Mbombela region in Mpumalanga to guarantee the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. The subjects had a scheduled meeting with the researcher well in advance of the hand-out. During the pre-test phase, the researcher assessed whether the questions in the research instrument were clear and free of ambiguity and whether all respondents understood the components of the instrument. After the piloted questions were answered by the participants, questions that need additional

clarification were changed and final, more reliable informed questionnaires were created.

The reliability of the variable items was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha test in SPSS Statistics. The results, shown in Table 3, indicate that the research question items related to work-readiness and training and development exhibit relatively high internal consistency, with an alpha coefficient of 0.900 for the 48 items.

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha for WR & T&D

Scale and subscales	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
<i>Work readiness & training and development</i>	0.900	48

4.10 ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

Upon receipt of ethical clearance and approval, 162 questionnaires were prepared for distribution. The researcher was given appointment dates by the regional managers of the EPWP National Youth Service project in the Mpumalanga province. Questionnaires were distributed to all the trainees who were willing to complete the survey. The participants signed the consent form, and they were given the questionnaire, which they submitted them after completion.

4.11 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The total number of questionnaires distributed to respondents was 162. All the questionnaires were administered at the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in Mpumalanga Province. The data of the empirical study was analysed with SPSS version 27(2021). To assess the accuracy of the raw data, all the variables employed categorical procedures, and most of the variables had ordinal scales. The raw data was cleaned to determine whether there were any incomplete questionnaires before any statistical analysis was done. Kumar (2019) indicates that the data must be cleaned and checked to ensure instrument accuracy by looking for discrepancies in

the original data. The statistical analysis for this study involved both descriptive and inferential statistical statistics.

4.11.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis refers to the process of tabulating and summarising data using a visual display (Tan,2017). It organises and summarises the univariate and bivariate analyses of quantitative data. According to Kumar (2019) descriptive statistical analysis involves calculations of mean to determine the scores of central tendency and standard deviations. This means that descriptive statistical analysis evaluates biographical variables such as age, gender, work experience, marital status and highest obtained qualification, using correlation. It also analyses the report of the mean and standard deviation of the constructs. In this study, the analysis was done using descriptive statistics to describe the demographic variables of the participants and the mean of work-readiness and training and development.

4.11.2 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics analysis focuses on testing hypotheses (Kumar,2019). It is used to forecast or determine how closely sample statistics correspond to population-wide parameters. Such an assessment largely hinges on whether the sample was drawn at random and accurately represents the entire population. Inferential statistics, According to Tan (2017), is an application of inductive reasoning because it enables researchers to establish claims based on empirical evidence and derive inferences about the population. Several statistical tests, including canonical correlation analysis, standard multiple regression analysis, structural equation modelling, hierarchical moderated regression analyses, and test for significant mean difference, are warranted in inferential statistics.

In this study the statistical tests that was used as part of the inferential statistics is the Pearson's product moment correlations, the test the relationship between variables with the goal of determining both the direction and strength of the associations. Regression analysis was used to determine the impact of training and development subscales (training needs analysis, planning and design of training, implementation of training) on work-readiness. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted

to examine the impact of demographic variables (age and education) on the perceptions of work-readiness and training and development.

4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Any social science research involving participants must comply with ethical standards, which are essential for protecting participants' rights and evaluating whether a researcher's actions are ethically sound. Additionally, these standards help determine the appropriateness of researchers' conduct and assesses their performance in terms of proper or improper research behaviour (Tan,2017). According to Kumar (2019), ethical reasoning and conduct are crucial in research just as they are in any subject that involves human interactions. Similarly, Dobbie et al., (2018) states that ethics must be a top priority when planning, developing, conducting, and reporting on human subject research.

Prior to gathering actual field survey data, much effort was spent on protecting the interest of the participants in the study and following the rules of ethical research. Among other things this initiative comprised the following.

- **Obtaining ethical clearance from the faculty Research Ethics Committee.** The process includes applying and submitting forms to the FREC at the University of Mpumalanga for ethical clearance. Permission was obtained from the committee. The researcher was able to connect with the EPWP provincial manager to ask for permission to conduct the survey. The researcher submitted a letter to request permission together with the ethical clearance letter to the EPWP provincial manager.
- **Obtaining a gatekeeper's letter from the Department of Public Works.** The researcher received a written confirmation to conduct a survey with EPWP participants from the provincial manager. The researcher booked appointment dates to visit the EPWP sites.
- **Administration of questionnaires.** The researcher followed a paper-based survey of self-administered questionnaires, by printing copies of the questionnaires, and shared them with the participants who were willing to participate and understood the consent form.

4.12.1 Data Collection

Potential participants were advised of the following:

- The goal, purpose and nature of the research were explained to them.
- They were informed that agreeing to participate in the survey and responding positively was voluntary.
- They were also made aware of their right to withdraw or stop participating in the survey at any time without providing a reason and that their involvement in the research was entirely optional.
- The participants were also told that their answers would not be given to the EPWP but be treated with anonymity.
- They received guarantees that their rights would be upheld, and that any information provided in the questionnaires would be kept completely confidential.

4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the research methodology of the study and explained the research approach that was used such as the quantitative research approach. The research design and population of the study was also explained in detail. This chapter further provided the sampling size, data gathering, and research instruments used. The measurement instruments of work-readiness and were explained. The statistical analysis and ethical considerations were also explained in the chapter.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and examines the statistical findings of the research. This is illustrated through tables, figures, and graphs. The questionnaire responses are presented and analysed to address the research questions and objectives stated in chapter 1. Descriptive statistics is presented to analyse participants' demographic variables and analyse the report of the mean and standard deviation of the constructs. Inferential statistics is presented and entails of Pearson product-moment correlation used to assess the relationship between training and development and work-readiness. Multiple regression analysis is used to determine the of training and development on work-readiness. Additionally, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to examine the differences in perceptions of work- readiness and training and development based on demographic variables. The chapter ends with a brief overview of the research findings and a chapter summary.

5.2 DATA PREPARATION AND RESPONSE RATE

This section details the decisions made during data preparation, particularly in managing missing values. A total of 162 individuals attempted to participate in the survey. A visual inspection for missing data revealed 12 questionnaires in which participants had not fully answered all the questions. Consequently, 12 questionnaires were deemed redundant due to incomplete responses and failure to meet the required criteria, resulting in a final number of questionnaires of 150 used for the data analysis.

5.3 PRESENTATION FOR DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics involves calculations of the mean to determine the scores of central tendency and standard deviations. The following section provides the descriptive statistics which involves demographic variables such as age, gender, work experience, marital status and highest obtained qualification using correlation. It analyse the report of the mean and standard deviation of the constructs.

5.3.1 Demographic characteristics

The participants' demographic characteristics are grouped into several categories of variables, namely gender, highest qualification, duration of work experience with the EPWP, age and race. These categories have a potential influence on participants responses. A summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants is provided below:

5.3.1.1 Composition of Participants by Gender

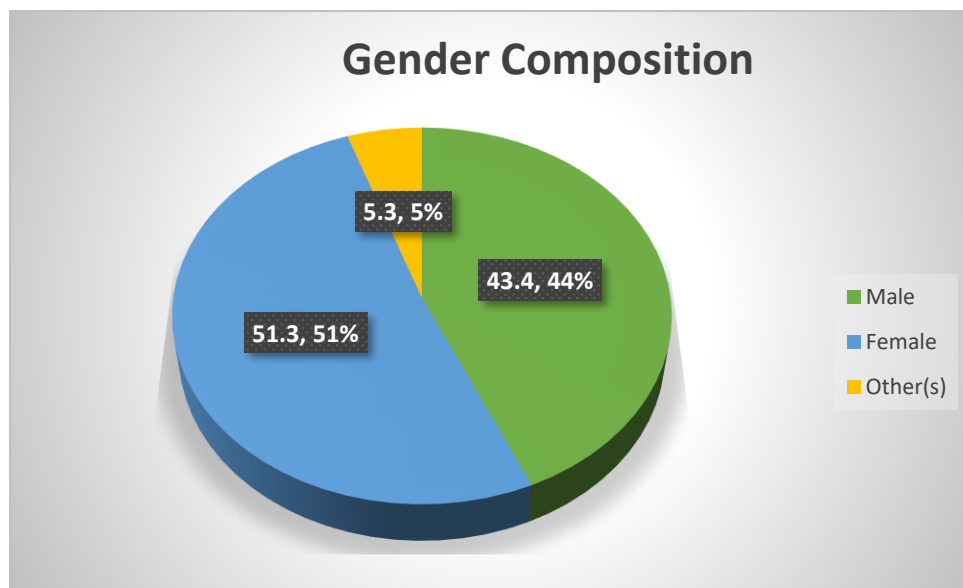


Figure 4. Gender composition

Figure 4. shows that the majority (51.3%) of the respondents are female, while 43.4% are male and others consists of 5.3%. The results indicate that the EPWP programme is dominated by female employees. This imbalance in gender roles was anticipated, given the nature of the 21st century workforce. Employers are changing employment systems by implementing the Employment Equity Act of 1998 which gives all workers irrespective of gender, equal opportunities of employment. These laws have made it possible for women and generally several people from historically excluded and disadvantaged backgrounds, an opportunity to work.

