

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Evaluation of the internship programme within the
Department of
Economic Development, Tourism and
Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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requirements for the degree of
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Governance**

College of Law and Management Studies

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DECLARATION

I, Cheryl Singh declare that:

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ABSTRACT

South Africa remains a country plagued by high unemployment, poverty, and inequality, still evident decades after achieving democracy. South Africa's official unemployment rate stands at 32.9%, with 10.2% having a tertiary qualification. The situation amongst the youth in South Africa is more dire, with 44.7% having no formal training. Youth unemployment is a global crisis and, in South Africa, this is accompanied by increasing poverty levels. There needs to be greater intervention into skills training, introducing entrepreneurship programmes, and improving the employability of youth through internship programmes to allow the unemployed to gain valuable work-related experience and enhance their tertiary qualifications. In this regard, the South African government has passed various pieces of key legislation to assist the youth, as well as unemployed individuals with tertiary qualifications, to prepare them for the move from tertiary education to gainful employment. The internship programme is one of government's methods of providing work-related experience to unemployed graduates. This study, therefore, focused on the graduate internship programme at the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environment Affairs (EDTEA), KwaZulu-Natal. A key objective of the study was to evaluate whether the skills and experience gained by the interns was relevant to their qualifications in assisting them to find gainful employment, and to determine if EDTEA was complying with the national framework for implementing internships. Through a qualitative study, using non-probability sampling, interns and mentors were interviewed face-to-face for data collection. The findings indicated that some of the interns did, indeed, acquire relevant skills and experience in line with their qualifications. One challenge was that the interns had experienced limited access to mentoring by their mentors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the study. It is envisaged that future studies could be conducted on a national basis to determine current trends experienced in other government departments.

Key words: internship programme, unemployment, skills and experience, mentoring, youth.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Initiative for South Africa
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EDTEA	Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NDP	National Development Plan
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGP	New Growth Path
NPC	National Planning Commission
PERSAL	Personal and Salary System
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PSETA	Public Sector Education and Training
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETA	Sector Education and Training
Strategic Framework for HRD Vision 2015	Human Resource Development for the Public Service: Strategic Framework Vision 2015
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW AND SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

South Africa transitioned to a democracy in 1994, offering hope that all its citizens would have equal rights, and promising a free and fair society. According to the National Planning Commission (NPC), after more than 25 years of democracy, South Africa is regarded as one of the most inequitable countries, where millions of the citizens live in abject poverty (Republic of South Africa (RSA) NPC, 2012:24). In addition, the current unemployment rate has spiralled to 32.9%, according to the ‘official definition’, which is lower than the highest-ever level of 35.3%, recorded during the fourth quarter of 2021. The unemployment rate recorded during the fourth quarter of 2021 was the highest level since data was collated for the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8).

The South African government implemented the National Development Plan (NDP, 2030) to alleviate the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment by 2030 (RSA NPC, 2012:24). It is noted that youth unemployment, which stands at a staggering 46.5% for the age group 15 to 34, remains the country’s biggest challenge to date. Currently, 10.2% of the unemployed have a tertiary qualification, yet the ability of tertiary graduates to find employment is hindered by the lack of necessary and essential workplace experience (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). Government is deeply involved in training and education to promote the employability of the unemployed youth sector by providing opportunities, such as internship programmes to graduates, to enable them to gain the necessary work experience and skills (Koma, 2010:1).

The KwaZulu-Natal province, in particular, has an unemployment rate of 30.9% (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). This study was undertaken within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environment Affairs (EDTEA) in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and sought to establish whether the current internship programme

provides the necessary workplace competences. The study also set out to determine whether it assists the interns in finding permanent employment, which could contribute to reducing youth unemployment, poverty and inequality in the province in particular, and in the country overall.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

South Africa has excessively high unemployment rates and the current unemployment rate in South Africa is 32.9%, with that in KwaZulu-Natal standing at 30.9% (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). According to the NDP 2030, the government needs to focus on growing the economy, which will have an impact on the creation of more jobs, while ensuring that job seekers have the necessary education and job skills to gain meaningful employment (RSA NPC, 2012:27). Government at all levels has been mandated to manage socio-economic transformation, and EDTEA, in particular, is the provincial custodian in this regard. It is, therefore, a leader in the initiatives around policy related to the promotion of growth and development in various segments of the economy, with the present policies focused on job creation and skills development. It is intended that this focus area will address the challenges related to unemployment, inequality and poverty. One such policy initiative targets youth graduates *via* the internship programme, with the intention of creating a platform to provide the necessary skills to supplement the qualification that the graduate interns already hold. However, with policy, implementation is key to the success or failure of the government's initiatives in enhancing service delivery, and other mandates. Therefore, key factors such as the impact of the internship programme on graduate youth employment, and factors contributing to graduate youth employment, are fundamental elements that ought to be investigated; making this study relevant and timely (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012:8).

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focused on the following key questions:

- Is the current EDTEA's internship policy being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in legislation?
- Are the interns receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification?

- Is the internship programme providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the study are to:

- Evaluate whether the current internship policy of EDTEA is being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in the legislation.
- Ascertain if the interns are receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification.
- Determine if the internship programme is providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The issue of unemployment, and specifically youth unemployment, has reached new heights in South Africa, and it is of immense concern to all key stakeholders in the country. Just over 10% of the unemployed sector of the population possess a tertiary qualification (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). Government has introduced legislation to assist in alleviating unemployment, such as that for the internship programme. Internship programmes are meant to provide young graduates with workplace skills to assist them in finding meaningful employment. This study, therefore, focused on the graduate internship programme within EDTEA and sought to determine whether the programme is managed adequately, and if the appointed interns gain the relevant skills necessary to seek permanent, meaningful employment. This gainful employment will, as per the NDP of 2030, partly contribute to addressing South Africa's current issues of rising unemployment and poverty.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research paradigms are associated with certain research methodologies. Authors du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:19) noted that paradigms provide guidance regarding what, and how, research should be conducted and interpreted.

The qualitative research that was used in this study is focused on knowing the methods used in a community and traditional environment that outline various behavioural configurations, and ultimately provides a narrative consistent with those involved in the study (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012:126).

The qualitative research method allowed for information gathering and an understanding of the internship programme from the point of view of interns at EDTEA. The qualitative method allowed for both the views of homogenous and diverse groups of people to be explored, and assisted in unpacking differing perspectives within EDTEA. The reason for using the qualitative method was to acquire a thorough understanding of the internship programme in the EDTEA.

The study site for this research was at the EDTEA Head Office, located at 270 Jabu Ndlovu Street, Pietermaritzburg, Umgungundlovu District, KwaZulu-Natal. The target population for this study consists of 171 interns who are currently employed by the EDTEA, and 70 mentors who provide guidance and supervision to the interns. This study employed a non-probability sampling method, which is preferred for qualitative studies, and where the tendency is to have a smaller sample. Within non-probability sampling, there are also different techniques to choose the sample for the study. This study considered the convenience sampling technique which allows for the participants to be chosen, based on their ease of availability. The sample size used for this study comprised of a total of 13 participants, including 10 interns and 3 mentors.

1.7 LIMITATION OF STUDY

Limitations are restrictions that have a bearing on, or influence, the study. Limitations include aspects such as access to information, resources or time (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:275). The focus of this study was in the EDTEA within its policy mandates. This

could be a limitation, as other provincial and national departments may have individual policies which could have implications that may differ from the EDTEA. This study focused on only one intake of interns, and this may be seen as a limitation.

1.8 ETHICAL ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

A gatekeeper's letter of approval was sought from EDTEA to request approval for the study to be conducted. The ethical clearance process was followed, as set out by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The study conformed with ethical clearance processes and rules that the UKZN prescribes, and in relation to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). According to Shaidi (2013:155), important aspects of ethical consideration in social research include the voluntary involvement and anonymity of contributors, and confidentiality. Participants completed and signed a declaration of consent which confirmed their understanding of their participation in the study and their right to anonymity. Prior permission was sought to record the interview. Participants were not forced to participate and could withdraw from participation without any penalties or prejudices; nor were there any financial inducements for participants to participate in the study.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The chapter summaries, below, provide an overall picture of the study, through an introduction to the research topic; the South African landscape governing the internship programme; youth unemployment and the means to mitigate youth unemployment; the research design and methodological aspects that were selected for the study; the research findings and an analysis of the findings; with the final chapter focusing on making recommendations and concluding the study.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO STUDY

Chapter 1 covered the background to the study, the research problem, research objectives and research questions. This was followed by explaining the significance of the study, and any limitations that may have had an impact on the study. It introduced the research methodology selected for the study site and the sample used for the research. Ethical considerations are imperative and required compliance by both the EDTEA and UKZN. The chapter concluded by providing a summary of the subsequent chapters.



CHAPTER 2: THE SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE GOVERNING INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Chapter 2 explored policies and legislation within the South African context that endorse the internship programme. Theories were also evaluated and the impact these have on internship programmes were explored and contextualised in the chapter. The public policy theory and the human capital theory, with their implementation underpinning some of the objectives of this study, were presented. The evolution of the public administration dichotomy from administration to new public governance was discussed.



CHAPTER 3: INTERNSHIPS TO MITIGATE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

This chapter focused on the major issues facing the South African government's efforts to address salient issues of the research study. These include poverty, inequality and unemployment. South Africa is considered the most unequal country in the world and has one of the highest unemployment and poverty rates, as presented in the literature. The focus was on government's interventions to address these challenges, with specific emphasis on implementing policies that focus on mitigating graduate youth unemployment. These include, amongst others, an internship programme which provides the graduates with entry level employment, thereby alleviating poverty and inequality.



CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS, PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 discusses the design and methodological approach used in this study. The constructivist paradigm was chosen for this study, and a qualitative method was used for data collection in the research. It outlines the various ethical considerations with which the study had to comply. The section details the information accumulated, using themes and sub-themes, and presents an analysis of the information. Through the analysis, findings are revealed, supported by discussions which are corroborated by scholarly literature.



CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. A summary of the various chapters is provided. A summary of the research findings is presented, together with recommendations that could be easily incorporated by the EDTEA in the implementation of the internship programme. Given the rapidly changing working environment, some of the recommendations could be beneficial to other governments departments, and also to private organisations. Lastly, possible areas for further investigation in future studies are suggested.

1.10 CONCLUSION

South Africa is plagued by high levels of unemployment, especially amongst the youth. One of government's inventions in dealing with youth unemployment was to introduce developmental programmes, such as internship programmes, which target unemployed youth graduates. The significance of this study is that it evaluates the internship programme within the EDTEA. This chapter draws on the structured research approach that is highlighted in the chapters comprising the South African landscape governing the internship programme. This forms a theoretical framework for the study which encapsulates the legal and policy framework mandates, public policy and theories on human capital, and the new public governance perspective. This is followed by a synopsis of internships to mitigate unemployment which discusses aspects of unemployment, poverty and youth unemployment in South Africa. Subsequent chapters explain the research methodology and preferred research approach used in the study; findings from

the data collected; analysis; and the recommendations based on the analysis of responses received from participants.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUTH AFRICAN LANDSCAPE GOVERNING INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the South African policies and legislation that underpin the internship programme. The South African government has endorsed various pieces of key legislation to assist the youth, as well as unemployed individuals, with tertiary qualifications to be able to make the transmission from tertiary education to meaningful employment. The EDTEA is introduced and its mandate in the KwaZulu-Natal province is described in the chapter. Policy implementation and the internship programme within EDTEA are discussed in this chapter within the theoretical framework of the new public governance (NPG) perspective.

2.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING THE STUDY

Koma (2010:23) describes the internship programme as one of the South African government's methods of providing work-related experience to unemployed graduates. This is underpinned by mandatory and legislative frameworks comprising various acts; strategic frameworks; regulations; policies; and various legislative source documents. These relevant legislation, and pertinent policy, documents that inform the context of this research are as follows:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended);
- the National Skills Development Strategy III;
- the Skills Development Act, 1998;
- White Paper on Human Resource Development in the Public Service, 1998;
- the Internship Framework for the Public Service, 2001;
- the legislative mandate of EDTEA; and

- the EDTEA's Departmental Internship Policy.

2.2.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

Some of the fundamental principles contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (hereinafter referred to as RSA Constitution, 1996), include the improvement of human rights and equality. According to van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2013:34), the Bill of Rights in the RSA Constitution, 1996, provides a foundation for the promotion of equality and representativity in workplaces, in particular, with reference to the public service. This is emphasised in Section 9 of the Constitution which deals with the equality and fortification of all persons in terms of the law. Equality is further characterised as the right to relish in equal satisfaction of all liberties.

Section 29 of the Constitution states that elementary learning, including for adults, is considered a basic right for all; and higher education through institutions of higher education should be reasonably available to all, through the intervention of the government (RSA Constitution, 1996:26).

The Constitution of South Africa is considered the founding legislation in the country and the ultimate law of the land to ensure all the citizens of South Africa enjoy the benefits provided by the country, and to ensure that all are treated equally and fairly in terms of the law. The right to education is entrenched in the constitution, and this is considered the 'stepping-stone' out of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

2.2.2 Public Service Act, 1994

The act provides a regulatory framework for the organisational and administrative matters of the public service in South Africa. It gives rise to the foundation for employment and employment-related matters including the exit from the public service. Fundamentally, and in accordance with the principles of the RSA Constitution, 1996, the act promotes equality with regard to the filling of positions and states that individuals should be assessed based on skills, training and competence in the public service. New graduates exiting higher education institution's (HEI's) are constantly found lacking the necessary

skills and training required for the majority of advertised jobs. With the internship programme fully supported by government, this allows the new graduates to obtain the necessary skills and training to enter into gainful employment or seek potential opportunities.

2.2.3 Skills Development Act, 97 of 1998

The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, outlines methods that can be used by government and the private sector to enhance and develop the skills of the South African workforce. It underpins skills development and developmental programmes and serves as a foundation for the establishment of institutional and funding frameworks for the National Skills Authority, and the various sector education and training bodies (SETA) (Republic of South Africa, Skills Development Act, 1998: 10). Some of the primary areas of focus, emphasising the relevance of this act, are that employers should be encouraged to provide opportunities for work experience to new entrants, and to develop the workplace into an interactive learning atmosphere to acquire skills.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT’S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT

South Africa is plagued by the triple challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty, and the country has developed various platforms to ensure that the challenges are mitigated. This chapter focuses on the strategic frameworks around skills development as a means of addressing the challenge of unemployment.

2.3.1 The National Planning Commission

The National Planning Commission (NPC) was appointed by President Zuma in 2010. The mandate of the commission was to assess the current challenges of South Africa and to set a vision for 2030, with a plan to achieve the set objectives in order to achieve the 2030 vision.

The commission had identified ‘eliminating poverty and reducing inequality’ as the key strategic objectives. In addressing these objectives, the NPC has identified nine major challenges that would help redress the high levels of poverty and inequality. These challenges are highlighted as follows:

- There are an extremely low number of South Africans who are in employment;
- Education, especially amongst black South Africans is below average;
- The positioning of infrastructure is out of the reach of the majority, is insufficient and is not maintained;
- South Africa’s economy is highly dependent on resources and is not sustainable;
- Spatial challenges are detrimental to the disadvantaged;
- The public health system is confronted with high demand and insufficient resources, which lead to inequality;
- The public service delivers low-value performance;
- Corruption impacts severely on public resources, which weakens the delivery of basic services; and
- Segregation amongst South Africans is high.

The above challenges require co-operation between government, industry and HEIs to try and achieve the strategic objectives of ‘eliminating poverty and reducing inequality’. The findings of the NPC were used to develop the NDP with a vision for 2030. Listed below are the critical actions that are required from the plan.

2.3.1.1 Critical Actions of the National Planning Commission

- Find an inclusive method to alleviate poverty and inequality, and to ensure more people are in employment and more investment projects are initiated;
- Implement plans to increase the entrance to new employment, thus alleviating poverty. These plans also include addressing issues with regards to the social wage, public transport, and rural household earnings;
- Entrench liability in the public sector and make them more focused on being professional, whilst combatting corruption;

- Increase investment from the private sector to generate labour-intensive employment, increase effectiveness and increase export revenue;
- Ensure accountability by government to schools in the education sector;
- Ensure implementation of the national health insurance to better the facilities in the government-funded health services, and to reduce the cost of health care for the majority;
- Increase investment in infrastructure;
- Safeguard the environment;
- Improve spatial patterns to ensure that people are close to employment opportunities; modernise informal housing, and ensure reliable and safe transport; and
- Improve the justice system to eradicate crime.

The NDP had identified that South Africa remains a separated nation where the unemployment and poverty rates are extremely high. The plan outlines government's efforts in its goal to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inequality by 2030. The plan makes reference to introducing incentives to organisations, introducing learnerships, and formalising programmes to employ graduates. This study focussed on the employment of graduates in the EDTEA's internship programme.

2.3.1.2 Initiatives of the National Planning Commission

The NDP has paved the way to address the challenges that South Africa faces, through implementation of various government initiatives. These include, amongst others:

- the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which provides provisional work for the unemployed;
- the New Growth Path (NGP), which is aimed at enhancing development, job creation and equity; and
- the provision of financial assistance to various sectors by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

South Africa is a diverse country and the challenges experienced by its people are far-reaching across the various provinces. The initiatives proposed by the NDP must be addressed by all levels of government. The EDTEA is no exception to this, and it has embraced the NDP to accelerate its service delivery, and to assist in the alleviation of unemployment and poverty for the province of KwaZulu-Natal and its people.

2.3.2 National Skills Development Strategy III

One of the fundamental areas that the National Skills Development Strategy III focuses on is the incorporation of workplace training with theoretical knowledge gained by individuals, either at school or places of higher learning. It further promotes relationships between stakeholders, such as SETAs and employers. It seeks to address high levels of unemployment in South Africa by redressing issues regarding inadequate work experience and skills, especially among young people who exit formal education systems and need to enter the labour market. Skills development should be accessible to all citizens in the country. However, access to education and training remains a challenge for most of the unemployed youth. Strategy implementation is fundamental to skills development and transformation and therefore, as a means of monitoring implementation of the strategy, formal institutions of higher learning and their progress are measured against seven transformation elements. These critical elements are: race; class; gender; age; geography; disability; and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

2.3.3 Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework III

The Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework III is designed to give direction for human resource development within the public service, within the ambit of the greater legislative framework. Built on the foundation of improving public service performance and service delivery, it shows the commitment to development opportunities in the public service. A strategic area, fundamental to this framework, is the focus on capacity building and development. This can be achieved through the promotion of graduate recruitment programmes; the strengthening of workplace learning capacity; and other learning initiatives, including mentoring and coaching programmes. The strategy further promotes developmental programmes, such as the internship

programmes, learnerships and bursary programmes. This could create a platform for the transfer of relevant skills and training.

2.4 POLICY FRAMEWORK ON INTERNSHIPS

The policies governing internships form a structure which comprises principles, standards and procedures for compliance. This allows for important guidelines to be addressed in the implementation of the internship policy.