5.3.1.2 Composition of Participants by Highest Qualification

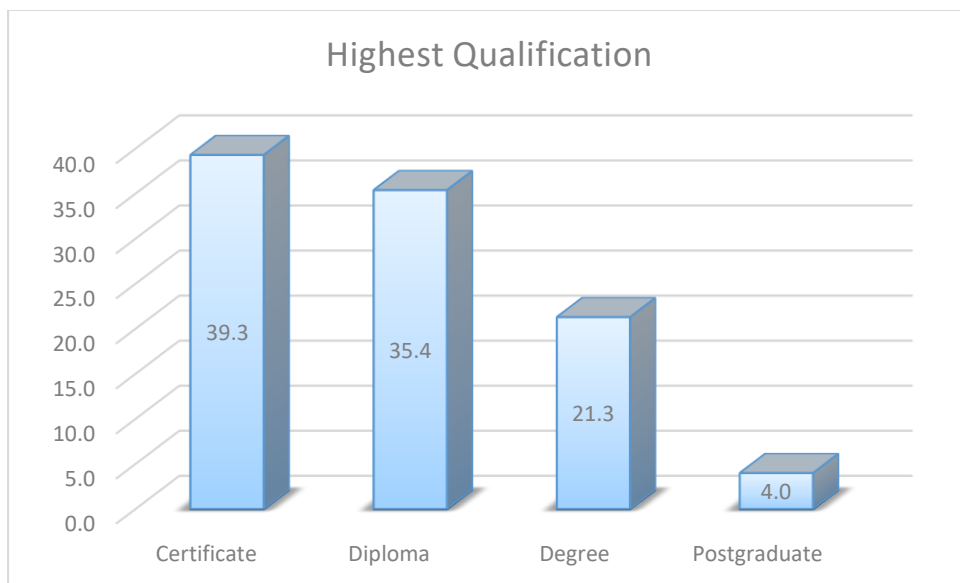


Figure 5. Highest qualification

Figure 5. above illustrates the highest qualifications of the EPWP participants. Of the respondents, 39.3% had certificates (NQF 5), followed by diplomas with 35.4%, followed by degrees with 21.3% and lastly postgraduate degrees with 4.0%.

5.3.1.3 Composition of Participants by the Duration of Work Experience with the EPWP

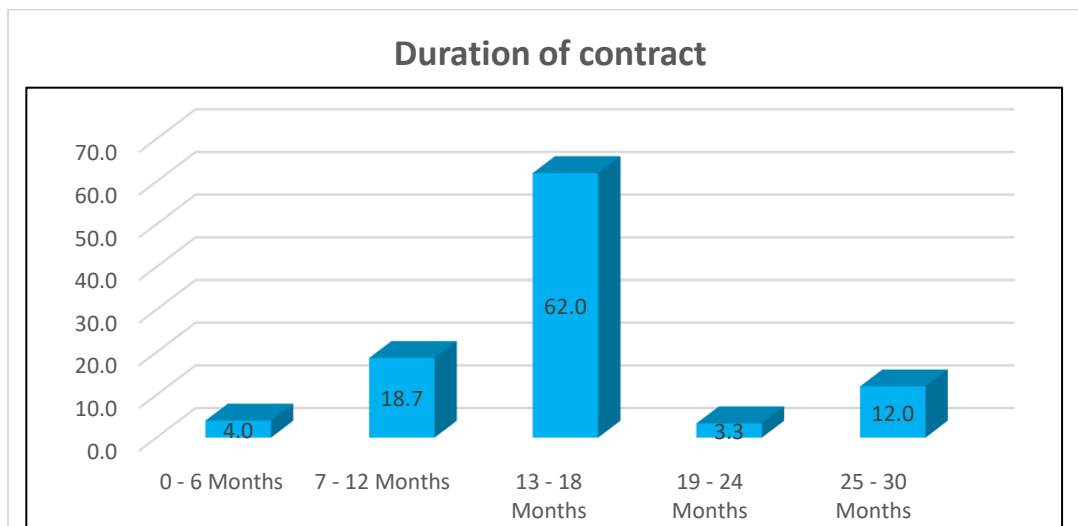


Figure 6. Duration of contract

Figure 6. shows that the majority (62.0%) of the respondents 'had 13 to 18 months' work experience, followed by those with duration ranging from 7 to 12 months at

18.7%. Respondents with work experience of 25 to 30 months constituted 12.0%, while those with 0 to 6 months of duration accounted for 4.0%. Finally, respondents with 19 to 24 months of working experience represented 3.3%.

5.3.1.4 Composition of Participants by Age Category

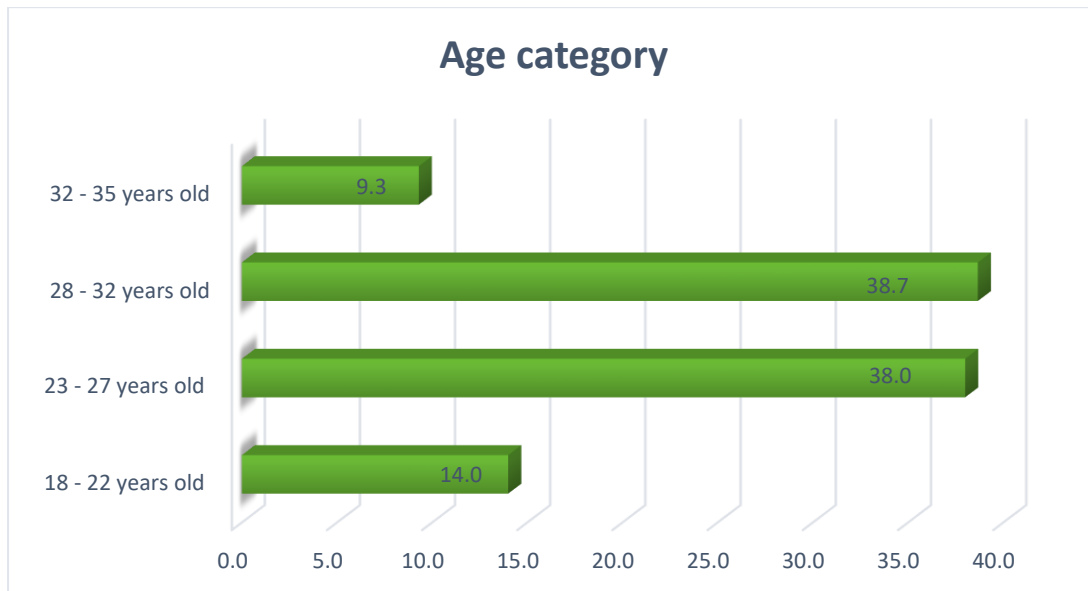


Figure 7. Age category

Figure 7. shows that the majority (38.7%) of the participants' ages ranged from 28 to 32. This is closely followed by the 23 to 27 age group, which comprises 38.0% of the respondents. The range between 18 - 22 age group accounts for 14.0%, and the minority are employees ranging between 32 to 35 years with 9.3%.

5.3.1.5 Composition of Participants by Race

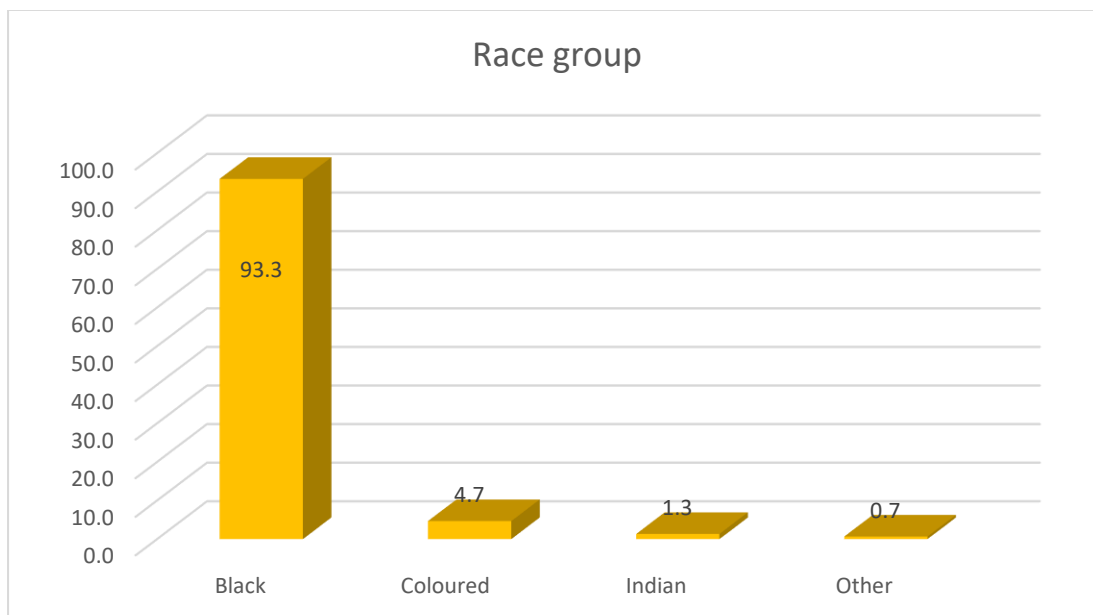


Figure 8. Race

Figure 8. shows that most of the respondents (93.3%) identified were Black. This was followed by those classified as Colored which constituted 4.7% followed by Indians with 1.3%. Lastly, individuals from other racial categories accounted for 0.7%.

5.4 REPORTING THE MEAN OF THE VARIABLES

To describe the survey participants using the measuring instruments, descriptive statistics such as means were utilised. The following section presents the results of the means for each instrument.

5.4.1 Work Readiness

The means of the work-readiness subscales are summarised in Table 4. below. Means can be reviewed to confirm that the data falls within the anticipated range. A Likert type scale was employed to record participants' responses about work- readiness and its subscales, namely personality traits, organisational skills, work competence, social intelligence. The scale ranged from '1' (Strongly Disagree) to '5' (Strongly Agree). Table 4. below shows the mean scores ranging between 2.84 and 3.33.

Table 4. Explore the impact of WR of EPWP participants

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Personality Traits	150	1	5	3,23
Organisational Skills	150	1	5	2,91
Work Competence	150	1	5	3,33
Social Intelligence	150	1	5	2,84
Work Readiness	150	1	5	3,07

The results reveal that participants' mean score for personality traits is (M=3.23), surpassing the midpoint of the scale, indicating a high level of positive personal characteristics. Personality is an essential psychological factor that influences human behavior and has a substantial impact on workplace performance. Studies suggest that traits such as conscientiousness, openness, and emotional stability enhance employee efficiency, effectiveness, and overall work readiness (Delima, 2020). In terms of workforce preparedness, individuals with strong personality traits are more capable of handling workplace challenges, working collaboratively with others, and completing tasks effectively, thereby contributing to improved organizational outcomes.

The mean score for organisational skills was (M=2.91), slightly under the midpoint of the scale, indicating that employees show relatively limited ability in planning, prioritizing, and managing tasks efficiently. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve time management, task coordination, and overall workflow effectiveness.

Conversely, the mean score for work competence was (M=3.33), above the midpoint, suggesting that employees generally possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities to perform their job responsibilities effectively. While employees demonstrate competence in their technical and professional roles, further training and skill development could enhance performance even more.

The mean score for social intelligence was (M=2.84), below the midpoint, indicating lower levels of interpersonal awareness and social skills among employees. This may

negatively influence teamwork, communication, and the ability to manage workplace relationships. Programs such as team-building exercises and social skills training could help strengthen these competencies.

The mean score for work readiness ($M = 3.07$) was slightly above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that employees are generally equipped to perform their job responsibilities. This reflects a moderate level of readiness, suggesting that while employees have the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to carry out their duties, there remains scope for improvement.

5.4.2 Training and Development

The participants' responses for measuring training and development were recorded using a Five-point Likert scale, where '1' represented Strongly Disagree and '5' indicated Strongly Agree. The mean scores varied between 2.67 and 3.24. The overall mean score for the training and development scale was 3.06. Table 5. below shows a summary of the training and development subscale.

Table 5. Explore the impact of T&D EPWP participants

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Training Needs Analysis	150	1	5	2,98
Planning and Design of Training	150	1	5	3,18
Implementation of training	150	1	5	2,76
Feedback and Support	150	1	5	3,24
Training and Development (Overall Mean)	150	1	5	3,06

Table 5. shows that the mean score for training needs analysis ($M=2.98$), was slightly lower than the mid-point of the range, indicating that training needs analysis also lacks in quality. This indicates that organizations may not be thoroughly evaluating gaps in knowledge, skills, and competencies, which can lead to the development of training programs that do not fully align with business objectives. Such misalignment risks wasting resources and missing opportunities to support the participant's career growth.

The mean score for planning and design ($M=3.18$) of training is above the midpoint, indicating that employees or organizations demonstrate a moderate to strong capability in structuring and organizing training programs. This suggests that once training needs are identified, there is a relatively effective process for designing programs that include clear objectives, relevant content, appropriate instructional methods, and structured delivery schedules. Strong planning and design can enhance the effectiveness of training by ensuring that learning activities are purposeful, aligned with organizational goals, and capable of improving participant's skills and performance.

The mean score for implementation of training ($M=2.76$), was lower than the mid-point of the range, suggesting that the execution of training programs is relatively weak. This may indicate challenges such as inadequate delivery methods, insufficient trainer competence, low participants engagement during sessions, or logistical issues that hinder the effectiveness of the training process. Poor implementation can limit the practical impact of training programs and reduce the extent to which the participants can apply new knowledge and skills in the workplace.

The mean score for feedback and support ($M=3.24$) is above the midpoint, indicating that employees perceive the support mechanisms accompanying training programs as effective. This suggests that after training sessions, employees receive constructive feedback, guidance, and follow-up assistance that help reinforce learning and facilitate the practical application of newly acquired skills. Effective feedback and support mechanisms can enhance employee confidence, motivation, and engagement, while also helping to identify areas where additional training or mentoring may be needed.

Lastly, the mean score for overall training and development ($M=3.06$) is marginally above the midpoint, indicating that trainees view the EPWP training and development initiatives as satisfactory. This suggests that the programs provide participants with essential knowledge, skills, and competencies for their roles. Adequate training and development can prepare the participants for career advancement and workplace challenges.

5.5 PRESENTATION FOR INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

Inferential statistics is used to forecast or determine how closely sample statistics corresponds to population-wide parameters. Such an assessment largely depends on whether the sample was drawn at random and accurately represents the entire population. This section presents several statistical tests such as the Pearson product-moment correlation, regression analysis and ANOVA.

5.5.1 PEARSON PRODUCT-MOMENT CORRELATION

The relationship between variables was assessed using Pearson's product moment correlations, with the goal of determining both the direction and strength of the associations. It is important to note that large sample sizes can complicate interpretation of the results, as many correlations may appear statistically significant but have a small practical effect size (Moshoeu,2021). Therefore, caution is needed when interpreting both statistical significance and practical effect size. For this study, the standard approach was to set the threshold for statistical significance at a 95% confidence interval ($p \leq .05$) and consider an effect size of $r \geq .30$ to $r \geq .50$ (medium to large effect) as practical.

Table 6. Correlation between perception of WR and T&D

		Work Readiness	Training and Development
Work Readiness	Pearson Correlation	1	,545**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	150	150
Training and Development	Pearson Correlation	,545**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

++. Correlation is practically significant (large effect): $r > .545$

Table 6 presents the results of the correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship between employees' perceptions of work readiness (WR) and training and development (T&D). The analysis was performed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables.

The results reveal a positive correlation between training and development and work readiness, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.545$. This indicates a moderate to strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of perceived training and development are associated with higher levels of work readiness among employees. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

5.5.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Regression analysis is a collection of statistical techniques used to estimate the impact between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It can be applied to evaluate the strength of the relationship between variables and to model their future interactions (Moshoeu, 2021). Regression analysis was used to determine the impact of training and development subscales (training needs analysis, planning and design of training, implementation of training, and relevance and usefulness and training programme) on work readiness. Using the p -value tests the null hypothesis that a given coefficient is equal to zero, the work readiness (explained) variable and other variables are independent (explanatory) variables.

Table 7. Regression analysis T&D and WR

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.988*	.994	.960	3.2243

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
1 Regression	19198.022	8	4512.004	136.805	.000
Residual	400.880	25	15.147		
	18699.782	28			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0,721	0,221		3,266	,001
	Training Needs Analysis	0,176	0,047	0,259	3,754	<,001
	Planning and Design of Training	0,285	0,078	0,327	3,651	<,001
	Implementation of training	0,129	0,052	0,150	2,491	0,014
	Feedback and Support	0,044	0,062	0,049	0,711	0,478
a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness						

Table 7. presents the results of a multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the impact of the training and development (T&D) subscales training needs analysis, planning and design of training, implementation of training, and feedback and support on employees' work readiness (WR). The regression model showed an excellent fit, with $R = .988$ and $R^2 = .994$, indicating that 99.4% of the variance in Work Readiness was explained by the four training and development predictors. The adjusted R^2 (.960) further confirmed the robustness of the model, even after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate (3.22) suggested good prediction accuracy. The ANOVA results indicated that the overall model was statistically significant, $F(8, 25) = 136.81$, $p < .001$, confirming that the combined T&D variables reliably predicted Work Readiness.

Training needs analysis shows a statistically significant impact on work readiness, with a $\beta = 0.176$, $\beta = 0.259$, $p < .001$. This finding suggests that employees who perceive the identification of training needs of the EPWP as effective tend to report higher levels of readiness to perform their work responsibilities. This result aligns with human resource development theory, which posits that accurately identifying skill gaps and learning requirements is critical for the effectiveness of training interventions (Foko, 2015). The moderate standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.259$) indicates that TNA is a meaningful predictor of work readiness relative to other dimensions of training and development, emphasizing its foundational role in preparing trainees for work.