2.4.1 KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration Policy Framework on Internships

In supporting the national imperatives and objectives, the KwaZulu-Natal province customised their individual internship policy framework in 2012, in order to give strategic direction to the province around matters pertaining to the management of internship programme. The policy focused on unemployed graduates between the ages of 18-35 who would enter the internship programme for a period of 12 months to gain work experience. On successful completion of the internship, graduate interns would receive a certificate of completion indicating the areas of work that they had been exposed to and been developed in. Fundamentally, the policy was meant to address the need for specific skills in the province that were considered to be scarce. Participation in the programme was limited to the unemployed graduate youth looking for employment and residing in the KwaZulu-Natal province, with preference given to youth who resided in rural areas. This policy sought to promote a platform of employment by providing opportunities to youth from diverse backgrounds. It aimed to address key challenges, such as poor access to work experience for graduates; the low awareness by graduates of provincial job and career opportunities; and low levels of practical work experience. The policy further aimed to address the challenge of youth unemployment, which is a serious cause for concern in the South African context at present. (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012:8).

2.4.2 Internship Directive on Programmes in the Public Service

The directive on developmental programmes sets out to give clarity to the Public Service Regulation, 2016, Section 58,74(2), 75 and 26 (2)(e), by stipulating that developmental programmes could mean internship, learnership and apprenticeship programmes, including graduate recruitment schemes. Whilst the directive identifies with various forms of developmental programmes, the various forms of internship programmes are fundamental, and are also of crucial significance when reporting to SETAs and to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). Internship programmes can be classified into the following: graduate internships, where the aim of the programme is to place a person who has obtained a qualification, but cannot find employment due to lack of workplace experience; student internships or work-integrated learning, where the programme is directed to persons who are currently studying towards tertiary qualifications that require a period of work experience for completion; and the candidacy development support programme, which targets professional development and registration with professional bodies (RSA DPSA, 2018).

2.5 ALIGNMENT TO NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL FRAMEWORKS

The KwaZulu-Natal provincial government is aligned to national frameworks through the RSA Constitution, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the NDP, 2030. The SDGs had 17 key priorities, with four of them notably relevant to the study. These include poverty; adequate education for all; finding employment; and growing the economy and reducing inequality. The NDP has its focus on poverty, unemployment and inequality. The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Provincial Growth and Development Strategy Plan, 2030, was developed using the SDGs and the NDP. Figure 2.1 shows the KZN Provincial Growth and Development plan.

Figure 2.1: KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Growth and Developmental Plan



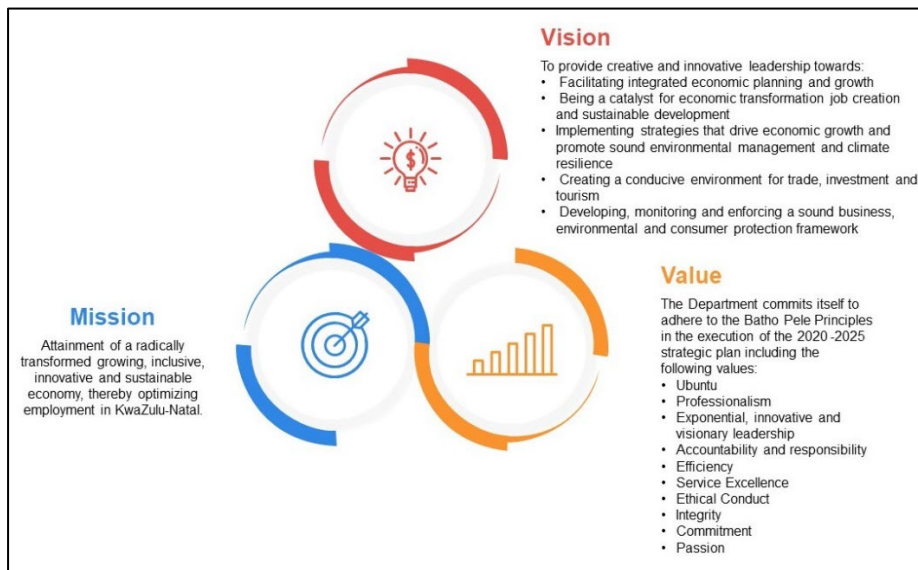
Source: Adapted from KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Planning Commission (2015:11)

The KZN Provincial Growth and Development Plan highlights its vision, strategic goals and the strategic objectives in relation to the NDP. The strategic goals that are relevant to this study are job creation and human resource development. These goals would be achieved by addressing the strategic objectives dealing with, amongst others, job creation programmes; youth development; improving education and aligning skills.

The KZN provincial administration is comprised of eleven provincial departments, each with various mandates to ensure the successful implementation of the KZN growth and development strategy.

The EDTEA is one of the eleven provincial departments that is mandated to implement matters of economic development, environmental affairs and tourism for the province. The EDTEA has a responsibility to ensure that the KZN provincial growth development plan's goals and objectives are implemented and reported to the KZN Provincial Planning Commission. The EDTEA's vision, mission and values, as shown in Figure 2.2 highlight the strategy of the department.

Figure 2.2: EDTEA's Vision, Mission and Values



Source: Adapted from EDTEA Strategic Plan (2020:23)

The commitment by the EDTEA to grow the economy and create jobs is emphasised in its mission and vision statements. The internship programme in the department is part of its effort to promote economic growth and reduce the unemployment rate in the province.

2.5.1 EDTEA's Policy on the Management of the Departmental Graduate Internship Programme

In August 2022, the EDTEA approved its policy on the management of the internship programme, within the public service parameters. The policy addresses various aspects, including aspects such as the stipends payable to the interns; the 24-month period of employment for the internship programme; and setting out the criteria for the implementation of the internship programme. The policy targets unemployed graduate youth between the ages of 18-35 years who reside in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The policy seeks to provide those who qualify with the necessary skills and experience that would contribute to them becoming more marketable and accessing gainful employment. The programme also seeks to bridge the gap between inadequate skills within the department and the shortage of skills across the entire province. The intention of the programme is to build capacity and, in this regard, the EDTEA states that it is under no obligation to provide employment to interns on the completion of the internship programme; and it immediately terminates the employment contract of any intern, should

it be found that they had previously participated in other internship programmes within the public service. The implementation of the internship programme requires timely preparation and planning; significant deliberation of the skills gaps through the inputs of the Departmental Workplace Skills Plan; the availability of resources such as working spaces and computers; an enabling environment where learning can take place; and trained mentors to ensure that the programme is effective. Rotation plans are developed to ensure that interns gain exposure to the various fields within business units. Interns, upon appointment, are assigned with mentors for continuing guidance, development and support. The EDTEA prepares reports on the implementation of the internship programme on a quarterly and annual basis for the KZN Office of the Premier, the Public Sector Training and Education Authority (PSETA) and DPSA. On completion of the internship programme, each intern is awarded a Testimonial Letter/ Letter of Completion (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2022:10). The stipend schedule which deals with how the interns are remunerated is shown as Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Stipend Schedule

Level	Qualifications			NQF exit level	Percentage of the minimum salary level contained in column (5)	Public service salary level: full time minimum notch of the indicated salary level unless specified in the applicable OSD directive	Maximum stipend: not exceeding 50% of the full time minimum notch of the indicated salary level unless specified in the applicable OSD directive
C2	Doctoral degree			Level 10	35%	8	8
C1	Master's degree			Level 9	35%	7	7
B4	Masters, post-graduate diploma or professional qualification			Level 8	35%	6	6
B3	Bachelors degree or advanced certificate			Level 7			
B2	Diploma or certificate			Level 6			
B1	Higher certificate		Advanced national certificate (vocational) 5	Level 5	35%	5	5
A3	National senior certificate (grade 12)	Adult national certificate	National certificate (vocational) 4	Level 4	35%	4	4
A2	All part qualifications or accumulated accredited units		National certificate (vocational) 3	Level 3	35%	3	3
			National certificate (vocational) 2	Level 2	35%		
A1	General education & training certificate (grade 9)		Adult national senior certificate	Level 1	35%		

Source: Adapted from EDTEA internship policy (2022:13)

2.5.2 Attracting Unemployed Graduate Youth to Internship Programmes

Cloete, Wissink and de Coning (2006:143) suggest that the aim of an approved policy is to identify the needs that the policy will satisfy, and how the needs and expectations of the individuals would be addressed. In this regard, EDTEA attracts unemployed graduate youth through promoting the internship programme at various career exhibitions held across the province in the different districts and at events such as the Royal Reed Dance, held annually in KwaNongoma in the north of province. The rural location of these initiatives is intentionally selected, in order to reach rural graduate youth and learners in secondary schools. Expanding on this aspect, EDTEA empowers and capacitates graduate youth and learners through presentations disseminating information about EDTEA's internship policy; the policy offering; and how to apply for the internship opportunity. Information relating to the different fields of study and requirements for studying or employment as an intern with EDTEA are matters that are commonly discussed with youth.

2.6 PUBLIC POLICY *VIS-À-VIS* INTERNSHIP

Defining and explaining policy and implementation are fundamental to an understanding of the evaluation of the internship policy being implemented by EDTEA. Public policy development lies with government officials and bodies, whilst external stakeholders may influence the development.

2.6.1 Defining Public Policy

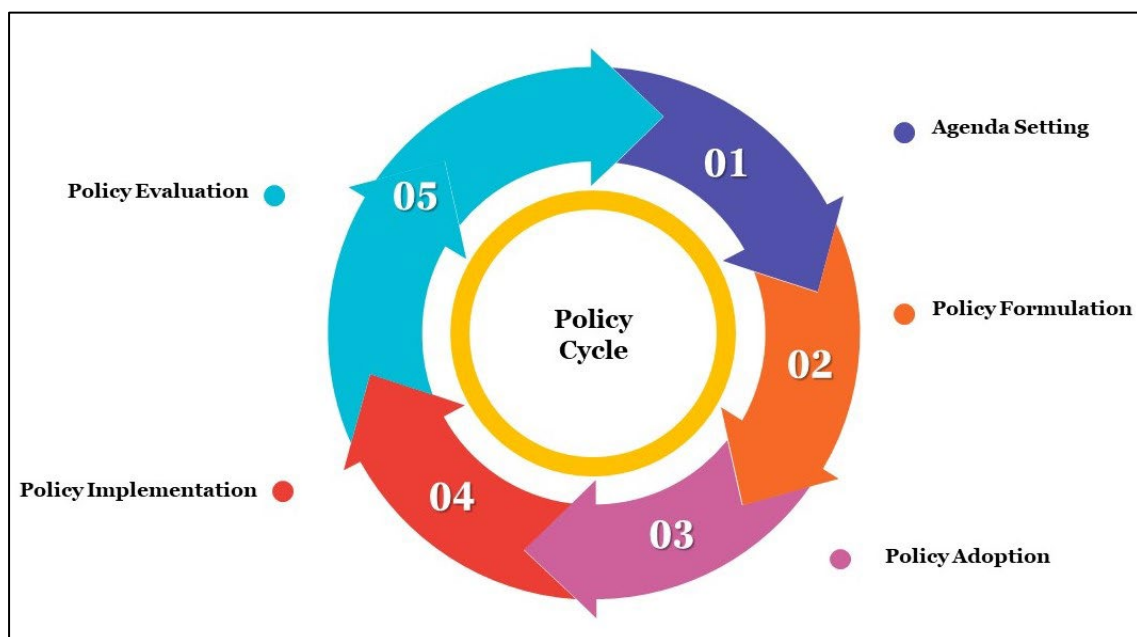
Public policy plays a crucial role in the improvement of service delivery. Public policy is defined by Fox and Meyer (1995: 107) as “authoritative statements made by legitimate public institutions about the way in which they propose to deal with policy problems”. According to Knill and Tosun (2008:1), public policy is government-initiated and is purposefully designed to solve the problems experienced by society. Ile, Eresia-Eke and Allen-Ile (2019:4) further contend that public policy is made of a sequence of many actions which are set out to accomplish pre-set goals which must be communicated properly in order to attain those pre-set goals. Extremely high levels of unemployment, particularly amongst graduate youth, is a key challenge that South African society is

plagued with. Therefore, the country's government has designed and introduced various public policies, one of which is the internship policy, to alleviate the burden on society and mitigate unemployment challenges. Fundamental to an understanding of public policy is the policy-making cycle, which includes various processes. These policy processes, with particular reference to policy implementation using the 5-C protocol, which has over the years expanded to the 7-C protocol, are contextualised to the study and are discussed in the next section.

2.6.2 Policy-Making Cycle

The policy-making cycle can be described as a cycle whereby one process leads to another, and each process is governed by its own set of characteristics, but are essential for the process to commence. There are five steps in the policy-making cycle and these are illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Policy Cycle



Source: Adapted from Jann and Wegrich (2006:45)

The policy-making cycle commences with the first process, termed as agenda setting. This is followed by policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation and, lastly, evaluation, which is crucial to the cycle. Much emphasis shall be placed on the aspect of

policy implementation, where the 5-C protocol that has expanded into the 7-C protocol, was explored as a vital link to the objective of this study. The various stages of the policy cycle are discussed further.

2.6.2.1 Agenda Setting

The process of agenda setting begins with identifying that there is a societal problem that needs to be addressed through state invention. The problem identified must then be integrated into government's agenda, which is termed agenda setting. This simply means that the list of problems that government has identified must be given considerable attention. Studies dating to the 1960s reveal that problem recognition and agenda setting are essentially political processes, where political attention is attached to policy problems, as contended by Jann and Wegrich (2006:45). One of the fundamental societal problems identified in relation to this study, is the high level of unemployment, particularly with reference to the graduate youth in South Africa. Strategies to mitigate the high level of unemployment must be identified to address this growing problem which society faces. Subban and Jarbandhan (2019:8) suggest that information technology can be used to gain access to a wider community to improve service delivery. Stakeholders within and outside of government influence agenda setting through strategic platforms such as the media, and in more recent times, through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok. The stakeholders in this study were identified as society, graduate interns, government, the EDTEA and the youth, amongst others, who frequently utilise social media platforms. The EDTEA regularly updates and maintains its Facebook page to engage with society and other stakeholders.

2.6.2.2 Policy Formulation

The policy formulation step in the policy cycle concentrates on the problems that were identified in the agenda setting stage, and these are used to form goals and create government policies and programmes (Knill & Tosun, 2008:13; Jann & Wegrich, 2006:48). Government has identified graduate youth unemployment as an area of concern, and this has led to the formulation of the Public Service Internship Programme which has been adopted to the EDTEA.

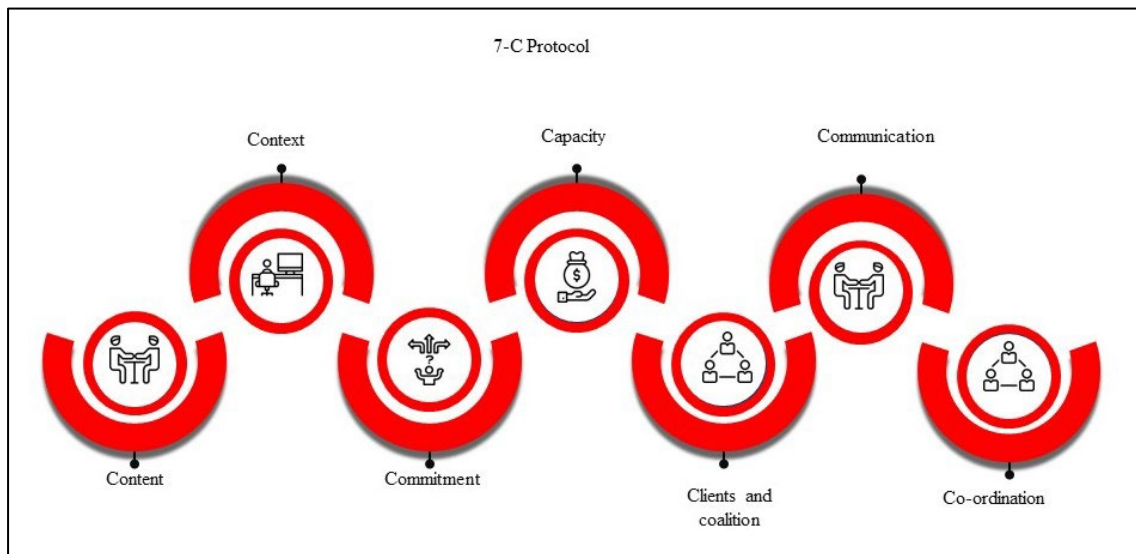
2.6.2.3 Policy Adoption

Policy adoption is determined by government institutions. According to Knill and Tosun (2008: 16), this stage of policy adoption is influenced by various factors, with the most relevant being party affiliation and public opinion in the policy adoption process. Emanating from South Africa's national priorities, aimed at reducing inequality and poverty, various policies focussing on the skilling of previously disadvantaged groups have been developed. This gave rise to developmental programmes such as the learnership and internship programmes which are required to operate within specific policy regulations.

2.6.2.4 Policy Implementation

Munzhedzi (2020:89-95) argues that policy implementation can be considered a way for government departments to use the policy to achieve the goals set out within the department. It can be said that any government policy only has value when it is implemented satisfactorily; in fact, if a policy is not implemented properly, it can be considered as deficient. Policy implementation hinges on the employees possessing the correct skills and knowledge to carry out the implementation. Historically, policy implementation was commonly described as the 5-C implementation protocol and more recently it has evolved to the 7-C protocol which included communication and co-ordination. Figure 2.4 shows the newly evolved 7-C Implementation Protocol.

Figure 2.4: 7-C Policy Implementation Protocol in relation to internship



Source: Adapted from Munzhedzi (2020:95)

- **Content**

The content of the policy would need to be addressed to ensure that the implementation of the policy addresses the issues identified during the development of the policy. The EDTEA has aligned its mandate to that of the national and provincial strategic mandates of the country and, in so doing, approved its departmental policy on the graduate internship programme in 2022. Therefore, this graduate internship policy is intended to assist in reducing high levels of unemployment and inequality in the province and in the country.

- **Context**

The implementation of a policy should be one that benefits the government department and would make its implementation meaningful. The EDTEA's mission is to optimise employment in the province and, drawing from its vision, it seeks to provide direction for job creation, amongst other areas. The graduate internship policy serves as a means for the EDTEA to achieve its vision and mission, and the implementation of the graduate internship policy should be beneficial and meaningful, not only to the EDTEA, but also to other stakeholders.

- **Commitment**

It must be said that, with the full backing of government departments, if a policy implementor is not functioning optimally, then the policy is doomed to fail, and the end goals would not be achieved. The EDTEA has embraced its mandate and vision in its commitment to the province and, by approving the graduate internship policy, has thereby ensured that it has recruited various intakes of interns over the years. Implementation of a policy cannot be stagnant and needs to be enduring to take into consideration changing dynamics, such as a changing economy, which can impact on policy implementation.

- **Capacity**

To ensure full implementation of policies, the department needs to have all the necessary resources for the implementation; and these would include, amongst others, human capital and the necessary funding needed for the implementation phase. The EDTEA ensures, through an assessment process, that resources such as computers and working areas are available to each intern prior to the intern joining the EDTEA. This assessment is conducted by the human resources section, together with the business unit requiring the intern. The respective business unit also confirms that the stipend payable for interns has been budgeted in the respective business units. This assessment assists the smooth running of the placement process so that, when interns are recruited and placed, they receive the necessary resources to work and the budget has already been allocated for timely payment of their stipends. Mentors and policy implementors must be adequately trained and capacitated with the relevant policy knowledge and mentorship skills.