The results indicate that Planning and Design of Training has a significant positive impact on employees' work readiness ($B = 0.285$, $\beta = 0.327$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that employees perceive well-structured and thoughtfully designed training programs as a key factor in enhancing their preparedness to perform their roles effectively. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.327$) suggests that planning and design is one of the stronger predictors of work readiness among the T&D subscales, highlighting its critical role in translating training initiatives into practical performance improvements.

The results further present a statistically significant impact of implementation of training and work readiness with the ($B = 0.129$, $\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.014$). This suggests that the way training programs are delivered and executed plays an important role in shaping employees' readiness to perform effectively in their respective roles. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.150$) indicates a modest but meaningful effect size,

implying that while implementation contributes positively to work readiness, it is less influential than training needs analysis and planning and design. This could be attributed to the fact that successful implementation depends heavily on the groundwork laid during the earlier stages of training design and needs assessment. Nonetheless, the significant p-value ($p < 0.014$) affirms that implementation is a statistically reliable predictor of work readiness.

Interestingly, the finding reveals that feedback and support have no statistically significant impact on work readiness, with a high $B = 0.044$, $\beta = 0.049$, $p < 0.478$. This finding suggests that, within this sample, post-training feedback and the level of support provided by supervisors, or the mentors do not meaningfully predict employees' readiness to perform their job functions. The relatively low standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.049$) further indicates that, even when feedback and support are present, their contribution to work readiness is minimal compared to other training and development subscales such as training needs analysis and planning and design of training. This may be due to several factors, including limited follow-up after training sessions, inadequate supervisory engagement, or a lack of clear performance feedback mechanisms that help participants connect training outcomes to practical job performance.

5.5.3 ANOVA ANALYSIS

A one-way ANOVA determines whether there is a significant difference between the means of diverse groups, with a p-value indicating statistical significance. If the $p < 0.05$ the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that there is a significant difference between at least one pair of group means. If $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating that there is no significant difference between the group means. A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine the effect of age groups on perceptions of work readiness, as well as training and development. Similarly, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of education on perceptions of work readiness and training and development.

Table 8. Mean of score WR and T&D

Age Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
18 – 22	21	3,19	,402	,088	3,01	3,37	3	4
23 – 27	58	3,02	,397	,052	2,91	3,12	2	4
28 – 32	58	3,28	,488	,064	3,15	3,40	2	4
33 – 35	13	3,38	,506	,140	3,08	3,69	3	4
Total	150	3,17	,460	,038	3,10	3,25	2	4

Table 9. Mean of WR and T&D between age group

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2,609	3	0,870	4,396	< 0,05
Within Groups	28,884	146	0,198		
Total	31,493	149			

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for the mean scores of work readiness (WR) and training and development (T&D) perceptions across different age groups. The results reveal variation in the mean scores among the four age categories: participants aged 18–22 years reported a mean score of $M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.402$; those aged 23–27 years reported $M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.397$; the 28–32 years group recorded a higher mean of $M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.488$; and participants aged 33–35 years showed the highest mean score at $M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.506$. The total sample ($N = 150$) reflected an overall mean score of $M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.460$, with observed scores ranging between 2 and 4.

The confidence intervals indicate the precision of the mean estimates for each group. For example, the 95% confidence interval for the 18–22 group ranges from 3.01 to 3.37, while that for the 33–35 group ranges from 3.08 to 3.69, suggesting that the true population means for each age group are likely to fall within these intervals. Notably,

the intervals for the older age groups (28–35) are higher than those for the younger cohorts, implying that perceptions of work readiness and training and development tend to increase with age.

Table 9 provides the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to determine whether the observed differences in mean scores across the four age groups are statistically significant. The results indicate that the variance between groups (Sum of Squares = 2.609, Mean Square = 0.870) is significantly greater than the variance within groups (Sum of Squares = 28.884, Mean Square = 0.198). The calculated F-value of 4.396 with 3 and 146 degrees of freedom yielded a p-value less than 0.05, signifying a statistically significant difference among the age groups in their perceptions of work readiness and training and development.

The significant ANOVA result ($F = 4.396$, $p < 0.05$) suggests that employees' perceptions of work readiness and training and development differ meaningfully across age categories. Specifically, older employees (aged 28–35) tend to report higher levels of perceived training effectiveness and readiness for work compared to their younger counterparts (aged 18–27). This pattern may reflect the influence of accumulated workplace experience, increased exposure to professional training, and greater familiarity with the EPWP systems among older employees.

These findings are consistent with prior research in human resource development, which indicates that age and work experience often contribute to enhanced confidence, competence, and readiness to perform job tasks effectively (Foko, 2015). Younger employees, particularly those aged 23–27, may still be in the early stages of adapting to workplace expectations, which could explain their relatively lower mean scores. From a practical perspective, the results imply that training and development initiatives might need to be tailored to different age cohorts to maximize their effectiveness. For instance, younger employees may benefit from more structured onboarding and mentorship programs to bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace readiness, while older employees could be offered advanced or leadership-oriented training to maintain engagement and skill relevance.

Table 10. Mean score WR and T&D between Education

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Certificate	59	3,34	,512	,067	3,21	3,47	2	4
Diploma	53	3,02	,366	,050	2,92	3,12	2	4
Degree	32	3,13	,421	,074	2,97	3,28	2	4
Postgraduate	6	3,17	,408	,167	2,74	3,60	3	4
Total	150	3,17	,460	,038	3,10	3,25	2	4

Table 11. Mean score WR and T&D between Education

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2,959	3	,986	5,046	,002
Within Groups	28,535	146	,195		
Total	31,493	149			

Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics of work readiness (WR) and training and development (T&D) perceptions across different levels of education. The mean scores demonstrate some variation among the four educational categories. Respondents holding a Certificate qualification recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.512$), followed by those with a Postgraduate qualification ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.408$), Degree holders ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.421$), and lastly, Diploma holders ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.366$). The overall mean score across all educational levels was $M = 3.17$ ($SD = 0.460$).

The 95% confidence intervals further indicate the precision of these estimates. For example, the true population mean for Certificate holders is expected to lie between 3.21 and 3.47, while that for Diploma holders lies between 2.92 and 3.12, showing a clear difference in perceived work readiness and training experiences across

qualification groups. The observed minimum and maximum scores (ranging from 2 to 4 across groups) indicate a moderate level of variability within each educational category.

Table 11 presents the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) used to test whether there are statistically significant differences in mean work readiness and training and development perceptions among the four educational levels. The analysis yielded a between-groups sum of squares of 2.959 and a within-groups sum of squares of 28.535, resulting in an F-statistic of 5.046 with 3 and 146 degrees of freedom. The p -value of 0.02 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the differences in mean scores among the educational categories are statistically significant.

The statistically significant ANOVA result ($F = 5.046$, $p < 0.05$) confirms that perceptions of work readiness and training and development differ meaningfully according to employees' educational qualifications. Specifically, participants with Certificate qualifications reported the highest levels of perceived work readiness and training and development effectiveness, while those with Diplomas reported the lowest levels.

This finding may suggest that employees with lower formal qualifications (such as Certificate holders) may rely more heavily on organizational training to develop practical, job-related competencies, and therefore, they perceive training efforts more positively. Conversely, employees with higher qualifications (Diploma, Degree, or Postgraduate) may have higher expectations of training content and delivery and might view existing training programs as less challenging or less aligned with their advanced skill levels.

5.6 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

This section offers an analysis and discussion of the empirical findings

5.6.1 Discussion on Work Readiness

Examining work readiness reveals several significant findings. The mean score for personality traits ($M=3.23$), exceeds the mid-point of the range, suggesting that the participant's personal traits are highly satisfactory. These findings are consistent with

those of previous studies on work readiness and personality traits (Delima,2020; Tappin,2014). Personality is a significant psychological factor that influences human behaviour and plays an important role in the workplace. Personality traits play an important role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of employee job performance and work readiness (Delima, 2020).

Tappin (2014) reports that organisations remain keenly interested in understanding how to improve the success rates of change initiatives. According to Tappin (2014) research aimed to determine whether employees' personality traits could predict their readiness for organisational change. The results showed that personality traits indeed predict employee readiness. Research by Ahmid et al. (2023) also revealed that innovative traits and vocational self-concept are important factors to consider when designing education and career programmes as well as interventions and support services for vocational students. Addressing the graduate employment challenges faced by vocational college students can be achieved by enhancing these identified factors. Personality trait is one of the important key components in the work environment. The EPWP participants demonstrates a satisfactory personality trait which indicates that they are prepared to face the challenges of the work environment. Possessing a charismatic personality can significantly help trainees to secure their desired jobs because this quality helps individuals to stand out by being seen as positive and demonstrating confidence.

The mean score for organisational skills ($M=2.91$), was slightly lower than the midpoint of the range, indicating that the employees' organisational skills are weak. Mashigo (2014) identified comprehensibility as the strongest predictor for personal work characteristics; emotional reasoning, emotional expression, and optimism as the main predictors for organizational skills; efficacy and emotional self-management as key predictors for work competence; and efficacy as the top predictor for social intelligence. Organisational skills help individuals gain a sense of responsibility and builds confidence, qualities that are essential for tackling the challenges of the professional world. The study concluded that organisational skills contribute to work readiness, especially in relation to work competence.

The findings of a study conducted by Satata (2021) indicated that organisational skills have a significant and positive impact on work readiness. This suggests that

organisational skills play a role in enhancing students' mindsets as they prepare for the workforce. Organisational skills can foster positive attitudes among students, helping them get ready to face the job market. Regarding the connection between organisational skills and individual work readiness, organisations offer a platform for trainees to explore their potential and adapt to future work environments that incorporate new technologies.

The mean score for work competence ($M=3.33$), was higher than the mid-point of the range, indicating that the employees' work competence meets the minimum standards. According to Kim and Jung (2022) work competency has significant influence on the behaviours and performance standards of employees. It helps individuals to adapt and adjust to changes and manage dynamic situations expected to achieve the organisation's goals. A study by Utami and Raharjo (2021) suggests that the competency variable has an impact on work readiness. This highlights that competence is essential to enable individuals to perform tasks effectively, grounded in the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes for the workplace.

The mean score for social intelligence ($M=2.84$), was lower than the mid-point of the range, suggesting that respondents exhibit lower levels of social intelligence. A study by Masole and van Dyk (2016) indicated that trainees with strong social intelligence can handle the challenges and uncertainties of new work environments as well as manage task effectively. The findings of a study conducted by Ramos (2023) showed that social skills were the strongest predictors of change readiness, accounting for 40.8% of the variance. These findings highlight the crucial role of social intelligence in promoting employee adaptability and involvement during organisational changes. The results suggest that organisations should invest in training programmes to develop social skills and awareness to enhance the effectiveness of change management.

Lastly, the overall mean score for work readiness ($M=3.07$), was marginally above the mid-point, suggesting that employees possess the required competencies to function effectively in the workplace, though there remains potential for improvement. Work readiness remains one of the most important concepts for graduate employability in today's fast-paced work environments. Work readiness skills enable employees to effectively engage with colleagues, manage their professional image, and excel in their

roles. These skills also support employees in acquiring new abilities and adjusting to various work environments.

5.6.2 Discussion on Training and Development

The mean score for training needs analysis ($M=2.98$), was slightly lower than the midpoint of the range, indicating that training needs analysis also lacks in quality. A major consequence of overlooking training needs analysis is a misalignment with business objectives. Without thorough analysis, there is a significant risk of creating learning programmes that fail to align with business objectives. This misalignment can result in wasted resources and lost opportunities for growth (Delima, 2020).

The mean score for implementation of training ($M=2.76$), was lower than the mid-point of the range, suggesting that the implementation process does not meet acceptable standards. Junipitoyo et al. (2021) state that implementation of a training and development programme is the key process to ensure that trainees are provided with hands-on experience that directly equips them with knowledge, skills and experience needed to excel in their jobs. The implementation of training plays a crucial role in producing competent and work-ready trainees who meet the demands of the job market.

The mean score for feedback and support ($M=3.24$) was above the midpoint, indicating effective support mechanisms. Feedback helps participants to recognize their strengths and areas that need improvement; it enhances both technical and interpersonal skills. The results of this study indicate that EPWP participants are provided with the skills, confidence and mindset required to succeed in the workforce and improve long-term employability. The results of a study conducted by Ahmin et al. (2017) indicated that when trainees receive fair support from supervisors during training, it enhances motivation and commitment. Feedback tied to job performance and expectations helps participants to align their skills with employer needs. As they develop, they become better prepared for the job market, enhancing employability.

Lastly, the mean score for the overall training and development is ($M=3.06$), which is above the midpoint, indicating that trainees receive adequate and satisfactory training and development. These results indicate the EPWP programme ensures that trainees receive the necessary skills, making them more prepared future employment and

better equipped to tackle challenges in professional spaces. The EPWP programme focuses on skills development that enables trainees to be adaptive and to succeed in their careers. As mentioned in Chapter 1, employers place great emphasis on new entry employees who are adaptable, skilled and ready to contribute to the growth of the organisation. The EPWP programme is playing an important role in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and the skills need in the job market. The results of this study support that the EPWP programme provides specialised skills and knowledge.

5.7 Discussion based on the objectives of the study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

The first objective was to determine the nature of the relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided by the EPWP. This study therefore sought to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables. The relationship between the two variables was assessed using Pearson's product moment correlations.

The results indicated a positive correlation between training and development and work-readiness, with $r = .545$, $n = 150$, $p < .001$. This shows that the training needs analysis of the EPWP programme is structured in a way that develops the skills, knowledge and competence of the participants to be ready for the workforce. The training and development programme implemented by the EPWP enhances the employability of participants. The implementation of the EPWP programme enables participants to gain a clearer understanding of workplace dynamics, strengthens their work ethics and adapts swiftly to career challenges. The programme ensures that the participants gain hands-on experience, equipping them with knowledge and experience required to excel in the work environment. The EPWP programme is designed to create competent, job-ready individuals. The results indicate that trainees who participate in the EPWP programme are more likely to pursue and obtain employment in the future as the programme ensures that they are prepared to be competitive by equipping them with up-to-day skills and insight to meet the demands of the job market. The programme underscores its role in developing and enhancing

the employability skills of graduates. It offers relevant and valuable workplace training to establish a strong professional foundation for trainees.

Previous studies (Ndebele & Ndlovu, 2020) have however shown that government programmes such as internships and youth development programmes, are not sufficiently effective in equipping graduates with the skills and experience needed in the labour market. Most of these government efforts fail to support graduates in securing permanent employment after graduation mainly because of the misalignment of training with the needs of the market (Ndebele & Ndlovu, 2020). The study recommends establishing strong collaborations between the government and higher education to promote advanced policies that focus on improving graduate integration into the labour market.

As indicated above, the results of the study indicate that the mean score for training and development exceed the mid-point, which shows that the EPWP programme offers valuable and relevant skills that prepare trainees to thrive in their careers.

Hypothesis 1:

The study established a statistically positive relationship between training and development and work readiness within the EPWP. The results offer full support for research hypothesis Ha1: There is a statistically significant relationship between training and development and work readiness of trainees within the EPWP.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

The second research objective of this study was to determine the impact of training and development provided by the EPWP on work-readiness. This was analysed using multiple regression analysis. Regression analysis is a collection of statistical techniques used to estimate the impact between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It can be applied to evaluate the strength of the relationship and impact between variables and to model future interactions (Moshoeu, 2021). Regression analysis was used to determine the impact between training and development subscales (training needs analysis, planning and design of

training, implementation of training, feedback, and support) and work-readiness. Using a 5% level of significance, the work-readiness (explained) variable and other variables are independent (explanatory) variables. The 5% significant level serves as a threshold for determining whether to reject a null hypothesis. If the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the explanatory variable significantly contributes to explaining the variation in the dependent variable (Moshoeu,2021). The p-value tests the null hypothesis that a given coefficient is equal to zero, and the work-readiness (explained) variable and other variables are independent (explanatory).

The result of this study indicates that Training needs analysis shows a statistically significant impact on work readiness, with a $B = 0.176$, $\beta = 0.259$, $p < .001$. Junipitoyo et al. (2021) found that effective job training greatly enhances graduates' preparedness for the workforce. Well-executed training boosts knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour, which in turn improves individual performance. On-the-job training positively influences creativity, goal attainment and economic gains. Given the substantial benefits that training provides to organisations, those with high aspirations must implement training programmes to realise these advantages (Junipitoyo et al.,2021). Devi (2025) found that an ineffective training programme can create skill gaps, leaving participants less prepared to handle workplace demands. The study highlights that training needs analysis plays a crucial role in work-readiness. The training needs analysis of the EPWP guarantees that the training is both impactful and resource-efficient, providing advantages for participants.

The result of the current study indicate that planning and the design of the training positively impact work-readiness at the $B = 0.285$, $\beta = 0.327$, $p < 0.001$. The results also indicate that the designing of the training programme offer EPWP participants the opportunity to apply their learning and enhance their confidence in securing future employment opportunities. The participants receive effective skills through the design of the training programme that improves good performance. The findings are supported by a study conducted by Ahmid at el. (2023). This study found that training and planning should be taken into consideration when developing a training and development programme. The employability of graduates is essential to meet the country's needs for 21st century workers. Training preparation enables graduates to effectively fulfil the requirements of the global industrial market.

The results of this study, as shown in Table 7. indicate a significant impact of training implementation on work-readiness, with the the $B = 0.129$, $\beta = 0.150$, $p < 0.014$. Junipitoyo et al. (2021) state that the Implementation of training programmes represents a significant advancement of the skills and knowledge of trainees; it is a key solution to achieving and integrating on-the-job training. The EPWP programme is implemented in a way that bridges the gap between academic knowledge and the practical skills needed in the workplace, enhancing trainees' prospects of finding employment.