- **Clients and coalition**

This requires the government to form necessary alliances with all relevant groups to ensure the full implementation of the policy. The EDTEA actively engages with KZN rural communities through career exhibitions, where the youth are empowered with information to assist them in selecting the type of qualification they want to pursue; and informed about the internships and learnership programmes offered by the EDTEA. This type of empowerment ensures that the EDTEA receives a significant number of applications for its internship, learnership and bursary programmes.

- **Communication**

Effective communication between all stakeholders is a necessary part of a policy implementation process and will keep all stakeholders updated on all aspects of the process. The EDTEA also has a business unit, headed by a chief directorate, that deals solely with youth and youth-related interventions in the province. This business unit has created a database of unemployed youth to reach out to them through Short Message Service and WhatsApp to alert them to any training or other youth-related opportunities that the EDTEA has to offer. One such initiative is that of a new intake for the internship programme, thereby increasing the EDTEA's interactions and visibility with their clients across the province.

- **Co-ordination**

This allows all stakeholders to associate and facilitates assistance between stakeholders should the need arise. The EDTEA has partnered with other provincial departments, such as the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, to utilise their platforms to increase the EDTEA's reach to youth, particularly in rural areas, in an effort to increase participation in the EDTEA's youth-related programmes, such as the internship programme.

2.6.2.5 Policy Evaluation

Jann and Wegrich (2006:53) contend that, at the policy evaluation stage, the outcomes of the policy must be emphasised. The outcomes must have achieved either a reduction or solving of the problem. These outcomes must be measured against the initial objectives. There are six aspects that are crucial in the effective evaluation of policies. These are relevance, significance, originality, legitimacy, reliability and validity. The outcomes should not end this evaluation stage, but should look at aspects of modification or redesign of the policy. In terms of this study, in the EDTEA for example, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the need for policies, such as the internship policy, to be modified to include hybrid methods and modes of working to ensure that the internship programme was implemented as seamlessly as possible, and to support and

enhance service delivery. In this regard, Zilincikova and Stofkova (2020:6) concur that the COVID-19 pandemic did have an adverse effect on service delivery.

2.7 STAKEHOLDERS INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The contents of a policy, and the degree to which the policy is dispersed, are important aspects in the implementation of policy. According to Hottenstein (2017:28), policy implementation cannot be undertaken in a uniform fashion: varying types of policy may pose different degrees of difficulty for their implementation. Public policy implementation and the influence of stakeholders, therefore, are imperative to this research study. Hutahaeon (2017:462) supports this view, and suggests that stakeholders play a vital role in public policy. In the EDTEA, for example, stakeholders from all levels in the organisation are invited to participate and provide input into the public policy-making process. The influence of stakeholders can be classified into three broad categories: the top-down approach; the bottom-up approach; and the hybrid approach, to explain the stakeholders' contribution to public policy in this study. These approaches are discussed below in relation to the EDTEA.

2.7.1 Top-down Approach

The top-down approach is characteristic of policy implementation commencing with a central government decision reached or taken at the 'top' of the government system. Decision-makers are expected to develop unambiguous policy objectives, which are sent 'down' the system. This approach disregards policy implementors. Historically, policy decisions were made at a national government level without provincial agencies, such as the EDTEA, having the flexibility to customise policies in accordance with the circumstances that prevailed in the various provinces.

2.7.2 Bottom-up Approach

The bottom-up approach is opposite to that of the top-down approach, and involves the identification and involvement of the stakeholders and the policy implementors for

appropriate implementation of policy. Policy implementation is viewed as a negotiation process amongst the stakeholders as analysis moves upwards and sideways to enable strategies to solve problems. The flexibility of this approach has resulted in the EDTEA becoming more responsive to the people's needs in the province. The EDTEA now customises the implementation of its policies, especially in regard to developmental programmes, such as the internship and bursary policies targeting youth in the province. The EDTEA faced challenges where vital capacity and skills in aeronautical engineering were lacking in the province and no KZN universities were in a position fill this skills gap. The EDTEA forged relationships with key universities outside the province of KwaZulu-Natal for youth to participate in the Aeronautical Engineering Bursary Programme. Such efforts could build much-needed capacity, skills and employment opportunities for the province of KwaZulu-Natal and its people.

2.7.3 Hybrid Approach

The hybrid approach attempts to incorporate the elements of the top-down and bottom-up theories for greater synergy. This theory acknowledges the need for lower-level stakeholders to be involved in policy implementation, together with a central, well-defined policy decision. Standard operating practice for the EDTEA's Human Resource Strategic Planning and Policy business unit ensures that all stakeholders are involved in the policy development and implementation processes. Employees, management and interns are all invited to attend policy workshop sessions scheduled across the district offices so that all stakeholders are given an opportunity to make meaningful contributions to policy development and implementation. The relevant draft policies are also sent to all stakeholders electronically, to ensure all stakeholders have an opportunity to forward their inputs should they be unable to attend policy workshops.

2.8 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS IMPACTING POLICY CHANGE

Both internal and external factors can contribute to changes in policy. According to Cloete *et al.* (2006:239), there can be changes in policy at any point of the policy-making process.

2.8.1 Internal Factors Influencing Policy Change

- Financial resource reduction:

Reduction in financial resources serves as a key public policy determinant. The EDTEA is constantly faced with cost-cutting measures that hinder policy and strategy implementation;

- Changes in organisational structures:

The EDTEA finally embraced a new organisational structure, after 14 years, in 2022. Over the years, interns that had been previously appointed were primarily being utilised to fill gaps for permanent positions; and

- Absence at senior management level:

The EDTEA did not have a permanent senior manager heading its Human Resources Management and Development business unit for a period of five years. The absence of an employee at this senior level has impacted on many policy-related matters, especially those pertaining to the internship policy and programme. The position was filled in late 2020, with the EDTEA subsequently adopting the departmental internship policy in 2022.

2.8.2 External Factors Contributing to Policy Change

- Changes in political landscape:

The ruling political leadership gives direction for the implementation of new priorities and the redesign of policies. In the past decade, the EDTEA has not been exempt from the changes in the political landscape, welcoming many different political heads;

- Technological advances in jobs:

Technological advances in automating jobs have resulted in downsizing of employee complements to promote efficiency through automated systems. Previously, EDTEA trained interns in entry level positions in the capturing of leave. This position has been

replaced with an automated electronic leave system. This has resulted in fewer positions being available, as some jobs can be automated;

- Demand-driven changes:

Provincially, the EDTEA leads various sectors in the economy, such as trade and sector development; clothing and textiles; and tourism and environmental affairs. Stakeholders in specialised sectors expect that the EDTEA will provide for the creation of jobs in these fields; and

- Environmental changes:

It is a known fact that, worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic brought disarray to humankind on various levels, and EDTEA delayed the intake of interns in 2019 by six months; but this did not provide much relief. Interns, upon appointment, were faced with serious challenges, as EDTEA, much like the rest of the world, did not anticipate the consequences of the pandemic. Many interns and employees had to isolate for lengthy periods, as they and their family members were at risk; and this adversely affected the mentoring relationship. In addition, both employees and interns lost loved ones during this period, where limited emotional and physical support was available. The pandemic had a drastic effect on an already-strained environment in the sector of unemployed youth, and the current state of the economy has exacerbated the situation.

2.9 CONTEXTUALISING POLICY TO THEORY

Whilst preceding theories emphasise the public administration and policy theories, the internship policy could also be substantiated by human capital theory. This theory encapsulates and supports skills and knowledge as a human capital investment, and is linked to the objectives of this study.

2.9.1 Human Capital Theory *vis-à-vis* Internships

Human capital theory initially emerged in the 1960s. Schultz (1961:1) contends that skills and knowledge contribute towards human capital. Investment in human capital can be acquired by various methods, such as on-the-job training. Becker (1993:17) further contends that investment in human capital is derived from education and training. Becker

(1993:20) suggests that youth exit from tertiary institutions with qualifications, but not possessing the necessary skills for employment. Thus, on-the-job training is a means to acquire job-specific skills. Developmental programmes targeting youth serve as a means to gain exposure to the working environment and to acquire skills.

The EDTEA has responded to the skills challenge that graduate youth face by implementing the internship programme. The internship programme provides a platform for graduate youth to gain exposure to the work-place and knowledge. The internship programme further provides graduate youth with an opportunity to gain appropriate skills to complement the qualifications they possess. Gainful employment becomes more accessible to graduates who are empowered with skills, knowledge and experience gained through an internship programme. This investment in human capital serves as a means to mitigate the high levels of graduate youth unemployment.

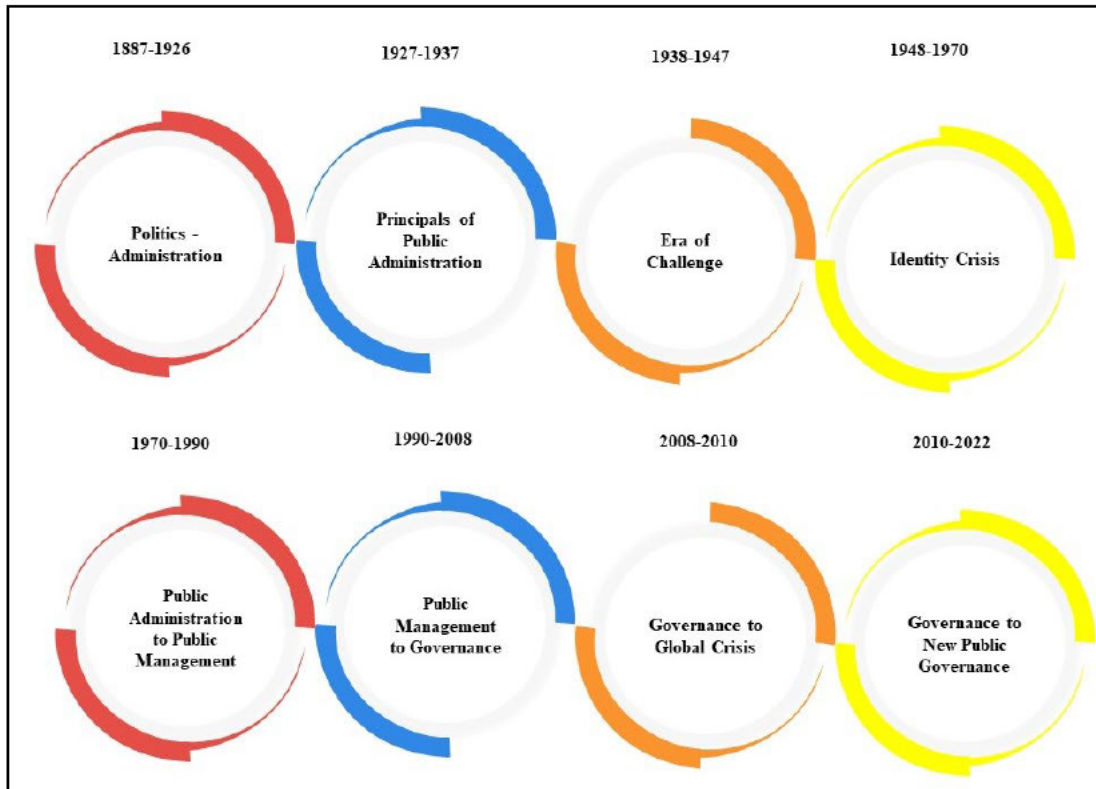
2.9.2 Public Policy, Public Administration and Theory

In its most recent strategic planning, dating back to 2020, EDTEA has committed itself to fulfilling government's mandate to grow the South African economy. The emphasis is placed on the KwaZulu-Natal province, through increasing the number of new jobs created, whilst ensuring the security of existing jobs. Resources are focused on industries and high-potential growth sectors which could yield more jobs. Primary policy discussions held by EDTEA have been centred around the mitigation of the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment, where the emphasis is placed on job creation and skills development (Province of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020:16). Addressing the needs of the people, in terms of job creation and skills development, could assist EDTEA to improve on its service delivery agenda. Government's service delivery is a topical and crucial issue and communities and other key stakeholders often tend to protest and criticise the government for its shortcomings. The evaluation of government service delivery is a fundamental principle of the New Public Governance theory.

Public administration is entrenched in history, with earliest mention in the literature in the 1800s; and much like other disciplines, public administration has changed over time with the influence of various global factors and technological advances and

accountability. A summary of the various paradigms in the public administration, and fundamental principles emanating from these paradigms, is provided in Figure 2.5, below.

Figure 2.5: Public Administration Dichotomy



Source: Adapted from Basheka (2012:35)

The public administration dichotomy traces how the public administration evolved from 1887 to the current period. In the early years, 1887-1926, the notion was that there had to be a clear distinction between the administration of government and the political affiliation. This is evident in current times, where the political head of a department has different responsibilities from the administrative head of the department. During the second period, which spanned 1927-1937, and was termed ‘principles of public administration, there was a trend to classify public administration as a science, and programmes were being offered by HEIs. The era of challenge, in terms of the political-administrative dichotomy, was seen the years 1938-1947. During the period 1948-1970, the focus was on the development of administration and this era was best described as an identity crisis. From 1970-1990, public administration transformed to public management. This further evolved from 1990-2008, where new public management

shifted to governance, with fundamental principles focusing on the digital era. The dichotomy further continued in 2008-2010, with the controlling factor in governments shifting from governance to global crisis of ideology. The current shift, from 2010 to the present, was to new public governance (Basheka, 2012:35). The NPG is characterised by six fundamental factors: the decentralisation of power; government's role is more one of synchronisation and public services are integrated; the creation of social co-operation between stakeholders in the economy; the promotion of mechanisms to share public service resources, allowing for the building of a flexible network built on trust; and ensuring that the citizens of the country are the primary beneficiaries of service delivery. The NPG thus allows for government and the other stakeholders to work closely together by enabling trust, sharing power, creating dependence on each other, and reaching consensus on all aspects to formulate strategies that benefit the people (Ndevu, 2021:189).

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has addressed some pertinent aspects which guided this study within the EDTEA. The section on the South African landscape governing internship programmes within EDTEA discussed the legal framework governing the study; the South African government's strategic framework addressing unemployment in South Africa; and critical actions and initiatives taken by the National Planning Commission. The EDTEA's position in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and its mission and mandates are presented. Fundamentally, the EDTEA's graduate internship policy is presented, together with the policy framework for KZN. Public policy and the policy life cycle, with the emphasis on policy implementation, were highlighted and theorised contextually in the chapter. Both internal and external factors, and stakeholders impacting and influencing the implementation of public policy, as well as different approaches, were discussed. The chapter concludes by linking the study to the NPG theory where the focus is on, *inter alia*, formulating strategies which benefit the people and reaching consensus between stakeholders.

CHAPTER 3

INTERNSHIPS TO MITIGATE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the difficulties of poverty, inequality and unemployment, faced by the majority of South Africans after 29 years of a new democracy. The focus is on the South African unemployed sector of the population; and more especially youth unemployment, with particular reference to government's intervention through the internship programme aimed at reducing unemployment and addressing the growing problems relating to this evolving issue in the country.

3.2 SOUTH AFRICA'S POST-APARTHEID ENVIRONMENT

South Africa transitioned to a democracy in 1994, with hopes of all its citizens having equal rights; and with promises of a free and fair society. Unfortunately, this strong belief by the majority of South Africa's citizens did not materialise. After more than 29 years of electing a new government and living in a democracy, South Africans find themselves living in a country that is ranked first out of 164 countries in the global poverty database; while it is considered to be the most inequitable country in the world. The South African Customs Union (SACU), which South Africa is a part of, ranks as the most inequitable region in the world (World Bank, 2022b:9).

According to the NDP, 2030, South Africa remains a country plagued by high unemployment, poverty and inequality; and this is still evident decades after achieving democracy (RSA NDP, 2012:24). South Africa had implemented various policies since the dawn of democracy which have aimed at addressing poverty, inequality and unemployment. These policies began in 1994 with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This policy focused on infrastructure development, but not on growing the economy. This was followed by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, which was introduced in 1996 after the RDP did not

achieve its targets of alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment. This policy focused on fast-tracking and growing the economy, thus reducing unemployment, and thereby reducing the poverty experienced by the majority of the country's citizens. The GEAR policy also failed to achieve its goals of reducing of poverty and unemployment. The South African Government followed the GEAR with the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) in 2006. The focus of this policy was to ensure policy implementation to aid with economic growth by addressing issues that hampered growth, and these included the skills deficit, issues surrounding funding, and the red tape required for entry into the market (Ramnath, 2015:29). The current policy that is intended to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality is the NDP. This policy was introduced in 2012 and followed the NPC's report, which highlighted the nine primary challenges which confront South Africa. Table 3.1 highlights the challenges highlighted by the NPC and the action plans from the NDP.

Table 3.1: From the National Planning Commission to National Development Plan

Challenges from NPC	Actions of NDP
There is an extremely low number of South Africans who are in current employment.	Revitalise the economy which will lead to job creation.
Education, especially amongst black South Africans, is below average.	Address the inequality of education and training amongst black South Africans.
The positioning of infrastructure is out of the reach of the majority. It is insufficient and not maintained.	Build strong, new infrastructure.
Spatial challenges are detrimental to the disadvantaged.	Address harms caused by apartheid in causing spatial effects.
South Africa's economy is substantially dependent on resources and is not sustainable.	Change to an economy that is sustainable.
The public health system is confronted with high demands and insufficient resources, which lead to inequality.	Provide healthcare to all, that is equal and of high quality.
The public service delivers low value performance.	Professionalise the public service.
Corruption impacts severely on public resources, which weakens the delivery of basic services.	End all forms of corruption.
Segregation amongst South Africans is high.	The effects of apartheid's segregation policy are prevalent and needs to be addressed to create an inclusive society.

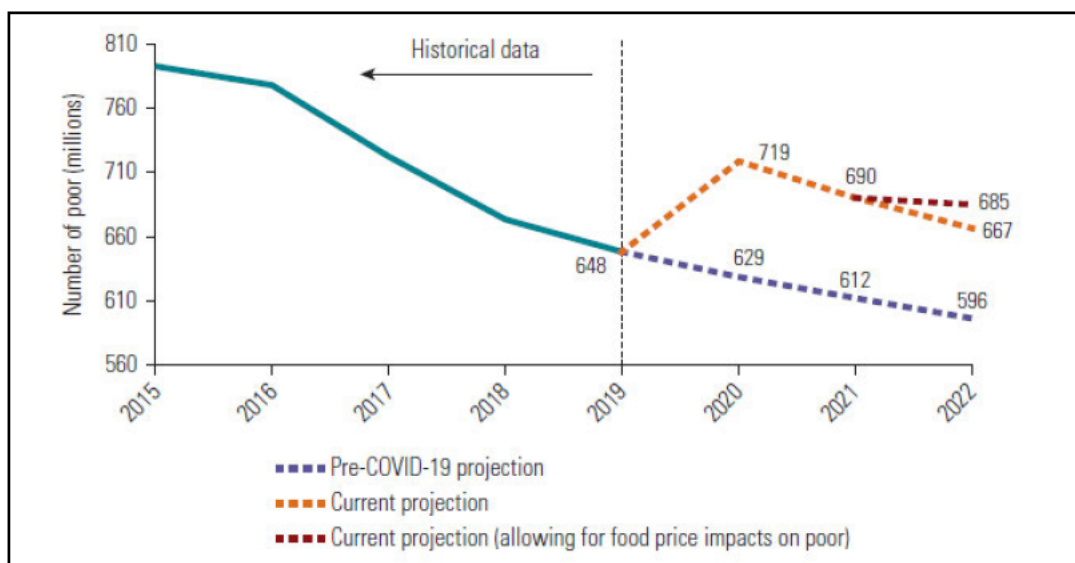
Source: Adapted from NDP (2012:25)

The NDP has set out clear goals which addressed the challenges identified by the NPC, and what it deems necessary if South Africa is to address the challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

3.2.1 Poverty

Deonandan (2019:18) defines poverty as the failure of an individual to meet the minimum requirements to afford the basic necessities to survive. The issue of poverty is global. The United Nations developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015 in its part to ensure that the world is a better place for all to live in. The first SDG is focused on the eradication of poverty (United Nations, 2022). Figure 3.1, below, shows the number of people living in poverty. The statistics used actual data from 2015 to 2018, and predicted poverty for the years 2019 to 2022, when it was publicised.