The results of the study indicate that feedback and support have no statistically significant impact on work-readiness, as evidenced by a high p -value of 0.478 $B = 0.044$, $\beta = 0.049$. This means that the feedback and support provided by EPWP to participants does not significantly influence their work-readiness. Feedback and support enable trainees to actively engage in their own development, which can enhance motivation and satisfaction. Feedback allows the trainer to refine their training need analysis and implementation of the training, promoting ongoing improvement in the quality of training. Feedback serves as an assessment tool that determines whether participants gained the desired outcomes of the programme (Ahmid et al., 2023). The Support offered by the EPWP enables participants to identify areas for improvement, which influences personal and professional development. Embracing support improves the participants' confidence, reinforcing abilities and preparedness for professional challenges.

The success of training programmes plays a crucial role in preparing participants for the workforce by providing them with the essential skills, knowledge and confidence needed to excel in their jobs. Based on the findings, the EPWP provides high-quality training which ensures that participants grasp important concepts and acquire hands-on skills, and it gives participants an understanding of workplace expectations, helping them to be better equipped to handle job responsibilities. Providing the participants with relevant training programmes improves skills, offers an insight into the workplace and prepares participants for successful careers and solid career development.

Hypothesis 2:

The results of this current study offer support to the Ha2: There is a statistically significant impact of the training and development provided by the EPWP on participants work readiness.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

The last objective of the study was to determine the difference in the perceptions of the effectiveness of training and development and work-readiness of EPWP participants based on their demographic variables. A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine the differences in perception levels of work-readiness and training and development across age groups and highest qualification. This section provides the interpretation of the results found in the study with regards to the third objective.

Table 8. indicates that results for the mean scores for age groups were: 18 – 22 ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.402$), age group 23 – 27 ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.397$), age group 28 – 32 ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.488$), and age group 33 – 35 ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.506$). The p value is <0.05 which means that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the four age groups. This result indicates that the EPWP programme is designed to meet the needs of each age group to effectively enhance the participants' work-readiness. By addressing these diverse age categories, the EPWP programme can ensure that participants are equipped and ready to contribute effectively to the workplace. The results of a study conducted by Govender (2021) indicates that although age is not a primary factor in determining the preparedness of trainees, demographic information plays a crucial role in the success of trainees. The findings also highlight that an effective training programme contributes to better outcomes of readiness. The significant ANOVA result ($F = 4.396$, $p < 0.05$) suggests that employees' perceptions of work readiness and training and development differ meaningfully across age categories. Specifically, older employees (aged 28–35) tend to report higher levels of perceived training effectiveness and readiness for work compared to their younger counterparts (aged 18–27). This pattern may reflect the influence of accumulated workplace experience, increased exposure to professional training, and greater familiarity with the EPWP systems among older employees.

These findings are consistent with prior research in human resource development, which indicates that age and work experience often contribute to enhanced confidence, competence, and readiness to perform job tasks effectively (Foko,2015). Younger employees, particularly those aged 23–27, may still be in the early stages of adapting to workplace expectations, which could explain their relatively lower mean scores. From a practical perspective, the results imply that training and development initiatives might need to be tailored to different age cohorts to maximize their effectiveness. For instance, younger employees may benefit from more structured onboarding and mentorship programs to bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace readiness, while older employees could be offered advanced or leadership-oriented training to maintain engagement and skill relevance.

A one-way ANOVA between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the differences between levels of education on the perception levels of work-readiness and training and development. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the four categories of education (see Tables 10. and 11.). The mean scores for education levels were certificate ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.512$), diploma ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.366$), degree ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.421$), and postgraduate qualification ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.408$) (see Table). The statistically significant ANOVA result ($F = 5.046$, $p < 0.05$) confirms that perceptions of work readiness and training and development differ meaningfully according to employees' educational qualifications. Specifically, participants with Certificate qualifications reported the highest levels of perceived work readiness and training and development effectiveness, while those with Diplomas reported the lowest levels.

This finding may suggest that employees with lower formal qualifications (such as Certificate holders) may rely more heavily on organizational training to develop practical, job-related competencies, and therefore, they perceive training efforts more positively. Conversely, employees with higher qualifications (Diploma, Degree, or Postgraduate) may have higher expectations of training content and delivery and might view existing training programs as less challenging or less aligned with their advanced skill levels.

Hypothesis 3

The result of the current study supports the Ha3: There is a statically significant difference in perceptions of the effectiveness of the training and development on work-readiness among EPWP participants based on age. The results also indicate a statistically significant difference in perceptions-based on participants' qualifications.

5.8 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS

Table 12. below provides a summary of the research objective, hypothesis and the findings associated with each hypothesis.

Table 12. Summary of research hypothesis, results and decision

Research objective	Research Hypothesis	Research results	Decision
Research objective 1: To determine the nature of relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided by the EPWP.	H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between training and development, and work-readiness provided the EPWP.	Significant positive relationship	Supported
Research Objective 2: To the impact of training and development provided by the EPWP on work- readiness.	H2: There is a statistically significant impact of the training and development provided by the EPWP on work-readiness.	Significant impact	Supported
Research Objective 3: To determine the difference in the perceptions of the effectiveness of training development and work-readiness of EPWP participants based on Age.	H3: There are statistically significant difference perceptions of the effectiveness of training development	Significant difference	supported

	on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on Age.		
Research Objective 3: To determine the difference in the perceptions of the effectiveness of training development and work-readiness of EPWP participants based on Qualification.	H3: There are statistically significant difference perceptions of the effectiveness of training development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on Qualification.	Significant difference	supported

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the data preparation process focusing on key decisions made, particularly in handling missing values. It also provided an explanation of the demographic variables from the questionnaires which included gender, highest qualification, contract duration, age category and race - all presented through diagrams and graphs. Additionally, the chapter reported the means for two key variables and uses Pearson-Product-Moment correlation to examine the relationship between training and development and work-readiness in the EPWP. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the impact of training and development on work-readiness. Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess how different age groups and education levels impact work-readiness and training and development. Lastly, this chapter provided a detailed discussion of the finding based of the objective, hypothesis and aim of the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the conclusions and limitations of the research and offers recommendations related to training and development and work-readiness. It presents the conclusions drawn from the literature review and research findings. It also provides an overview of the identified limitations and makes recommendations for future research.

6.2. OVERVIEW OF THE KEY VARIABLES

6.2.1 Training and Development

Training and development is an essential component of modern HR management, and the scope varies across different organisations. It equips employees with skills and knowledge that help them to make better decisions and solve problems more effectively.

Training and development are designed to enhance employee skills, abilities and knowledge to perform tasks effectively. It involves shaping employee behaviour to align with organisational expectations. This study focuses on training programmes that prepare trainees to meet modern workplace demands, which have evolved due to technological advancements and globalisation. Effective training helps new employees adapt to these challenges and meet workplace expectations.

The systematic model of training and development consists of four phases, namely needs assessment, design, delivery, and evaluation. The first phase identifies skill gaps, knowledge deficiencies, and inappropriate attitudes, providing direction for addressing these issues. Designing a training programme is the next phase, which tailors the programme to meet specific objectives for individuals or groups (Dhawan, 2023). Delivery involves the actual implementation of the training, where participants engage in learning activities, guided by an experienced training team to ensure effective execution (Mabrouk, 2021). Finally, the evaluation phase assesses whether the training has led to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, with participant feedback used to improve future programmes.

Well-designed training empowers employees and fosters a sense of respect. Training and development promote shared understanding of core values, offers opportunities for skill acquisition, and provides a supportive space to address workplace challenges. In the rapidly changing and competitive job market, training and development programmes in the workplace are popular methods for fostering youth skill development and job creations (Tahir et al., 2019) and assist new entry employees in their career paths. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a government-initiated programme to reduce youth unemployment through various projects that offer young people training and development and temporary jobs to enhance their skills and prepare them for the workplace.

6.2.2. Work-readiness

Work-readiness has gained new importance worldwide as countries and organisations strive to attract, nurture, and retain their most talented and skilled workers (Guttermann, 2023). Due to technological advancements, globalisation, economic growth, and the drive for competitive advantage, organisations increasingly prioritise high-quality service, the concept have different terminologies used by researchers such as: *employability*, *work-readiness* or *work-preparedness* are some of the terms that are used to explain the general skills that new entry employees or new graduates must possess to succeed in the workplace.

Work-readiness is defined as the degree to which graduates possess the attitudes, characteristics, worker traits, and coping mechanisms necessary to succeed in jobs (Janeke, 2021). South Africa has a high youth unemployment rate caused by the mismatch between the skills that new entry employees from higher education institution possess and the needs and desires of the industry.

The graduate capital model, developed by Michael Tomlison, is used in this study. It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding graduate employability, emphasising the importance of five types of capital, namely human, social, cultural, identity and psychological.

Human capital involves the skills and knowledge acquired through formal education and experience, while social capital refers to the networks and connections that help graduates access job opportunities (Masilela, 2024). Cultural capital refers to the

cultural knowledge and behaviours valued in the job market, and identity capital refers to how graduates' self-perceptions and career-related identities influence their employment prospects. Lastly, psychological capital is essential for resilience, adaptability, and decision-making, enabling graduates to overcome challenges and uncertainties in their career paths (Tomlison, 2017). By using this model, organisations can support graduates, including mature students, by providing targeted resources like workshops and networking opportunities to help them leverage these forms of capital and enhance employability (Tomlison, 2017; Wood et al., 2017).