Figure 3.1: Number of people living in poverty



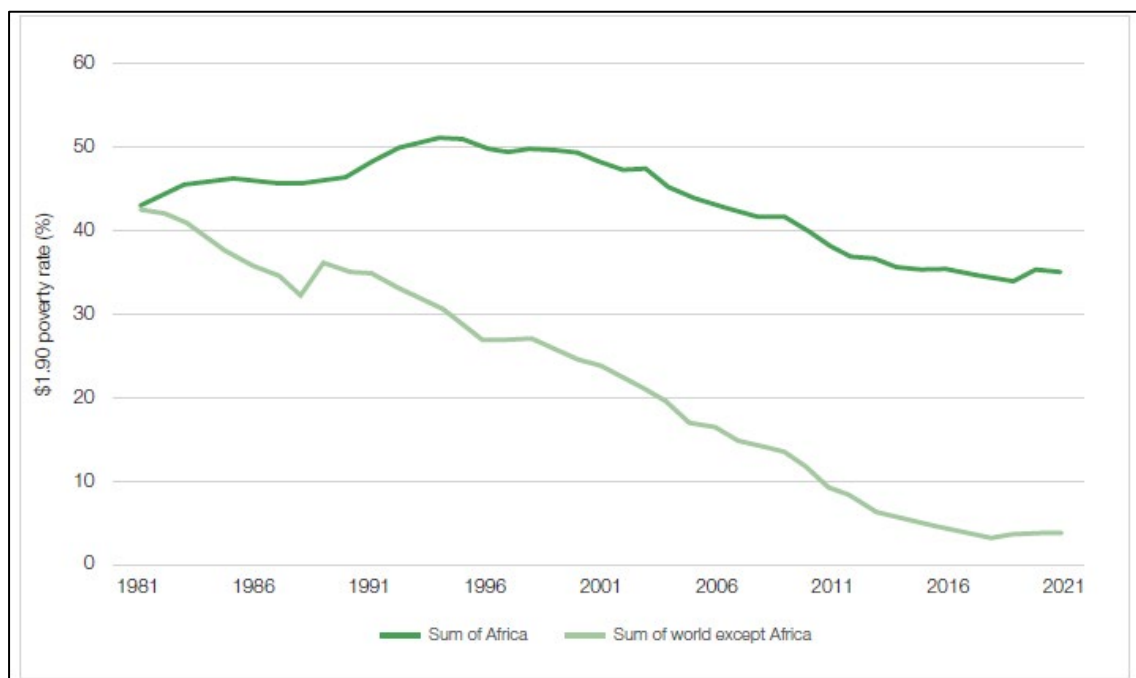
Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022a:7)

As seen in Figure 3.1, world poverty declined from 2015 to 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic ‘destroyed’ livelihoods and pushed more people into poverty. This can be seen in the above graph, where there was a sharp increase in the poverty rate – the first increase since 1998. This change in poverty numbers was a significant setback for the

United Nations' goal of eliminating poverty; and has resulted in the poverty rate not recovering to the levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022a:1).

According to Woldermichael, Louw-Vaudran, Singh, Aikens and du Toit (2022:9), the African Union launched its Agenda 2063 programme in 2015, which coincided with the United Nations SDGs. The Africa Agenda 2063 also had eradication of poverty as its number-one goal. Since 1982, there has been an insignificant reduction in the poverty rate in Africa when compared to the rest of the world. Figure 3.2 shows the poverty rates for Africa and the rest of the world.

Figure 3.2: Poverty rate of Africa versus the world



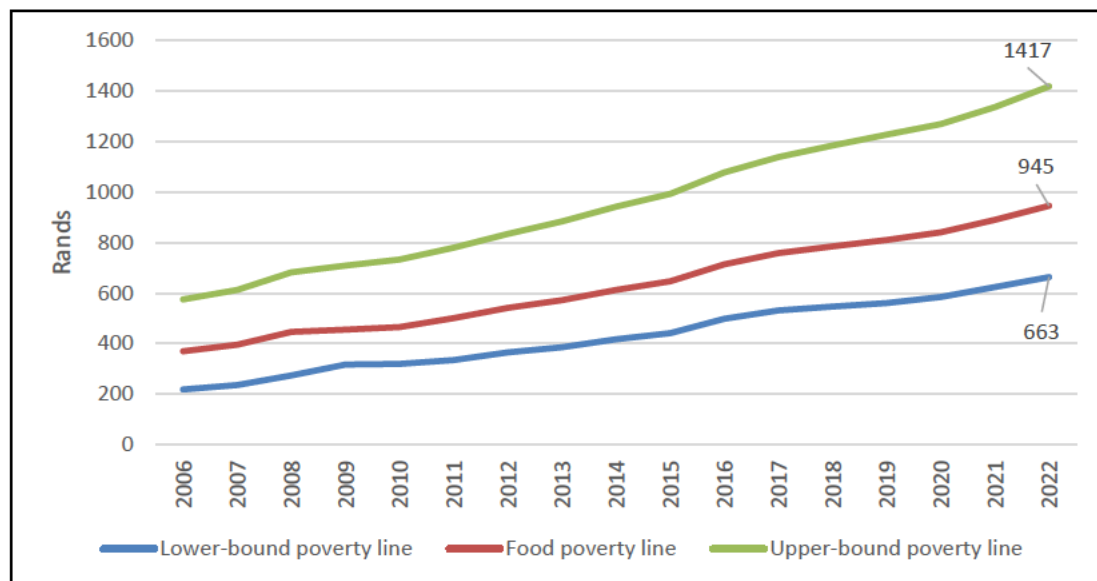
Source: Adapted from Woldermichael *et al.* (2022:9)

Figure 3.2 shows that the poverty rate for Africa and the rest of the world was 43% in 1981 and about 40 years later, the rest of the world's poverty rate had dropped to 6%; but the African poverty rate remained high at 36%. This identified Africa as an area of concern, where the poverty rates are not decreasing in line with the more developed countries of the world.

According Gumedé (2021:186), recent research highlights that poverty levels in South Africa have shown signs of decline from 1994 to 2015; although approximately 25% of

the population still lives below the breadline. Van der Westhuizen and Swart (2015:734) also highlight the plight of many South Africans who live below the breadline. The ‘breadline’, synonymous with the poverty line, is the amount of money required to buy a basic basket of goods. This is the reasoning that was used by the South African Government who included the fight against poverty as one of its key priorities alongside the current foci of reducing unemployment and inequality. Figure 3.3 shows the change in the poverty lines in South Africa from 2006 to 2022.

Figure 3.3: Inflation-adjusted poverty lines for South Africa



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2022:4)

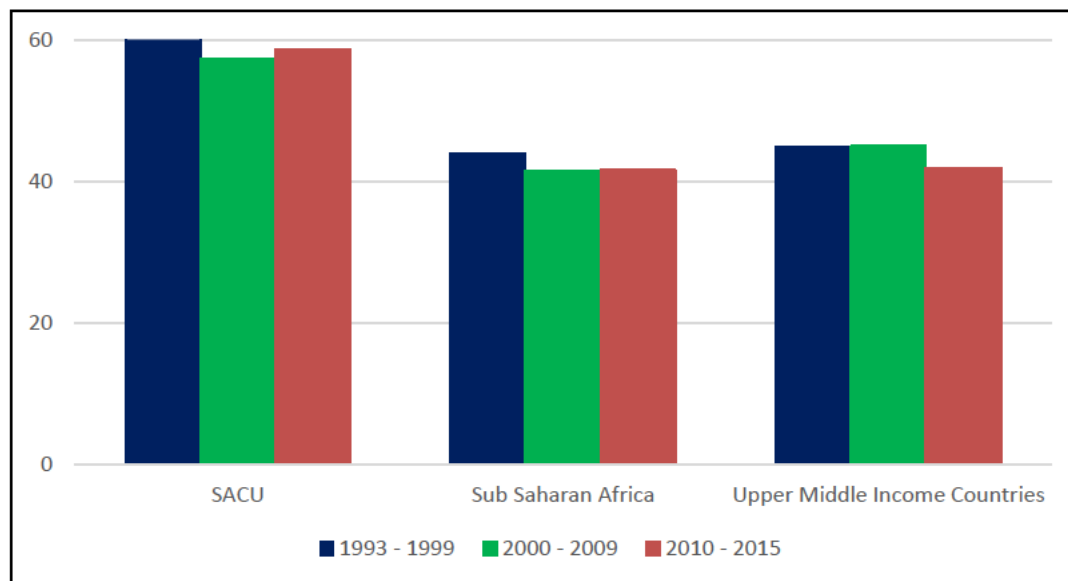
The above figure shows that the poverty lines for South Africans have continued to increase over the past 16 years and this, coupled with the high unemployment rates, has led to a more unequal society.

3.2.2 Inequality

Inequality is measured worldwide by using the Gini coefficient, which shows how the wealth is spread in that country. The coefficient values range between 0 and 1 (sometimes also shown as 0 to 100), with a value of 0 meaning that everyone is sharing equally, while a value closer to 1 (or 100) means most of the wealth is held by a few (Farris, 2010:852).

According to the World Bank (2022b: 11), countries that fall within the SACU region are amongst the most unequal in the world. South Africa, which falls within the SACU region, is ranked as the most unequal country in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.67. This means the majority of the wealth (approximately 70%) is held by a minority of individuals (approximately 10%); whilst the majority of individuals (60%) held just 7% of the wealth. Figure 3.4 show the SACU region's Gini coefficient when compared to other regions.

Figure 3.4: Gini coefficients of different groups of countries

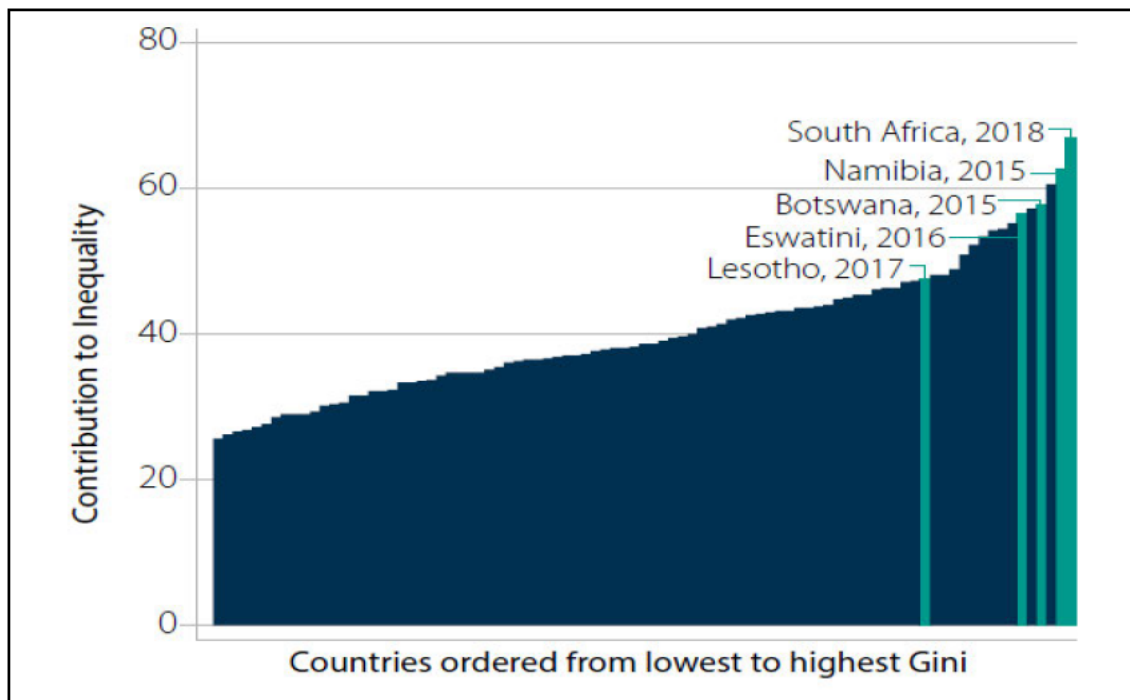


Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022b:12)

Figure 3.4 highlights the differences between the higher-income, developed countries and the African countries, more especially the SACU region which includes South Africa. The vast difference between the different regions is of great concern and needs to be urgently addressed.

The SACU countries feature highly on the rankings for all the countries, with South Africa being classified as the most unequal, and this is shown in Figure 3.5.

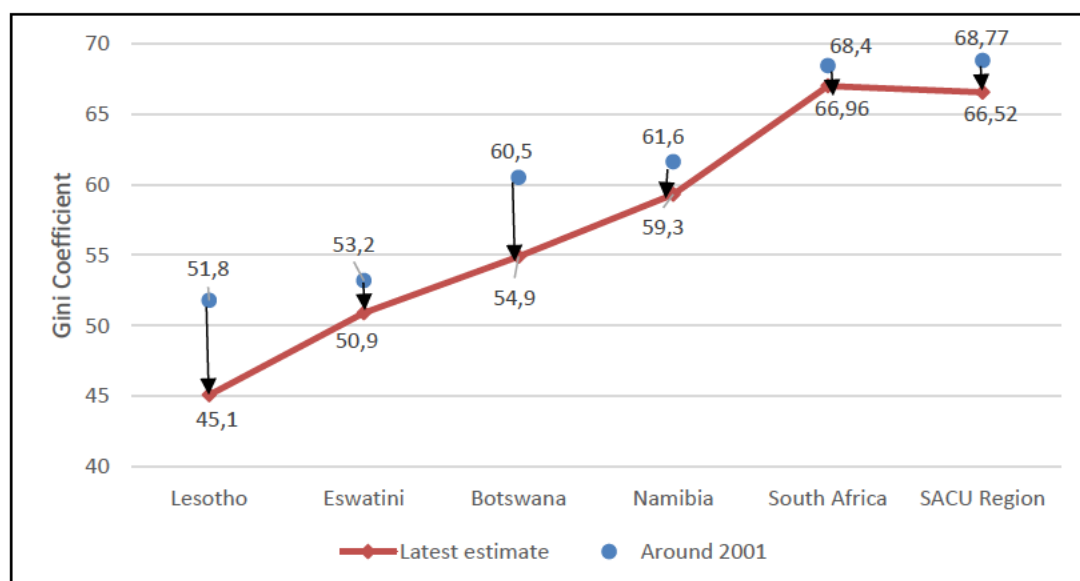
Figure 3.5: South Africa's ranking in terms of Gini coefficient



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022b:12)

The SACU countries, specifically South Africa, feature highly as the most unequal countries in the world. Figure 3.6 shows how the Gini coefficient has changed from 2001 to current estimates.

Figure 3.6: Changes in Gini coefficients over time

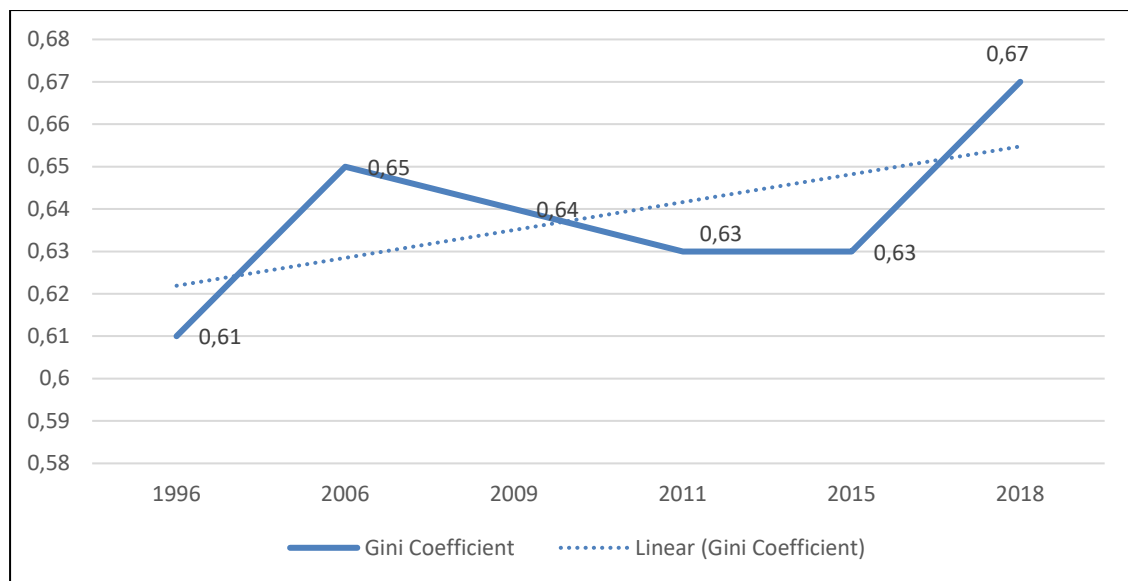


Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022b:13)

The changes since 2001 have shown that some SACU countries have shown larger shifts compared to others. South Africa showed a marginal difference when compared to other SACU countries.

Figure 3.7 shows the historical trend of the Gini coefficient for South Africa.

Figure 3.7: Gini coefficient for South Africa



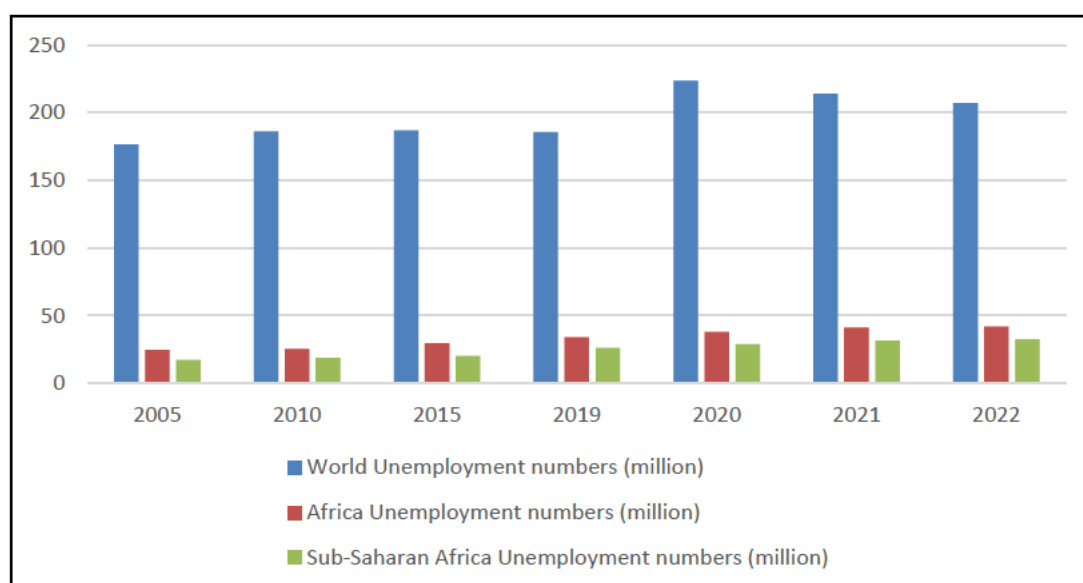
Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022)

The figure shows there has been an increase in the coefficient from 1996 to 2018, although there were signs of an improvement during 2006 to 2015.

3.2.3 Unemployment

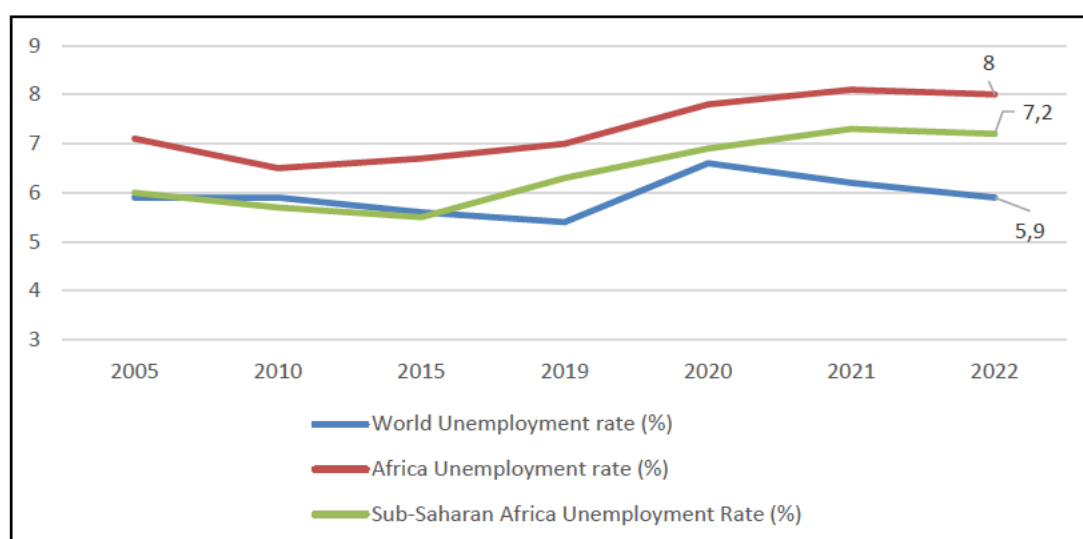
According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2022:106), global unemployment affected 207 million individuals in 2022, representing an unemployment rate of 5.9%. Africa has 41.9 million unemployed people, representing an 8% unemployment rate. Sub-Saharan Africa has an unemployment rate of 7.2%, representing 32.6 million individuals. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 shows the changes in unemployment numbers and unemployment rates for these groups from 2005 to 2022.

Figure 3.8: Unemployment numbers for the world, Africa and sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Adapted from ILO (2022:106-113)

Figure 3.9: Unemployment rates for world, Africa and sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Adapted from ILO (2022:106-113)

With the unemployment rate of sub-Saharan Africa hovering at 7.2%, South Africa, which falls within this region, has the highest unemployment rate, and one of the highest on the continent (ILO, 2022:43).

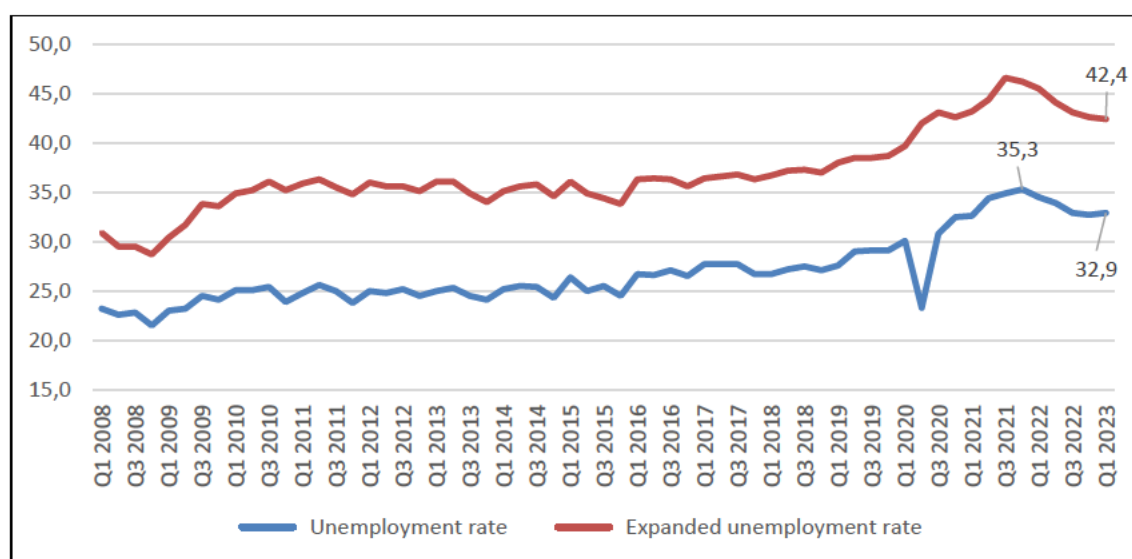
According to Statistics South Africa (2022:8), South Africa has two formal definitions of unemployment. The official definition considers persons between the ages of 15 and 64

years who are currently not in any form of employment and who had attempted to find gainful employment in the four-week period whilst the survey was undertaken. The expanded definition relates to persons in the age category 15-to-64 years who are currently not employed, and who had not actively been searching for gainful employment during the period under review.

Statistics South Africa (2022:9), therefore, reported that the official unemployment rate in South Africa during the first quarter of 2023 stands at 32.9%, marginally lower than the record rate of 35.3 % recorded in the fourth quarter of 2021. The unemployment issue is even more serious when one looks at the expanded unemployment rate of 42.4%.

Figure 3.10 shows the quarterly unemployment rates from 2008 to 2023.

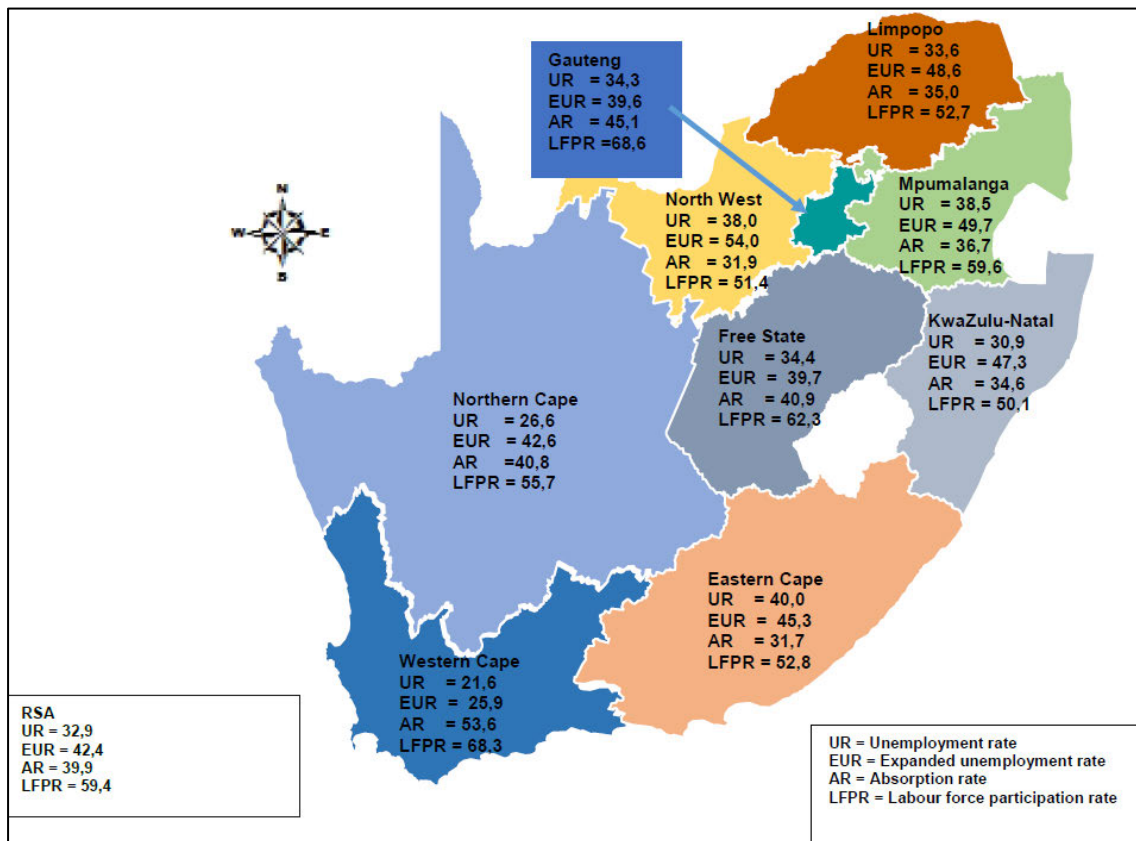
Figure 3.10: Unemployment rates from 2008 to 2023



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2023)

There has been a gradual increase in unemployment during this period, with very few quarters showing a decrease. The unemployment rates per province also vary, with some provinces showing extremely high unemployment. Figure 3.11 shows the unemployment rates of all the provinces.

Figure 3.11: Unemployment rates per province



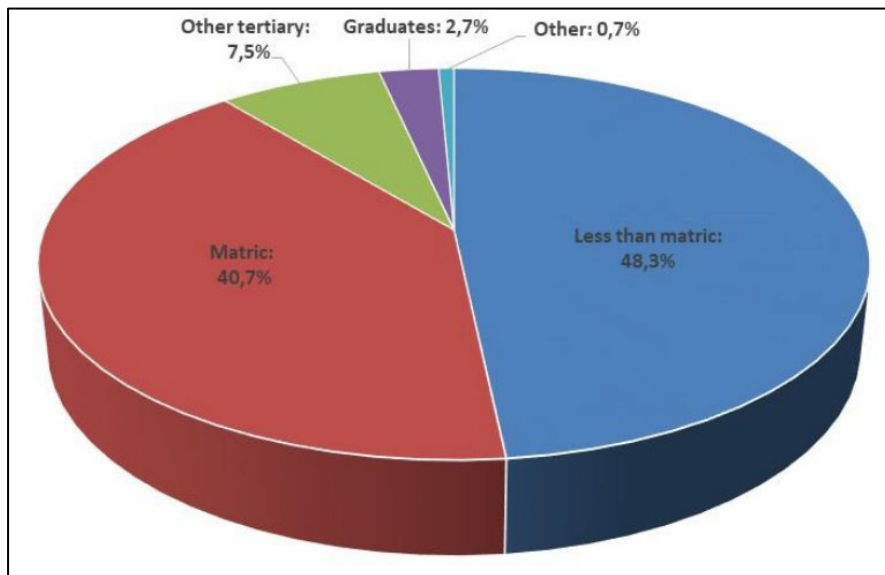
Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2023:10)

The unemployment rates vary from one province to another. The Eastern Cape has the highest unemployment rate (40.0%), as at the end of the first quarter of 2023. KwaZulu-Natal, where the EDTEA is based, and where the study took place, has an unemployment rate of 30.9% (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:10).

South Africa's level of unemployment is one of the highest in the world. It, and the two other primary challenges of poverty and inequality, are continuing to plague the country. There is no doubt that South Africa is considered to be the most unequal country in the world, with some of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the world. Therefore, strategies to mitigate the unemployment rate, especially among graduate youth, could influence the standard of living of the people in the country.

Figure 3.12 below shows the breakdown of the unemployed in terms of their level of qualifications.

Figure 3.12: Unemployment per education level



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2023:8)

Figure 3.12 shows that 10.2% of the unemployed persons possess either a graduate qualification or some other form of tertiary qualification (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). This highlights the number of newly graduated individuals who find themselves empowered with a tertiary qualification, yet do not have the necessary skills to join the ranks of the employed.

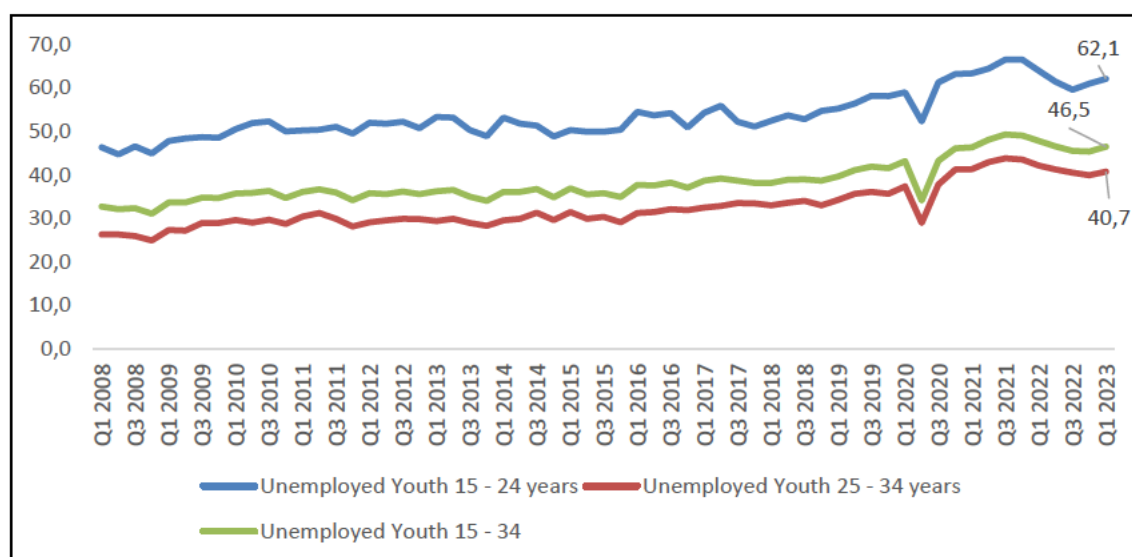
The foregoing discussion has described the extent of unemployment in Africa, with particular reference to South Africa, as compared to the world, in order to contextualise youth unemployment.

3.3 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

According to the National Youth Policy, 2020, the youth are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 34 years (RSA National Youth Policy, 2020:10). Dagume and Gyekye (2016:59) also support the definition of youth in South Africa as being aged between 15 to 34 years, although the United Nations defines the youth as aged between 15 and 24 years.

According to Statistics South Africa (2023:25), youth unemployment, as per the South African definition, stands at 46.5%. The youth unemployment rate for the group 15-to-24 years stands at 62.1% and the unemployed rate for youth aged between 25 and 34 is 40.7%. These statistics are reflected in Figure 3.13.

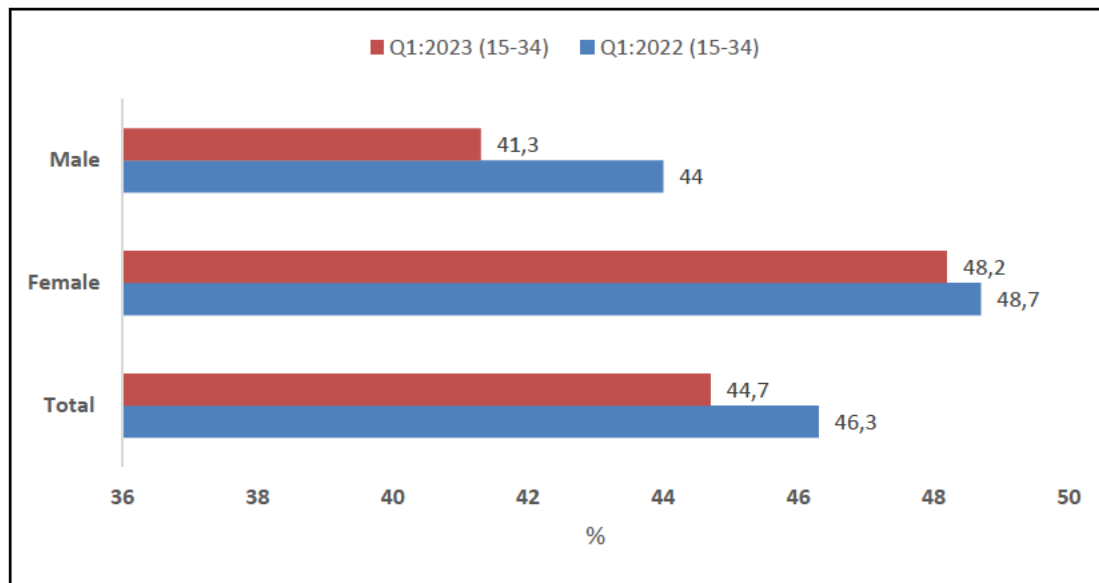
Figure 3.13: Youth unemployment rates from 2008 to 2023



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa year (2023)

The youth unemployment rates in South Africa indicate that this issue is reaching a critical point and government's interventions in this area need to be addressed. A further statistic provided by Statistics South Africa (2022:10) is one where youth are "not in employment, education or training" (NEET) and the unemployment rate for this group stands at 44.7%, as per Figure 3.14, below.

Figure 3.14: Unemployed youth not in employment, education or training



Source: Adapted from Statistics South Africa (2023:9)

The issue of youth unemployment is not only a South African problem, but it is a global phenomenon that is faced by all youth (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016:59; Baidoo, 2016:249; Patel, Graham & Chowa, 2020:1). According to Baidoo (2016:250), youth unemployment is one the biggest problems faced in Africa. Dhakal, Nankervis, Prikshat and Burgess (2018:3) highlight the plight of the unemployed youth across the world, and the focus by many governments is to create policies focusing on employment opportunities for the youth.

According to the International Labour Organisation (2022:258), global youth unemployment reached 73 million individuals in 2022, representing an unemployment rate of 14.9%. Sub-Saharan Africa has a youth unemployment rate of 11.3% representing 12.3 million individuals.

3.4 REALITY AND EFFECT OF POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Excessively high unemployment is not only concentrated in South Africa, but throughout the developing nations. There is a recognition that unemployment leads to poverty in South Africa, and that the transition from unemployed to employed can reduce poverty. The concept of job creation is seen to be central in alleviating poverty (Zizzamia, 2020:1).