6.2.3 The relationship between training and development and work-readiness.

In recent years, many developing countries have experienced a significant shift from manufacturing-based industries to service-oriented sectors (Lawton et al., 2023). This transformation has underscored the growing importance of training and skills development. As Foko (2015) highlight, workers must continuously adapt, enhance their abilities, and remain flexible to stay relevant in an ever-evolving workplace driven by industry shifts, market demands, and technological advancements. Magwenyana (2020) emphasises that fostering a skilled economy is key to growth, innovation and individual empowerment. Investment in training and skills development programmes goes beyond academic instruction, equipping graduates with the skills necessary to secure employment or to be work-ready. To be considered employable and meet the demands of the workplace, recent graduates must acquire essential skills, competencies and knowledge (Mashigo, 2014).

6.3 CONCLUSION BASED ON THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

First research objective

The objective of the study was to determine the nature of the relationship between training and development and work-readiness provided by the EPWP. It was found that the EPWP programme boosts the employability of its participants. The findings highlight a strong connection between training and development and the work-readiness of EPWP participants. This suggests that graduates involved in the EPWP are more likely to secure employment. The programme provides trainees with direct exposure to workplace dynamics, standards, and future expectations. This exposure

does not only prepare them for future employment, but it also lays a foundation for long-term career growth and adaptability in a constantly changing job market.

Second research objective

The second objective of this current study was to explore the impact of training and development provided by EPWP on work-readiness. The result of the study shows that the overall training and development programme had a significant impact on the work-readiness of the participants. This implies that the programme offers top-notch training, which ensures that participants understand key concepts, gain practical skills and familiarise themselves with workplace expectations, thereby better preparing themselves to manage job responsibilities. Successful implementation of training programmes is vital for enhancing work-readiness (Maselela,2024). Training programmes equip trainees with the necessary skills beyond academic education, improving their employability and ability to meet workplace demands (Ndou, 2015). The EPWP programme improves trainees' chances of securing employment by helping them to develop strong personality traits as shown by the results of the work-readiness mean. The mean score for work competencies exceeds the mid-point, which suggests that EPWP helps the trainees to develop a work ethic, communication abilities and problem-solving which are high priority work competences valued in career growth. Briefly, the training and development programme of EPWP enhances the competitiveness of participants in the job market, making them more appealing to potential employers and improving long-term career success.

Third research objective

Lastly the study's objective was to determine the difference in perceptions of the effectiveness of training development on work-readiness of EPWP participants based on demographic variables. The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the four age groups. The EPWP programme is designed to cater to different age groups, enhancing participants work-readiness. Age category is not a key factor in determining the work readiness, but demographic information significantly impacts their success. The study also emphasises that effective training programmes leads to better work-readiness.

The results of the study indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of educations and training and development. Training provides essential foundational skills, while further training is crucial for refining these skills, aligning them with industry demands, and ensuring that individuals regardless of their educational backgrounds are fully prepared for the workforce. Training and development bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills needed to succeed in specific jobs or careers.

6.4 LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were identified in the study:

- One limitation is that the study was restricted to employees listed in the EPWP National Youth Service database, which excluded other potential participants who were not recruited to complete the survey questionnaire. Although the sample size was sufficiently large to enhance the generalisability of the results, this exclusion may limit the broader applicability of the findings.
- Another limitation is that most participants had obtained certificates as their highest qualifications. This suggests that they may require basic or introductory training to build foundational skills before progressing to more advanced elements in the programme. Participants with diplomas or degrees may already possess higher levels of expertise and abilities, which they can apply in a training or development programme.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicated that more research is needed to examine the relationship between training and development and work-readiness. It is recommended that the following shortcomings of the study be addressed in future research:

- It is therefore recommended that training coordinators ensure that the design of the training aligns with the training needs of participants. The T&D should be

designed in such way that it aligns with the development needs of the participants.

- The study's results highlighted the organisational skills of the EPWP participants. It is recommended that trainees set clear and achievable goals for themselves. They should break down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable components and focus on one task at a time. It is also recommended that the trainees should consistently evaluate how they are organising their work and reflect on what is effective.
- The study's results indicate that the training needs analysis was slightly lower than the mid-point of the range. It is therefore recommended that training programmes should be directly connected to the organisation's overall strategic objectives. It should address both immediate needs and long-term goals, helping to bridge the gap between the current skills of trainees and the organisation's vision. An in-depth analysis of job roles and responsibilities should be conducted to identify the skills and knowledge required to perform tasks efficiently. The focus should be on recognising lack of skills; areas where trainees fall short of expectations, and the training should be designed to meet these specific needs.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

- Future research should apply a variety of approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, as these may provide deeper insights into the connections between work-readiness and training and development.
- Future studies should extend the constructs of training and development and work-readiness to include other job-related outcomes, such as career development and career paths, job performance, employee motivation and learning agility.

- It is also recommended that future researchers focus on individuals who have already completed their training and development programmes. This group can provide valuable insights, as they possess the knowledge and experience on the transfer and application of learning to the workplace.
- Future researchers could also include or assess supervisors of the training and development programmes, as they play a pivotal role in the success of training initiatives. Supervisors are often responsible for overseeing the application of learned skills in the workplace and for providing ongoing support and feedback to participants.

6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an important insight into the relationship between training and development and work-readiness, specifically in the context of the EPWP in Mpumalanga. The results underscore the substantial influence of training on participants' readiness for work and their employability, stressing the importance of effective programmes to tackle youth unemployment and equip individuals with the skills required for today's workforce. Although the study has limitations, it establishes a strong basis for future research on the subject and offers actionable recommendations for enhancing training and development programmes to better prepare individuals for successful careers.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Ref: UMP/ Mkhomole/07/2024

Date: 16 July 2024

Tshegofatso Natia Mkhomole (201869241)

School of Development Studies

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES

University of Mpumalanga

RE: APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THE STUDY:

***The effects of Training and Development Strategies on Work Readiness of the EPWP
Employed Youth in Mpumalanga Province.***

Reference is made to the above heading.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences) UMP, approved the ethical clearance of the above-mentioned study.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach, and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be stored securely in the school/division for a period of 5 years.

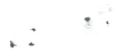
The Ethical Clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter, Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.



Prof. Ogujiuba Kanayo Chairperson: FREC,

Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences University of Mpumalanga

ANNEXURE B: GATEKEEPER LETTER



Enquiries: Ms. TN MKHOMOLE
Cellphone: 076 077 1324
Email address: tshigofatsonashia85@gmail.com

Private Bag X11283, Mbombela 1200, South Africa, Tel: (013) 002 0232

TO	Mr. MC Morolo Head: Public Works, Road and Transport
FROM	Ms. TN Mkhomole Student : University Of Mpumalanga (Masters of Industrial Psychology)
DATE	31 July 2024
SUBJECT	REQUEST TO CONDUCT MASTERS RESEARCH SURVEY WITH PARTICIPANTS UNDER THE EPWP PROGRAMME WITHIN MPUMALANGA

Dear Mr. Morolo

My name is Tshigofatso Natia Mkhomole, (Student No:201869241); I am currently enrolled for Masters of Arts in Industrial Psychology at the University of Mpumalanga .This letter serves to request for you permission to conduct a research survey with 150 participants employed under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), specifically the National Youth Service. The title of my research study is: **"Investigating the effect of training and development strategy on work readiness of participants under the EPWP in Mpumalanga province"**

The purpose of my research study is to contribute to the current understanding and knowledge about the how the Expanded Public Works Programme reduce unemployment, prepare young people to be work ready and be employable within Mpumalanga province.

I would like to make it clear that this research study is solely for academic purposes, and the participants name or the employees who will participate in the survey will remain anonymous. The Department of Public Works, Road and Transport will not be liable for any financial responsibility on this research study. This research is conducted under the supervision of Dr T Mtetwa, currently a lecture at the University of Mpumalanga. The research will be guided by the University of Mpumalanga's ethics policy, together with the POPI Act in ensuring that personal information is kept private. Accordingly, details of the project will not be publicized without consent or permission from the participants.

Kind regard



Ms. TN Mkhomole
Researcher: Masters of Industrial Psychology
Date: 31 July 2024

DECISION

The recommendation requesting the Head of Public Works, Road and Transport to approve the request to conduct the research survey is:

Approved / ~~Not Approved~~ / ~~Amended~~



Mr. MC Moroio
Head: Public Works, Road and Transport
Date: 07/08/2024.

ANNEXURE C: CONSENT FORM



Researcher: Tshigofatso Natia Mkhomole, 0760771325

Supervisor: Dr Trevor Mtetwa

Contact: 0130020386

: E-mail address: Trevor.Mtetwa@ump.ac.za

Dear Potential Research Participant,

I am Tshigofatso Mkhomole, a Master of Arts in Industrial Psychology student at the University of Mpumalanga in the Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences. You are invited to participate in a research project titled: **The effects of Training and Development Strategies on Work Readiness of the EPWP Employed Youth in Mpumalanga Province.**

The research objectives are:

1. To determine the nature of relationship between training and development and work readiness provided by EPWP in Mpumalanga province.
2. To explore the impact of training and development provided by EPWP on work readiness in Mpumalanga province.