Vaalavuo and Sirniö (2022:451) concluded, in their research, that an individual's employment status can be related to the poverty risk, and that individuals who are not in employment have a significantly higher chance of sliding into poverty than those who have gainful employment. They also mentioned that gaining work or employment is not always sufficient to shift out of poverty, as there is now an increased trend of 'in-work poverty', where employed individuals are still considered to be living below the breadline. The South African Government has committed, via the NDP, 2030 to put measures in place to reduce poverty and unemployment (RSA NPC, 2012:24).

Maake-Malatji (2021:131) contends that graduates who accept positions as interns within organisations are classified as workers; but they are paid a stipend, which is insufficient to cover their basic necessities, so it does not improve their prospects of escaping poverty. Mabuyane (2023:1) urged all departments in the Eastern Cape province to prioritise the fight against youth unemployment by making more provisions and opportunities available to the youth. This call in government resonates with the *raison d'être* for this research study.

3.5 EMPLOYABILITY OF UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES

The current unemployment rate for individuals who possess either a graduate qualification or some form of tertiary qualification, stands at 10.2%, and it has become the priority to ensure that these graduates are employable after completion of their studies (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:8). The ability of tertiary qualified individuals to find employment is hindered by the lack of necessary workplace experience (RSA NPC, 2012:24). The South African Government is involved in training and education to promote the employability of the unemployed youth.

The term 'employability' has been the focus of various authors, and their definitions vary; but at the core, their definitions are all very similar. Phoko and Molefhe (2017:458) term it 'the individual's likelihood of acquiring the skills to ensure that they are competent to complete the tasks that form part of the job'. Kalufya and Mwakajinga (2016:52) contend that it deals with understanding concepts and the basic abilities to fulfil a task. Qubati

(2021:9) contends that employability deals with the acquiring of soft skills, individual traits and grasping concepts to gain employment.

3.5.1 Understanding Graduate Unemployment

The issue of graduate unemployment is worldwide, and it was found that in Australia, while there has been an increase in the number of people entering the labour force with a qualification, the number of opportunities for these graduates in the labour force has not risen to the same extent, and these graduates find themselves searching for gainful employment for a longer period. It was found that the higher education institutions have not been providing the students with sufficient grounding to enter the labour force. Therefore, more needs to be done by the HEIs to overcome this issue (Small, McPhail & Shaw, 2022:930). Mgaiwa (2021:10) supports this view, and further recommends that ensuring the employability of graduates requires more interventions from government. Subban and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2014:503) proposed that the HEIs make improvements to improve their educating methods to provide more adequate exposure for students to prepare them for the job market. The initiative by government to transform the public service to one that is professional and competent hinges on an improved education system.

There are various research studies which deal with the reasons that contribute to graduates being unable to find gainful employment. There seems to be consensus among the majority on a basket of reasons.

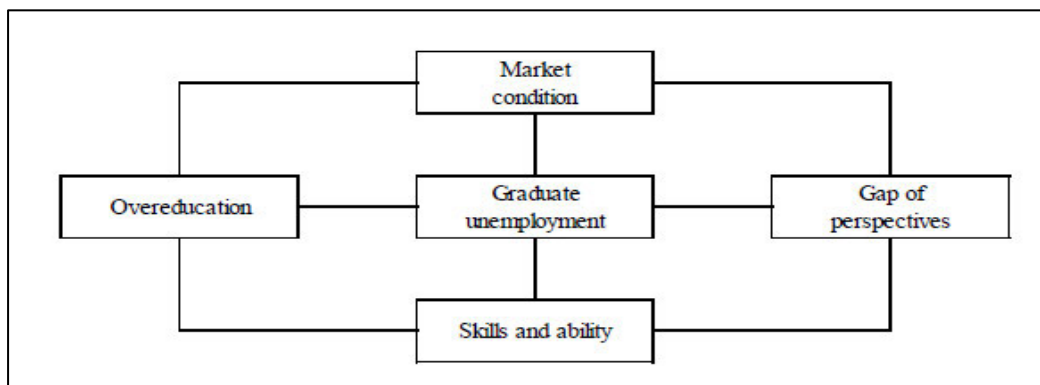
Mseleku (2019:89) highlighted the following concerns:

- The economy, which has shown very little growth in recent years, has been unable to generate new jobs to absorb new graduates and unemployed graduates, which has led to an increase in the graduate unemployment rate;
- There is a skills mismatch between the job market and the new graduates' qualifications, which results in an influx of graduates with qualifications which are irrelevant for the demands of the market;

- The new graduates do not possess experience related to the jobs available and employers are not willing to employ individuals that are inexperienced; and
- There is tendency that some new graduates exhibit a of poor attitude, which is a stumbling block in acquiring employment.

Hwang (2017:6) developed a model which highlights the findings of his research which deals with reasons for graduate unemployment. Figure 3.15 shows the factors influencing graduate unemployment, and indicates the links between the four components that may contribute to graduate unemployment.

Figure 3.15: Factors around graduate unemployment



Source: Adapted from Hwang (2017:6)

The model developed by Hwang (2017:6) highlighted that market conditions play a significant role in obtaining gainful employment, and this can be exacerbated by the difference between the perspective of the individual, and reality. Over-education is defined as when an individual possesses a qualification or a skill that is more advanced than the required qualification or skill for the job (Hwang, 2017:3; Valiente-Palma & Pérez-González, 2022:3). Over-education, as well as mismatch between what jobs are available and what qualifications have been acquired, also hinders graduates from finding meaningful employment. The last component of the model focusses on the skills needed for employment and what skills the graduates possess. Not having the relevant skills; poor external market conditions; a poor quality of education; and lack of work readiness are all factors that are suggested as reasons for the high graduate unemployment rate (Fraser, 2023:1; Huu, Nhat, Thanh & Hoang, 2022:20-21; Kgotlhane, Madau & Ncube, 2018:11470-11472).

With the higher unemployment rates across the world, organisations are more inclined to employ individuals who have some work experience. This, in effect, has also been seen in China, where the economy has been in a decline, and this has substantially hampered the job market (Zuo, Weng & Xie, 2020:627).

3.5.2 Enhancing the Employability of Graduates

There is abundant literature on various ways to ensure the graduate unemployment rate declines in the future, and the majority have highlighted that completing an internship programme after graduation is considered as a stepping-stone to ensure quality, gainful employment. Individuals who complete an internship programme have an increased chance of being employable in the future. Internship programmes allow the individuals who possess the theoretical knowledge to build the set of skills required by the job market. These include having the necessary soft skills and personal attributes (Pietersen & Malatjie, 2022:16; Lubega & Schultz, 2022:8). It is widely believed that interns need to adopt a professional attitude, where they are allowed to develop their skills related to communication and interactivity with others, as well as grasping the organisational culture (Silva, Lopes, Costa, Seabra, Melo, Brito & Dias, 2016:705).

It is a sad reality that not all graduates who undergo an internship programme and acquire skills to make them more employable find gainful employment. There is a possibility that many could revert to a life of unemployment, thus raising questions about the effectiveness of the internship programme (Majova, 2018:1; Silva *et al.*, 2016:706).

3.6 INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES AS A CATALYST TO EMPLOYMENT

The switch from university life to the work environment is considered to be one of the biggest steps for graduates, and this can be the start of an eventful future (Sekiguchi, Mitate & Yang, 2022:1).

Qubati (2021:14) argued that an internship programme is the combination of a qualification with work experience that is being overseen by an experienced individual, and this combination can assist individuals to become more employable. Mchunu and

Mutereko (2020:62) define an internship programme as a place where an individual could gain “career-centered learning experience, which involves an actual work environment.” Meyer (2017:59) highlighted that, to reduce the youth unemployment, the focus should be on introducing entrepreneurship programmes or improving the employability of the youth by creating internship programmes, to allow the youth to gain some of the much-needed skills to enhance their tertiary qualifications, and to prepare them for the world of work.

3.6.1 Definition of an Intern

There are two definitions of interns, with an added stipulation that these individuals are between the ages of 18 and 35. The focus of this study is on graduate interns.

3.6.1.1 Graduate Intern

This group of interns are persons who have completed a tertiary qualification and are in need of experience to increase their chance of entering into gainful employment.

3.6.1.2 Student Intern

An intern who is currently enrolled at a tertiary institution but requires practical exposure to complete their qualification is identified as a student intern.

Graduate youth are the target population for the internship programmes in South Africa and, as such, they need to possess a tertiary qualification and be between the ages of 18 and 35 (RSA DPSA, 2006:5).

3.6.2 Contribution of the Internship Programme

The internship programme has both advantages and disadvantages for the interns and the employers. Interns can benefit by being allowed to gain the necessary skills which were not obtained at the HEIs. The interns can also be provided with training specific to their qualifications. Organisations who implement internship programmes can benefit by using

the programme to monitor the available graduates, which could provide a possible stream of new recruits who could be absorbed into the organisation should a vacancy arise, without going through a potentially costly recruitment process. The HEIs can also benefit from internship programmes and could restructure their academic offering to ensure that their curriculum is aligned with what employers require, thus ensuring absorption of graduates into the labour market (Lubega & Schultz, 2022:5 – 7; Silva *et al.*, 2016:705). Internship programmes are seen as mechanisms which allow graduates to enter organisations at entry level positions, thereby alleviating graduate unemployment (Maake-Malatji, 2021:131). Zuo *et al.* (2020:627) suggest that internship programmes can influence the direction of an individual and make them more competitive and appealing to the labour market, including in the interview process.

Some programmes can fail where an intern is placed into a position that is not aligned to their qualification, and this leads to a mismatch between the skills learnt and the qualification obtained. This misalignment can lead to situations where the intern is not upskilled enough to find gainful employment (Lubega & Schultz, 2022:5).

3.6.3 Skills and Experience

The promise that an internship programme can provide a graduate with the necessary skills and experience to find gainful employment has led to an ever-increasing trend amongst new graduates to find some form of internship programme upon completion of their qualification. This is illustrated by the fact that, in the 1980s, fewer than 3% of graduates underwent some form of internship training; but that has increased to 75% in the 2000s. The research also found that students who underwent some internship programme had a higher chance of being called for interviews to organisations, as evidenced in the literature (Baert, Neyt, Siedler, Tobback & Verhaest, 2021:1, 3 and 8).

Research in the hospitality industry has shown that internships have ensured that the students have built on from their academic and theoretical skills acquired at the tertiary institution by obtaining core competences that are work-related, whilst blending the same for relevance in the workplace (Mensah, Appietu & Asimah, 2020:1). Pietersen and Malatjie (2022:15) have also established the unemployed youth with a tertiary

qualification need the chance to use their classroom-learnt education in a work-based environment. The reasoning behind this is that most qualifications do not focus on the hands-on interface with the real world, making the need for internships a fundamental necessity.

An internship programme can prove to be advantageous for students' professions and helps students to put their theoretical learning into practice, given the reality-based perspective. The programme, if structured appropriately, allows the interns to acquire skills which are beneficial for their future endeavours in the job market (Arif, Nunes & Kanwal, 2018:595-597).

Internship programmes can be seen as a means of bridging the gap between a formal education and the work environment (Saniter & Siedler, 2014:2; Anjum, 2020:1). Akram and Malik (2012:10604) on the other hand, significantly, view the internship initiative as a catalyst for economic growth which is derived from on-the-job training and human resource development. Various studies indicate that internships are beneficial to both employers and graduates, as a mutually reciprocal plan of action. The employers create a platform through the internship programme to explore capabilities of the graduates, whilst at the same time, the internship programme provides financial assistance for the graduates (Akram & Malik, 2012:10604; Owens *et al.*, 2001; Saniter & Siedler, 2014:3) as they gain some useful on-the-job work experience. Among new graduates, the internship is vital to boost confidence (Owens *et al.*, 2001). Internships play a critical role in assisting newly graduated individuals in their professional training and contribute to preparing them to enter into careers in the working environment. The internship programme allows the graduates to garner more information regarding the career choices available in the job market and this is deemed essential for furthering their career ambitions. They also gain first-hand knowledge of some of the necessary core skills to be able to contribute to the work environment (Saniter & Siedler, 2014:2). Maertz, Stoeberl and Marks (2014:126) further suggest that the graduates benefit from the internship programme by gaining insight into the work industry, which contributes to the advancement of their careers.

The evolution from traditional schooling to the ranks of the employed is still a challenge in many countries. This has allowed for more investment in programmes that can

facilitate the on-the-job experience which can be used to fulfil the criteria required for permanent employment (Dhakal *et al.*, 2018:4). Mabiza, Mahlalela and Mbohwa (2017:1) define graduate internships as “programmes intended to provide graduates with an opportunity to gain work experience in a professional environment in order to enhance their academic and professional knowledge.” The authors concluded that these programmes allow the graduates to develop to their best ability through varying workplace experiences. Jung and Lee (2016:215) contend that many fields of study, for example, medicine and law, have long had work experience built into the relevant qualifications. These strategies assist the graduates to improve their generic and specific skills in relation to vocational-based careers.

Studies have identified a misalignment between some training programmes within the internship programmes and the qualifications obtained by the graduates. This misalignment has resulted in the graduates not being exposed to the relevant skills needed for their qualifications. Some interns on the internship programmes have found the training irrelevant, highlighting a potential mismatch of skills. This is of immense concern (Pietersen & Malatjie, 2022:16; Bilal & Ummah, 2016:63).

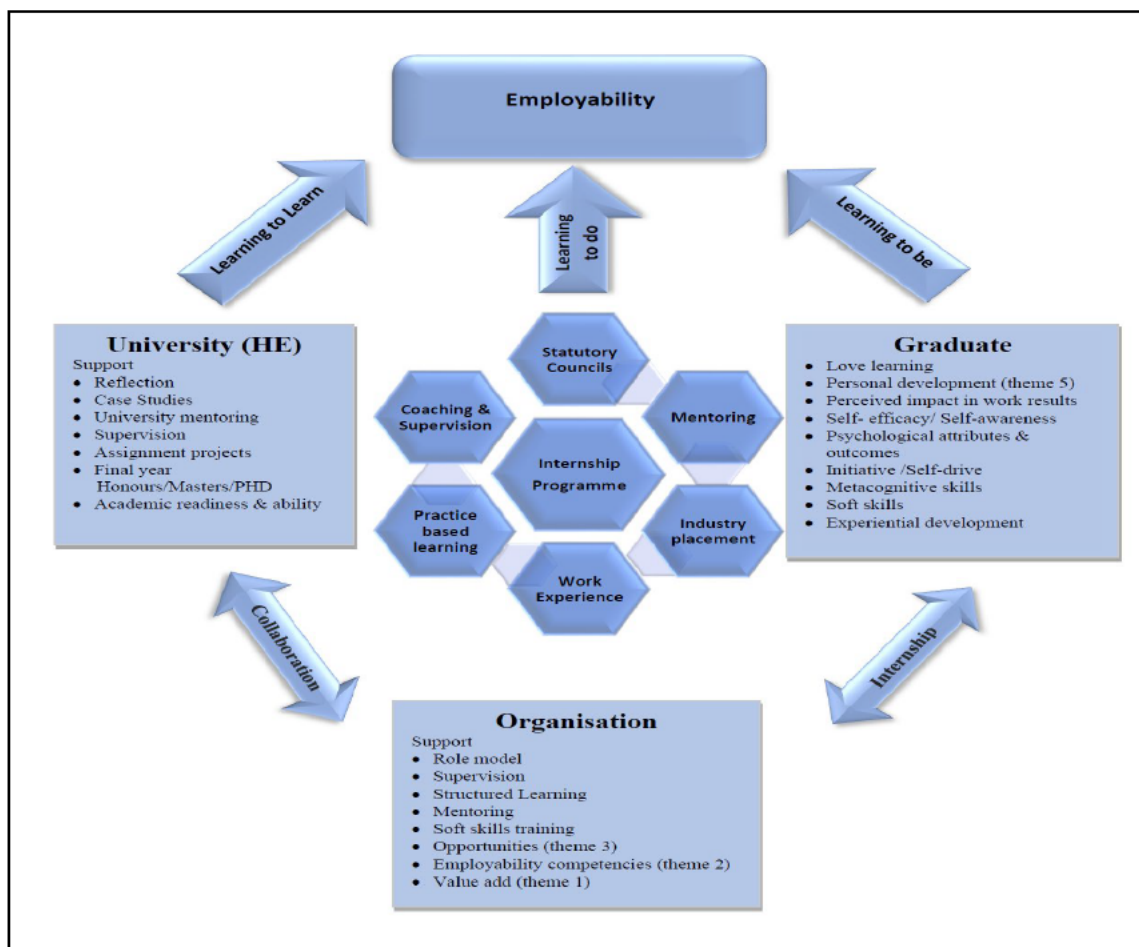
Through providing opportunities, such as the internship programme to graduates, to gain the necessary work experience (Koma, 2010:1). The NDP (2012:417) has also highlighted the role that the South African government plays in implementing internship programmes to contribute towards creating access to the job market. They have also identified that various governments have created a platform to incorporate unemployed graduates into the public service.

Whilst many governments have introduced programmes to alleviate youth unemployment, which have shown signs of success, there are also numerous programmes that failed to deliver (Baidoo, 2016:252). It was found, in Ghana, that the majority of the youth could not apply for vacancies within the country because they lacked the education or skills that were required (Baidoo, 2016:257). Patel, Graham and Chowa (2020:1) contend that youth unemployment is a global crisis, and for South Africa, particularly, this is currently exacerbated by high levels of poverty. Their study found that more interventions are needed in skills training to alleviate the high levels of youth unemployment. Jubane (2020:10) recommended that there needs to be more emphasis by

the South African government on developing programmes to assist the youth in acquiring the skills that are required by the labour market. Companies who have a skills shortage can be reluctant to engage with unemployed graduates who do not have any work-related skills (Lubega & Schultz, 2022:2).

Lubega and Schultz (2022:16) developed a framework for internship programmes, which highlights the processes or steps that need to be followed by the organisation, individuals and universities for a graduate to be employable. This is shown in Figure 3.16.

Figure 3.16: Framework for internship programmes



Source: Adapted from Lubega and Schultz (2022:16)

Figure 3.16 shows the interdependence between the university, the organisation and the graduate regarding what needs to be acquired at the various stages to ensure that the graduate is employable.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the global challenges related to unemployment, and South Africa's triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. South Africa is the most unequal country, as well as a country with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. Youth unemployment has reached epidemic proportions in the country and includes youth who possess a tertiary qualification. Graduate youth unemployment is linked to a lack of the relevant skills that are sought by organisations. The South African government has, in line with the NDP, implemented policies to aid with the reduction of unemployment, and more especially youth unemployment. One policy initiative is the internship programme, which is tipped to be the 'game changer' in reducing youth unemployment. It is widely believed that graduates who undergo an internship programme become more attractive to the labour market because they now possess the skills and experience needed for gainful employment.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology can be defined as the way one goes about studying a specific area of interest. This includes the model to be considered, the method for conducting the research, and the ways in which to collect the data required for the research (Igwenagu, 2016:5). This is echoed by Patel and Patel (2019:48), who stated that research methodology is a way to find solutions to problems by following a systematic approach. This chapter outlines the path followed in this study, and discusses the various worldviews, research designs and research methods. The ethical aspects taken into consideration during the study are discussed. The data which had been collected is discussed, together with the themes identified in the study. The analysis of the data collected is presented, together with the findings and discussions, supported by other studies and scholarly work in the relevant field.

4.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Issues of unemployment, and specifically youth unemployment, have reached new heights in South Africa. This is of immense concern to all key stakeholders in the country. Graduates make up just over 10% of this unemployed sector of the population. Government has introduced legislation to assist in alleviating unemployment, and one such initiative is the internship programme. Internship programmes are meant to provide young graduates with workplace skills to assist them in finding meaningful employment. This study focused on the graduate internship programme within the EDTEA, and sought to determine whether the programme is adequately managed; as well as whether the appointed interns gain the relevant skills necessary to obtain permanent meaningful employment. This gainful employment will, as per the NDP, 2030, contribute to addressing some of South Africa's issues associated with rising unemployment and poverty.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was premised on the following key questions:

- Is the current EDTEA's internship policy being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in legislation?
- Are the interns receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification?
- Is the internship programme providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment?

4.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

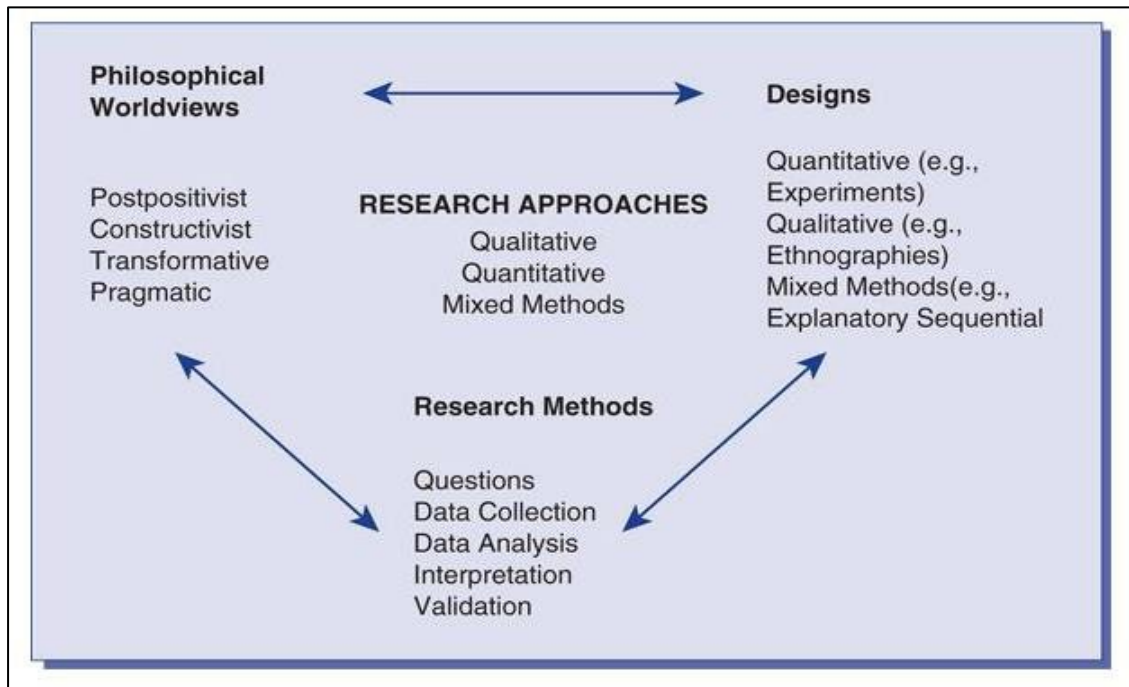
The key objectives of the study are to:

- Evaluate whether the current internship policy of EDTEA is being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in the legislation.
- Ascertain if the interns are receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification.
- Determine if the internship programme is providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment.

4.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

In Figure 4.1 the interrelationship between the philosophical worldviews, research design and research methods which informed the research approach is shown.

Figure 4.1: Interrelationship between worldviews, research design and research methods



Source: Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018:5)

4.5.1 Worldviews or Paradigms

Research paradigms are associated with certain methodologies. Paradigms provide guidance regarding what and how research should be conducted and interpreted (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:19). There are four worldviews that are found in research. These are the postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic worldviews. These views are briefly discussed below.

4.5.1.1 Postpositivist Paradigm

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:6), the postpositivist paradigm is considered to be a scientific method which is linked to qualitative research. The core characteristic of this paradigm is that the outcomes are most likely determined by a cause and the research is focused on this relationship.

4.5.1.2 Constructivist Paradigm

This paradigm focuses on understanding human awareness and how the research uses the information acquired from the contributors during the interview process. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006:195) state that the constructivist researcher is most likely to depend on qualitative data collection methods. The data gathering techniques that are normally used in a constructivist paradigm are interviews with participants, observation of situations and documents, among others (Wagner *et al.*, 2012:54).

4.5.1.3 Transformative Paradigm

This worldview is centred around people or communities that have been predominately side-lined; and research needs to be aligned with political opinions to encounter these side-lined groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:10).

4.5.1.4 Pragmatic Paradigm

This worldview holds there are different views or ways of looking at the way research can be conducted and, as such, it focuses on using a mixed methods approach which can use different research methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:10). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016:144) reiterated these sentiments by saying that “no single point of view can give the entire picture and that there are multiple realities”. They also confirmed that multiple methods can be used; but this is not always the case.

The study undertaken in EDTEA used a constructivist approach and was used to obtain the perceptions of the current interns in trying to ascertain whether the internship programme addresses skills development and job creation.

4.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design allows the researcher to choose a specific method to conduct research. This can be qualitative, quantitative, or a mixed method. Saunders *et al.* (2016:165) emphasise that the main difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that quantitative research focuses on data that is associated with numbers;

whilst qualitative research focuses on words. These research designs are briefly discussed.

4.6.1 Quantitative Research Method

The quantitative research method is aligned to the postpositivist paradigm and focuses on experimental studies. This is when a researcher wants to investigate the relationships or correlations between different variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:147). This method follows a well-constructed system to collect the data and investigates the association linking the variables using some form of statistical analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:166).

4.6.2 Mixed Research Method

This method is considered a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers adopting a pragmatic worldview would use this combination when conducting research (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:169-170). Creswell and Creswell (2018:215) contend that this method involves collecting the data using both open-ended and closed-ended questions. It also combines both qualitative and quantitative narratives to explain the data.

4.6.3 Qualitative Research Method

Badenhorst (2008:92) defines the qualitative method as one where the scholar looks for ways of interpreting activities through the collection of verbal data. Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014:234) define qualitative research as revealing ‘whole-world’ experiences because qualitative researchers are primarily interested in human experience and the meanings associated with a phenomenon. From the above description, it could be concluded that qualitative research deals with meanings, feelings, and reasons. According to Shaidi (2013:140), the qualitative research differs from quantitative research in the following key features:

- The research is conducted in a setting that resembles the natural environment of the participant;
- The emphasis is on the process rather than on the outcome;

- The key aim is to obtain in-depth explanations derived from activities and procedures;
- The main objective is to understand the common action and not to make generalisation to the population; and
- This method results in the formulation of a new hypothesis or theory.

Qualitative research is, therefore, concerned with understanding the methods and processes used, and the societal impacts which inform various behavioural outlines. It strives to create a comprehensible narrative, as it is seen through the eyes of the participants (Wagner *et al.*, 2012:126).

This study adopted the qualitative research method which allowed for information gathering and an understanding of the internship programme from the point of view of interns at EDTEA. The qualitative method, therefore, explored the views of both homogenous and diverse groups of people, and assisted in unpacking differing perspectives within the EDTEA. The aim of using the qualitative method was to gain an in-depth understanding of the current internship programme in EDTEA.

4.7 STUDY SITE

The study site for this research is within EDTEA, based in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. There are eleven District Offices, which are as follows; uMgungundlovu; uThukela; Zululand; uMkhanyakude; Ugu; uMzinyathi; uThungulu; iLembe; Newcastle and uMgungundlovu; and eThekweni. The majority of the interns are based at the head office in the uMgungundlovu District.

4.8 TARGET POPULATION

The target population is the group of individuals from whom the researcher collects the necessary information required for the study (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:132). The target population for this study consists of 171 interns who are currently employed by EDTEA and 70 mentors who provide guidance and supervision to the interns.

4.9 SAMPLE SIZE

The ability of the researcher to sample the entire population depends on the practicality of reaching all the members of the population; but there are costs associated with reaching out to all the members of the population, in terms of timeliness of data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:274). These restrictions force researchers to take a sample of the population. According to du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014:134), a sample is defined as being a sub-group of the entire grouping, which would have the same traits as the target population. The sample size used in research is also dependent on the tools used to collect the data. Interviews are more appropriate for small sample sizes and questionnaires are more suitable for larger samples (Mwita, 2022:534).

Taherdoost (2016:20) further details the various sampling methodologies used in research, and these include two main groups, namely probability and non-probability sampling.

4.9.1 Probability Sampling

In probability sampling, all the parts of the population have an equal chance of being chosen. This method allows the researcher to draw conclusions about the population based on the results from the sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:276; Taherdoost, 2016:20). There are also different ways to go about probability sampling and these include:

- simple random sampling, where the entire population has an equal chance of being chosen;
- systematic sampling, which allows choosing the sample by following a systematic approach; and
- cluster sampling, where the population is gathered into groups that are predetermined and the sample is taken randomly from these groups.

4.9.2 Non-probability Sampling

According to Taherdoost (2016:22), the non-probability method of sampling allows for the sample size to be chosen subjectively. These include:

- quota sampling, where the sample is based on a specific, distinctive trait;
- snowball sampling, which uses some individuals to influence others to participate in the study; and
- convenience sampling, when the researcher can choose the sample based on availability and ease of access.

This study used the non-probability convenience sampling method, which is the preferred method for qualitative studies, and where the tendency is to have a small sample. This allows for the participants to be chosen based on their availability.

Gill (2020:579) also concurs that convenience sampling is one of the most common qualitative sampling methods, but also cautions that the downside to this method is that the members of the sample may not always provide the adequate information that is required.

The sample size for this study comprised ten interns and three mentors, making a total of 13 participants. The participants interviewed were from the EDTEA head office based in the uMgungundlovu District of KZN.

4.9.3 Data Saturation

Data saturation can be considered to have been reached when any further interviews will not yield any variation to the data already collected (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012:192). Fusch and Ness (2015:1409) contend that data saturation is not when the researcher has utilised all their resources, or if the researcher has conducted a pre-set number of interviews, but rather when the data collected is deemed to have answered the research questions, irrespective of the sample size. Data saturation was reached in this study conducted in the EDTEA, when it was deduced that any more interviews would not have provided new information that could have affected the findings.

4.10 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data for research can be collected from primary or secondary sources. Primary data is when the researcher goes out and collects the data first hand, directly from the participants. Secondary data is pre-existing data that the researcher uses from other sources for their research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010:180).

Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, and Martimianakis (2016:263-264) highlight the importance of this method to collect data, and describes five ways to collect data for qualitative studies, namely:

- surveys, which use open-ended questions to gather information to extract the perceptions and beliefs of individuals;
- interviews, which allow the researcher to engage with the individuals, and are used for in-depth questioning to get the answers to a structured or unstructured set of questions;
- focus groups, which are used to obtain evidence from individuals who form a group; and the questions are such that they enable dialogue amongst the members of the group;
- observations, in which the senses are used to gather the information from individual actions; and
- textual and content analysis, which are predominantly used to evaluate changes in the views of different organisations.

Creswell and Creswell (2018:186) also concur with the different methods to collect data for qualitative research. According to Mwita (2022:535), the method of data collection varies and is dependent on the tactic used. The quantitative method may focus on the numerical data and follows the route of a questionnaire, whilst the qualitative method uses interviews, focus groups or observations.

The research within EDTEA took place via face-to-face interviews. The questions took the form of in-depth, open-ended questions. The interviews were scheduled for approximately 20-25 minutes per participant.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

For the interpretation of qualitative research, Creswell and Creswell (2018:190), suggest many procedures, and these include a comparison between the findings and those in the literature; a summation of all the findings and ascertaining limitations; as well as suggestions for future research. In this study, the data collected through face-to-face interviews with respondents was analysed by organising the responses into themes and sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes that were identified, emerged from the research questions and respondents' responses. This process was used to aid in the understanding of participants' feedback, and also to analyse the data. Findings of this study were collaborated and substantiated through scholarly literature reviewed on the topic.

4.12 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical Clearance was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal through the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. According to Shaidi (2013:155), important ethical considerations in social research include voluntary participation, anonymity of participants, and confidentiality. Nkwane (2012:49) is of the opinion that ethical considerations in a research study come into effect as soon as participants are identified, and continue as the study progresses with the involvement of the participants, until the results of the study are released.

4.12.1 Informed Consent

According to Singh (2010:172), where research work requires the participation of humans, it is important to fully inform the participants about the purpose and nature of the study. For the purposes of this study, all relevant information was explained to all participants. Thereafter, all participants were given informed consent forms, where they

could either choose to continue with, or withdraw from, participating in the study. This is important, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:52), when conducting primary research.

4.12.2 Confidentiality

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the study did not use the real names of the contributors. Cohen *et al.* (2007:64) argue that confidentiality means that, although investigators know the identity of the participants who have provided the information, there is no way to link the information provided to the contributors. The boundaries surrounding the shared secret is protected (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:65), not only in terms of POPIA, but also in terms of the rules regarding primary data collection in research. Confidentiality must be upheld, according to the university's policy for research.

4.12.3 Gatekeeping

Wagner *et al.* (2012:64) describe gatekeepers as people who allow researchers entry into an organisation or community to conduct research. An approval for permission to conduct research was sourced from EDTEA, which was obtained prior to engaging in the study. The gatekeeper's letter not only allowed the researcher to approach the participants from the department to engage in the empirical research, but it also allowed the researcher to use information that is of a public nature from the department's website and other policy-related information that is for public consumption, and is not deemed confidential in nature. The researcher requested and obtained a gatekeeper's letter from the EDTEA granting formal permission to conduct the research in the designated locality.

4.13 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The section presents the data collected, the findings of the research conducted within EDTEA, and the analysis of the data with discussions. The data collected is presented together with the themes and sub-themes which were identified to aid the analysis of the data.

4.13.1 Respondents' Profiles

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented below.

Table 4.1: Demographic profiles of mentor respondents

Mentors						
Respondent	Gender	Race	Age	Highest qualification	Position	Experience in the department
RM 1	Female	African	40-49	Degree	Assistant Director	2 years
RM 2	Female	Coloured	Above 50	National Diploma	Assistant Director	14 years
RM 3	Male	African	40-49	Degree	Deputy Director	10 years

Source: Author's perspective

Table 4.1 presents the demographic profiles of the mentors. The majority of the respondents were aged between 40-49 years and in possession of degrees. The mentor respondents had work experience ranging between two years and 14 years, and held positions in junior and middle management within the EDTEA.

Table 4.2: Demographic profiles of intern respondents

Interns				
Respondent	Gender	Race	Age	Highest qualification
RI 1	Female	African	25-30	National Diploma
RI 2	Female	African	25-30	Master's Degree
RI 3	Female	African	18-24	National Diploma
RI 4	Female	African	Above 35	National Diploma
RI 5	Female	African	25-30	National Diploma
RI 6	Female	African	25-30	National Diploma
RI 7	Female	African	18-24	Degree
RI 8	Female	African	25-30	National Diploma
RI 9	Female	African	31-35	National Diploma
RI 10	Male	African	31-35	National Diploma

Source: Author's perspective

Table 4.2 above presents the demographic profiles of the interns. The majority of the respondents were female, aged between 25-30 years; and the majority of the intern respondents held national diploma qualifications as their highest qualifications.

4.13.2 Themes and Sub-themes from the Data Analysis

Various themes and sub-themes were identified when analysing the data that was linked to the research questions. These are presented below in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Question 1: Is the current EDTEA's internship policy being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in legislation?	
Policy Implementation	Policy knowledge Contract obligation Duration of internship programme Mentorship Performance management Stipend Resources Training
Question 2: Are the interns receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification?	
Skills and Experience	Induction training programme Attendance of relevant training programmes Skills and experience relevant to qualification Supervision Expectations of the internship programme Enhancement of the internship programme Willingness to learn
Question 3: Is the internship programme providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment?	
Employability	Period of unemployment Number of positions applied for Reasons for applying for the internship programme Necessary skills for employment Gainful employment Actively seeking permanent employment Interviews attended Duration of the internship programme Impact of COVID-19

Source: Author's perspective

4.13.3 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the data collected, the themes and sub-themes that emerged and were extracted from the data collected, followed by the findings and discussions put forth.

4.13.3.1 Policy Implementation

This theme discusses critical aspects relating to implementation of the internship policy within the EDTEA, and addresses one of the key objectives of the research, in evaluating whether the current internship policy of EDTEA is being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts, as set out in the legislation.

4.13.3.1.1 Policy Knowledge

Some mentor respondents indicated that they did have knowledge of the policies related to the internship programme. However, one mentor respondent had no knowledge of policies related to the internship programme. Some mentor respondents indicated that they did understand the relationship between the internship policy and the Skills Development Act, although one mentor respondent did not understand that there was any correlation.

The findings of the study indicated that the mentor respondents did display some understanding and knowledge of the internship policy and the Skills Development Act, although this area could be improved. Mentors who are sufficiently capacitated with an understanding and knowledge of the internship policy and other related supporting prescripts, such as the Skills Development Act, would be in better position to implement the internship policy within EDTEA. Naidoo (2016:61) suggests that the success of the internship programme is attributed to the quality of mentorship provided to the graduates, and further suggests that organisations must carefully select mentors and empower them to undertake their duties.

4.13.3.1.2 Contract

All the intern respondents indicated that they had signed a contract of employment on the commencement of the internship programme. This finding was evident from the response below.

RI 6

“Yes, upon assumption of duty I signed a contract.”

The study found that all of the interns had signed contracts upon assumption of employment with EDTEA. This requirement – having signed contracts of employment in place as part of the implementation of the internship policy within EDTEA – was met, and is in accordance with provincial and national prescripts.

4.13.3.1.2.1 Duration of the Internship Programme

The majority of the intern respondents indicated that the 24-month duration of the internship programme was sufficient, but there were some who felt it should be longer. The mentor respondents indicated that the duration of the internship programme was sufficient. This is supported by some responses from respondents.

RI 3

“Yes, it is if you are willing to learn and if you have supervisors who are able to teach you. Twenty-four months is enough to gain skills and knowledge.”

RI 10

“No, I think it should be three years as the minimum requirements of some level 7 positions is three-to-five years.”

RM 2

“Yes. Two years is a long time.”

The findings of study indicated that the EDTEA was complying with the 24-month duration of the internship programme, and this was in accordance with internship policy. The 24-month internship programme in South Africa also compares with the length of

the internship programme in Botswana, which is also a developing country (Bakwena & Sebudubudu, 2016: 9).

4.13.3.1.2.2 Mentorship

The mentor respondents indicated that they were in junior and middle management positions within EDTEA and had work experience of between 2 years and 14 years in the department.

The mentor respondents indicated that they had mentorship experience of between 2 and 14 years within the department, whilst the majority of them indicated that they had not been trained as mentors.