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be required to do the following:

- Sign this informed consent form
- Participate in completing the study's questionnaires:

Informed consent

- ✓ I agree to voluntarily take part in this research project.
- ✓ I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and may choose to no longer participate without having to explain myself.

- ✓ I am aware that the information I provide on the questionnaire is for educational/academic purposes.
- ✓ I understand that my name, Identity, or personal information will not be recorded.
- ✓ I have been provided with, and have read, the information regarding this research study.
- ✓ I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study and received satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details I wanted.
- ✓ I agree to answer the questions to the best of my ability.
- ✓ I understand that I may refuse to answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable answering.
- ✓ By signing this letter, I give free and informed consent to participate in this research study.

DATE			
I do consent to take part in the study		PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE	
RESEARCHER NAME	Tshigofatso Mkhomole	RESEARCHER SIGNATURE	

ANNEXURE D: QUESTIONNAIRE



Kindly, answer each question honestly and accurately as your participation in this process is essential to the success of this study.

Section A: Biographical Data

Instructions: Please mark with a cross (x) next to the most appropriate response

1. Please indicate your gender.

Male (1) ☐	Female (2) ☐	Other (3) ☐
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2. What is your Highest Qualification?

Certificate (1) ☐	Diploma (2) ☐	Degree (3) ☐	Postgraduate (4) ☐
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3. How long have you been contracted to the organization?

0-6 months (1) ☐	7-12 months (2) ☐	13-18 months (3) ☐	19-24 months (4) ☐	25-30 months (5) ☐
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4. Please indicate your age category.

18-22 (1) ☐	23-27 (2) ☐	28-32 (3) ☐	32-35 years (4) ☐
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5. Please indicate your race.

Black (1)	White (2)	Coloured (3)	Indian (4)	Other (5)
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Section B: Work Readiness Scale

Kindly rate the statements below which best indicate your view. *The following questions describe work readiness. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement by marking with an "X" your response using this scale.*

Example:

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>I have received career guidance from my supervisor.</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Personality traits

	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I try to control events rather than being a victim of circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I do not take criticism personal	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am not comfortable with change and uncertainty.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am able to work effectively in different environments.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Listening and learning is more important than showing your knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I always make sure that I listen carefully to the instructions provided by my supervisors	1	2	3	4	5
7	When I hear about a new idea or approach, I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I Know how to control my feelings	1	2	3	4	5

Organisational Skills

	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I keep my work clear and organized	1	2	3	4	5

2	I prioritize my personal need irrespective of how urgent and important the tasks my supervisor gave me.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The economic and social influences that affects the department don't matter to me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I feel like my interest and values are not matched with the department.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I applied for this job simply because I want to gain financial benefit.	1	2	3	4	5
6	It's not my responsibility to bring change in the department.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have a great feeling of commitment to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My behavior is guided by the rule, procedures and policies of the department.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I feel like I have too many responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5

Work Competence

	Items	SD	D	N	A	SD
1	It is important to manage my own career development in order to secure employment.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I rarely leave tasks to the last minutes.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I take pride and put effort in every task that am required to do	1	2	3	4	5
4	I always feel satisfied when my workplace is in order.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Most of my work tools /equipment's are kept in the same place.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I will always manage my time, when I am given a task	1	2	3	4	5
7	I share information openly and honestly.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I do not like to take risks in order to improve the productivity of the department.	1	2	3	4	5

Social Intelligence

	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
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1	I am not expected to use my leadership skills as an entry level graduate	1	2	3	4	5
2	I prefer working alone; teamwork is not for me.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am always confident in the work that I do.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I don't make effort to develop and maintain relationships with my co-workers or supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I understand the importance of cause-and-effect relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
6	It's important to respect other people, irrespective of their age.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I don't waste time helping my co-workers to complete their task.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C: Training and development

Instructions: Please indicate with an "X" next to selected answers

What type of ongoing training programmes have you participated in the last year.

Workshop	1
Seminar	2
Conference	3
Practical training	4
Online course	5
On the job	6
Other - Please Specify	

Other: _____

Before joining the training programme what were you doing?

High School Student	1
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Tertiary/College student	2
Unemployed	3
Employed /	4
Other -Please Specify	

Other _____

How often do you have meetings with supervisor regarding your performance progress?

Weekly (1)	Monthly (2)	Quarterly (3)	Mid-year (4)	Annually (5)
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How would you rate your performance so far?

Poor (1)	Average (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
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How would you rate the overall quality of the training?

Poor (1)	Average (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
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Do you feel like the training has improved your skillsets?

No (1)	Yes (2)
--------	---------

How would you rate the effectiveness of the current training programs offered by the organization?

Completely ineffective	1
Ineffective in most regards	2
Moderately effective	3
Effective in most regards	4

Completely effective	5
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Were you provided with a clear strategy and guidelines of the training programme?

No (1)	Yes (2)
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Instructions: The following questions describe training and development. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement by marking with a cross “X” under your response using this scale.

Example:

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>I have received career guidance from my supervisor.</i>	1	2	3	4	5

Training Needs Analysis

Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My strengths and weakness were identified before the training commenced.	1	2	3	4	5
The training is focused on long-term skills development	1	2	3	4	5
The training provided aligns with the current skills shortages in the country	1	2	3	4	5
Personal development plans were completed before the training	1	2	3	4	5
The training plan aligns with my future career needs	1	2	3	4	5

Planning & Design of Training

Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The training has been allocated the adequate time period for me to gain the necessary skills.	1	2	3	4	5
The hours I work daily are enough for me to complete my duties.	1	2	3	4	5
The budget allocated for the training is not enough for me to cover my basic needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The training is aligned with the objective of the department.	1	2	3	4	5
The design of the training is based on the skill deficiency of participants.	1	2	3	4	5
The objective and purpose of the training programme were clearly communicated to me	1	2	3	4	5
There is good balance between the theory and practical aspects of the training	1	2	3	4	5
Training content is organised and easy to follow	1	2	3	4	5
The materials and tools are adequate for effective training.	1	2	3	4	5
We are given adequate realistic scenarios related to real job tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
The practical aspects of the training are not adequate to acquire the skills needed in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5

Implementation of Training

Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The delivery of the training does not match my career goals	1	2	3	4	5
Training facilitators are not knowledgeable about the training programme	1	2	3	4	5
The methods used during training are effective	1	2	3	4	5
Training delivery is always learner centred.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the overall aspects of the training delivery.	1	2	3	4	5
I am not provided with enough guidance to complete my daily task.	1	2	3	4	5

Feedback and Support

Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I don't receive emotional support from the management.	1	2	3	4	5
We always get helpful feedback when we are practicing	1	2	3	4	5
The feedback we get is always related to the work we do.	1	2	3	4	5
Feedback is always provided on time.	1	2	3	4	5
We are always given a platform whenever we seek assistance.	1	2	3	4	5

Facilitators always ensure engagement and active participation during training.	1	2	3	4	5
Facilitators show great understanding of individual trainee strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5

Relevance and usefulness

Items:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Training has helped me to better understand the strategic goals of the department.	1	2	3	4	5
Training has helped me to understand the skills needed to be successful in my career	1	2	3	4	5
Training makes \me better understands how meaningful my role is in the department.	1	2	3	4	5
This training programme is not necessary for my future career growth	1	2	3	4	5
The training enabled me to understand new concepts and skills related to the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
The overall concepts are not relevant enough to the work I need to do. Items:	1	2	3	4	5
The training is quite relevant to my current work.	1	2	3	4	5
All the activities were related to real job tasks and topics.	1	2	3	4	5
The training has helped me to improve my professional network.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your participation!!

ANNEXURE E: PLAGIASM REPORT

Final Thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

17 %	15 %	11 %	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

7	uir.unisa.a c.za Internet Source	www.lsst.ac Internet Source
8 2	hdl.handl e.net Internet Source	lmi-research.org.za Internet Source
9		scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source
3	researchs pace.ukzn .ac.za Internet Source	
4	vital.seals. ac.za:808 0 Internet Source	
5	core.ac.uk Internet Source	
6	www.cour sehero.co m Internet Source	

ANNEXURE: F EDITORS LETTER

Fran Saunders

academic and business writing solutions

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To whom it may concern

This is to certify that the thesis, *Investigating the effect of training and development strategy on work readiness of participants under the EPWP in Mpumalanga province* by Tshigofatso Mkhomole, has been professionally edited for language, grammar, and clarity. The editing was carried out by Fran Saunders, ensuring that the document meets high linguistic and academic standards.

The scope of the editing process included:

- Grammar, spelling, and punctuation correction
- Sentence structure and clarity enhancement
- Consistency in terminology and formatting
- Readability and flow improvement

Please note that while the editing process has improved the language quality of the document, the content, arguments, and originality remain the sole responsibility of the author.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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25 March 2025 – Western Cape



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