The findings of the study show that mentors were at a management level and had varying levels of work and mentorship experience within EDTEA. The findings also highlight that the majority of the mentor respondents were not trained as mentors. EDTEA's internship policy states that the Human Resource Unit must determine selection criteria for mentors and, prior to placing interns, the mentors must have undergone training. EDTEA's internship policy states that the onus for the facilitation of training resides with the Human Resource Unit. It can be argued that the EDTEA did not provide the mentors with the necessary training and development and, in this respect, did not comply with the implementation of the internship policy. Mentors play a fundamental role and are also key stakeholders in the successful implementation of the internship programme within EDTEA. Naidoo and Hoque (2017:8) hold the view that mentors need to be selected cautiously within an organisation so as to ensure that they provide adequate support to the interns, as they found that some mentors were inundated with their own work, or were disengaged with the internship programme, which resulted in poor mentorship. Tien and Trang (2020:86) also noted that organisations lack individuals who are qualified to provide support to interns. Naidoo (2016:62) suggests that the performance agreements of mentors should be clear and inclusive of the guidance and support role they provide to interns. Naidoo (2016:61) further states that mentors must be adequately capacitated to perform their duties. Ganesh, Bozas, Subban and Munapo (2015:27) have found that

mentoring programmes have yielded positive results in performance and career advancement.

4.13.3.1.3 Performance management

The majority of intern respondents said they did not have a formal workplan, although some did say they had a performance agreement; whilst the majority of the mentor respondents indicated that workplans were developed for interns. Most of the intern respondents indicated that they were not assessed by their mentors, nor were they given any necessary feedback. However, the majority of mentor respondents indicated that the interns were assessed and given feedback. Some of the responses are highlighted below.

RI 2

“No formal structure. However, weekly plans are created for the week ahead for the daily tasks one needs to complete, especially those of priority.”

RI 4

“No, I don’t have a workplan, but I have a performance agreement in the current moment.”

RI 8

“No, we don’t get assessed.”

RM 2

“Workplans are developed.”

RM 3

“On a quarterly basis interns complete the written assessments of their performance.”

The findings of the study revealed that there were conflicting views between the intern respondents and the mentor respondents in regard to workplans, assessments and feedback. One of the ways to evaluate whether the internship policy within EDTEA was being implemented, was by assessing whether the workplans and assessments were in place, and that the interns were being engaged through regular feedback. The conflicting

views in this matter clearly indicate that this aspect should be a cause for concern for EDTEA, as it could be argued that EDTEA did not meet this requirement in terms of the implementation of internship policy. The department, therefore, failed to comply in this regard with the provincial and national prescripts. Workplans set clear objectives and tasks for the interns. Workplans and assessments clarify for the interns whether the deliverables that were set had been met, and communicating this information in terms of feedback would provide an indication whether the workplan is being achieved, or if possible, improvements were becoming necessary. This also contributes to the development of skills and experience of the interns and the successful implementation of the internship policy within EDTEA. Mabeba (2021:69) suggests that the contracts for internships must clearly indicate the objectives. He also (2021:220) suggests that the process of performance management for interns has deficiencies due to a lack of understanding by the officials who are responsible for the implementation of the internship programme.

4.13.3.1.4 Stipend

The majority of both intern and mentor respondents indicated that the stipend was insufficient due to the current high cost of living. Only two intern respondents said that it was fair, with one mentor respondent indicating that the stipend was sufficient.

RI 9

“It is way too low provided that we pay rent, buy food, electricity and taxi fare before taking into account the cost of living being high.”

RM 1

“Financially difficult for people with qualifications – it should be increased.”

RM 2

“Some interns come from far. Not sufficient.”

The findings from the study revealed that the majority of respondents felt that the stipend that the interns were receiving was insufficient due to the rising cost of living. The EDTEA was paying interns the stipend as prescribed in the EDTEA’s internship policy,

which was aligned to the DPSA's 2018 directive on developmental programmes in the public service. The stipend payable on the internship programme was linked to the level of qualification that the intern held. The public service, in recent years, has committed to reducing South Africa's fiscal debt to more maintainable levels in its attempt to stabilise the country's debt. Therefore, government has initiated processes within the public service, in the short-term and medium-term, to not spend its borrowing on wages (RSA National Treasury, 2023:1). This, simply put, means that wage and salary increase for public servants, including interns, would be limited to reduce and alleviate the burden on South Africa's national fiscus.

4.13.3.1.5 Resources

The majority of the intern respondents indicated that had they been provided with the necessary tools to conduct their duties in the office.

RI 2

"The resources are available for interns who are within the department to carry out their official duties."

RI 3

"Yes, I have access to a computer and printer and e-mails and internet."

RM 2

"Yes. Every intern has their own desktop."

The findings from the study indicated that the EDTEA does comply with the internship policy, which is to provide the necessary resources, such as desktops, printers and access to e-mails and the internet, to the interns to conduct their duties.

4.13.3.1.6 Training

Regarding training, most of the intern respondents indicated that they had attended an induction programme called 'Breaking barriers into Entry' for the public service. There were varying responses with regards to other training opportunities that were provided.

RI 3

“Yes, I attended Breaking Barriers into Entry.”

“Yes, PERSAL courses.”

RI 8

“No, I have not received any relevant training programmes.”

RI 9

“Non-relevant to my qualification.”

The findings from the study indicated that EDTEA did provide an induction course for the interns and met this requirement in terms of the internship policy. It was also found that the interns had varying experiences regarding their attendance in other training and development areas. The internship policy stipulates that training interventions must be arranged for the interns; therefore, it could be argued that this is an area that could be improved, and is a focal point for the EDTEA to consider.

4.13.3.2 Skills and Experience

This theme, which includes various sub-themes, emanates from the research questions in regard to the interns’ exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience, to determine whether or not the interns are receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme, and in relation to their qualifications. The various sub-themes, below, together with some responses from the respondents, are presented.

4.13.3.2.1 Induction training programme

Most of the intern respondents indicated that they had attended an induction training programme for interns. This programme, specific to the public service and the internship programme, is called the ‘Breaking Barriers into Entry’ programme.

Findings from the study showed that the EDTEA capacitated the interns with a comprehensive background to the public service by providing the opportunity for the

interns to attend the induction programme specific to the public service and designed for interns.

4.13.3.2.2 Attendance at relevant training programmes

Most of the intern respondents indicated that they had attended relevant training programmes to enhance their skills and qualifications; whilst one respondent did not agree. Two mentor respondents also agreed that the interns attended relevant training programmes, whilst one mentor respondent indicated that the intern had not attended training programmes. The training course most attended was for the personal and salary system (PERSAL) used for the administration of the public service payroll.

RI 9

“Not relevant to my qualification.”

Findings from the study highlighted that, while most respondents had attended relevant training programmes to enhance their skills and qualifications, there was no consensus by the respondents, and therefore this indicates that the EDTEA could improve in this area, as there are interns who would benefit from attending relevant training programmes. The findings also showed that the training course most attended was on PERSAL. The PERSAL system is government’s salary business system, which is readily available and is used to provide personnel support to all provincial and national department across the country. It is mostly used by the human resource management business unit. Therefore, the good attendance at the course may suggest that it is not only relevant, but also readily accessible. There could be a need for other relevant training courses to be considered, as the interns are spread across various business units in EDTEA. Naidoo (2016:62) found that the investment in training and development of interns has yielded improved workplace skills.

4.13.3.2.3 Skills and experience relevant to qualification

The majority of intern respondents thought that the skills and experience they acquired in the programme were relevant to the qualifications they held. However, there was one

respondent who differed in her view on this aspect. There was, therefore, no consensus amongst the respondents on this aspect.

RI 1

“I was not sent to the communication section for my communications qualification but placed in human resources.”

The findings of the study show that the majority of the interns were placed in the correct business units and they were receiving skills and experience relevant to their qualification. There was one case of skills mismatch, where the intern was placed in a business unit that was not relevant to the intern’s qualification. To ensure the internship programme is successful, the skills and experience gained should match and supplement the qualification held by the intern, so the interns can gain the relevant skills and experience to compete in the job market. In the case of a skills mismatch, the interns would be performing work functions that are irrelevant to their qualification. Hence interns could also become despondent with the internship programme and may not benefit from participating in the programme. This could also severely impact on interns’ transitioning into gainful employment as their participation in job interviews could be hindered as they would not have gained the relevant work experience during their internship programme. In support of this finding, Ziberi, Rexha and Ukshini (2021:2) noted that, when some graduates enter the workforce, they are incorrectly placed, as there is no correlation between their qualifications and the jobs that they are employed to do. Such circumstances are a risk to the productivity of the organisation and could further contribute to the economic problems that the country faces. Habiyaremye, Habanabakize and Nwosu (2022:790) suggest that skills mismatch is more prevalent among youth who are inexperienced. A point worth noting is that, although the issue of skills mismatch is highlighted in the context of interns as very prevalent, needing due consideration, a similar problem exists in the wider public service. Vandeweyer and Verhagen (2022:26) agree that a skills mismatch is prevalent in the public service, and that there is a need to address this challenge.

4.13.3.2.4 Supervision

Most of the intern respondents indicated that they did receive guidance and advice from the mentors. One intern respondent, RI 8, indicated that she did not have a mentor allocated to her. Respondents RI 4 and RI 9 did not want to respond to this question. Some responses are tabled in the discussion.

RI 2

“I can confidently say that the mentor/supervisor that was allocated to me is very professional. Hence, she provided continuous guidance and advice at all times.”

RI 8

“I do not have a mentor.”

Findings from the research demonstrate that, while most of the intern respondents did receive guidance and support from their mentors, there were also intern respondents who did not want to comment on this, which suggests that this could be an area of concern. Another matter of concern for the EDTEA should be that some interns are being placed without mentors, and this results in those interns experiencing difficulties on the job and programme, without any supervision. These findings must also be read together with earlier findings around mentorship from a policy implementation perspective, where the lack of trained mentors was identified as a policy implementation gap. It is a known fact that mentors assist interns with skills transfer and that this then forms the basis for guidance and support on the programme. Doerwald, Scheibe and van Yperen (2015:2) support this view, and note that there is a positive association between effective mentoring and improved skills transfer. The absence of a mentor and lack of mentorship could lead to interns not gaining the relevant work experience, or developing the right skills. This shows that there was a lack of proper planning for the internship programme by EDTEA, as there were insufficient mentors.

4.13.3.2.5 Expectations of the internship programme

Most of the intern respondents indicated that the programme met their expectations. However, one intern respondent indicated that his/her expectation had not been met, in

that he/she was doing something that was not aligned to his/her qualification. This is supported by the responses below.

RI 6

“Some moments I found it challenging, especially during COVID and being understaffed; but now with overtime it has done wonders for my growth.”

RI 7

“No, my expectations were not met because I ended up doing something I did not study for.”

The findings from the study indicated that, although most respondents were satisfied with regard to their expectations from the programme, there was no consensus, as one respondent was dissatisfied and felt strongly that she was performing duties that were irrelevant to her qualification. This finding can be further supported by earlier findings in the study, where an intern respondent had indicated that she attended training that was not relevant to her qualification. This highlights the aspect of a skills mismatch discussed in earlier findings, where the interns would be performing work functions that are irrelevant to their qualification and, as such, not of value. Hence, the intern could become despondent with the internship programme and not benefit from participating in the programme. This highlights the importance of proper planning in policy implementation, as aspects such as placement of qualified graduates to the relevant business unit is important. In this manner, they could benefit optimally in terms of the acquisition of skills. This should, ideally, be concluded at the pre-placement phase of the recruitment process, according to Tien and Trang (2020:86). In this way, critical gaps identified could be avoided. However, Suleman and Laranjeiro (2018:1099) suggested that recruitment could be focused on different aspects of skills where the organisation has a deficit, and this could contribute to the problem of capacity building.

4.13.3.2.6 Enhancement of the internship programme

The majority of the intern respondents indicated that the internship programme could be enhanced to assist interns in securing permanent employment. One intern respondent suggested that the interns be monitored to ensure that they were doing the relevant duties.

RI 6

“The internship programme can be improved by providing interns with help or insights on how interviews are like and what to expect in real life interview moments. I don’t know if there are workshops like that. It would be great if the department would assist interns by trying to integrate them into entry level posts as interns already have acquired the necessary skills and experience and they already know the departmental culture.”

RI 5

“All interns should be monitored and assisted; for instance, there are interns who are doing duties that are irrelevant to what they have studied.”

Findings from the study on this aspect indicated that most of the intern respondents felt strongly that the internship programme could be enhanced and improved to provide the interns with particular skills. One of the identified skills includes interview workshops to prepare the interns in their search for gainful employment. Another finding, in relation to the lack of monitoring of interns’ duties, speaks closely to the aspect of monitoring and evaluation of the internship programme. This is regarded as one of the key aspects in the successful implementation of the programme. This is to ensure that the interns are capacitated with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience. Mabeba (2021:220) supports and emphasises the importance of monitoring and evaluation of the internship programme.

In the absence of monitoring and evaluation of the interns, skills transfer to the interns could be hindered and work experience could be limited, as the interns may not know how to perform duties, which could result in interns completing the programme without acquiring work experience and skills. This could lead to poor implementation of the internship programme, which negates the original intent of having the internship programme in place.

4.13.3.2.7 Willingness to learn

The mentor respondents mostly agreed that the interns were eager to learn and develop themselves. However, there was no consensus in this aspect as one mentor respondent did not fully agree.

RM 1

“One intern is willing to learn, the other is not willing and needs to be pushed.”

The findings of the study indicated that, although the majority of interns were eager to learn, an area of concern was that some interns needed to be ‘pushed’ to learn. A willingness to learn, commitment and dedication from interns are essential if the interns are to acquire knowledge and skills whilst on the programme. Such factors can be influenced by mentors; however, the onus lies with the interns to demonstrate that they are approaching the internship programme with a positive attitude and a desire to enhance their knowledge, skills and experience, so that they can improve their future employment prospects.

Various findings in the preceding discussion are entrenched in human capital theory, which contends that skills and knowledge contribute towards human capital (Schultz, 1961:1). Investment in human capital can be acquired by various methods, such as on-the-job training, and this is also evident in the findings. Suleman and Laranjeiro (2018:1107) found that some interns displayed a poor work attitude and immaturity. In addition, Tien and Trang (2020:85) suggested that interns should be actively involved in learning and should utilise the internship programme to build their skills, profiles and maturity, and should also use the internship programme to acquire a competitive edge in future job opportunities.

4.13.3.3 Employability

This theme relates to the research objective to ascertain whether the internship programme is creating potential opportunities for gainful employment. The various sub-themes that follow address some of the aspects of unemployment, and whether or not the internship programme is having an impact on the interns securing gainful employment; as well as whether or not the interns are actively seeking gainful employment.

4.13.3.3.1 Period of unemployment

The majority of intern respondents indicated that they had spent between up to four years without employment prior to joining the internship programme at EDTEA. Some responses from respondents are documented below.

RI 1

“Never really stayed at home. Worked as a volunteer with a small stipend and then started the internship with EDTEA.”

RI 2

“I was unemployed for two years and it was not an easy time. We all do not know how hard it is to be unemployed until you experience it first-hand.”

The above findings are supported by the current unemployment rate in South Africa, which stands at 32.9%; of which 10.2% have a tertiary qualification. The intern respondents who were interviewed are ‘youth’ in terms of the South African definition. They fell into the category of 35 years and under. The current youth unemployment rate in South Africa stands at an alarming rate of 46.5% and the numbers are increasing on a regular basis (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023: 25).

4.13.3.3.2 Number of positions applied

The majority of the intern respondents applied for up to two or three positions before being successful with the current internship programme with EDTEA.

RI 4

“I applied for three positions and got two interviews, but I was only successful for the current position.”

The findings from the study show that intern respondents had applied for a few employment opportunities whilst being unemployed. This could imply that the South African labour market currently lacks employment opportunities for graduate youth. Studies indicate that the number of graduates annually exceeds the growth in South Africa’s labour market, which results in increases in the graduate unemployment rate

associated with a stagnate and ‘distressed’ economy. The above findings are supported by Dlamini (2020:66), who found that youth in search of jobs were faced with little opportunity for skills enhancement, because of the volatility in the labour market, caused by local and global conditions, including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.13.3.3.3 Reasons for applying for the internship programme

A majority of the respondents indicated that the reason they applied for the internship programme with EDTEA was because they wanted to gain some work experience consistent with the qualifications they had obtained, and which could assist them in securing permanent employment into the future.

RI 1

“I wanted to gain work experience. It’s required for a permanent job.”

RI 5

“I applied for the internship programme to understand the working environment and to gain experience so I can apply for jobs positions which I studied for.”

R1 6

“I applied for the internship programme as I believed it was going to be the steppingstone to entering the field that I studied for, as a full professional.”

These findings in the study indicated that the majority of the respondents wanted to gain work experience consistent with their qualifications, and therefore applied for an internship programme as a route to gainful employment. Sekiguchi *et al.* (2022:15) highlighted that the lack of work experience remains a leading cause of graduate unemployment. Hence, the above findings indicate that unemployed graduates viewed the internship programmes as a means of capacitating themselves with workplace experience and skills.

4.13.3.3.4 Necessary skills for employment

The majority of the intern respondents thought that the internship programme was structured, and this assisted the interns in obtaining the skills required for permanent employment in their respective fields of study. The mentor respondents were in agreement that the interns were provided with the necessary skills and experience.

RI 3

“Yes, I learnt a lot about the working environment and also developed my skills in writing documents, memorandums and communication skills, which will hopefully help me get a permanent job.”

RI 1

“Yes, but the qualification is in another section.”

RM 2

“Yes. Trained on all the work in the section.”

The study revealed that all the respondents concurred that the internship programme was structured and assisted them in obtaining the skills required for permanent employment in their respective fields of study. The research findings are echoed in the NPC (2012:24), which stated that the lack of workplace experience contributed to qualified individuals not finding gainful employment. Becker (1993:20) suggested that youth who left tertiary institutions with qualifications did not possess the necessary skills for employment; thus on-the-job training was a means for acquiring the job-specific skills.

4.13.3.3.5 Actively seeking for permanent employment

Most of the intern respondents indicated that they were actively seeking permanent employment.

RI 4

“Yes, this programme is valid for two years only so I made sure, I have been looking for something permanent during the internship programme.”

4.13.3.3.6 Interviews attended

The majority of intern respondents indicated that they attended interviews and it was pleasing to note that participating in internship programme has assisted many of them in the interviews. Some responses are quoted below:

RI 4

“I have attended two interviews, both from the Department of Education and I believe if I had not done the programme, it was going to be difficult for me to answer the interview questions, so the experience of the internship did assist me in the interviews.”

RI 10

“Yes, but unfortunately, I was unsuccessful on both occasions.”

The findings from the study show that the interns have been actively looking for gainful employment, having participated in interviews and been shortlisted. These findings suggest that job opportunities are available in the economy, as most of the interns have attended interviews. This could also suggest that, through the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and experience on the internship programme, the interns are now viewed by other employers as more suitable candidates and are therefore being shortlisted for the interviews. According to Jung and Lee (2016:259), graduates who have not participated in an internship programme have fewer job opportunities, compared to those graduates who have participated in an internship programme.

4.13.3.3.7 Duration of the internship programme

The majority of the intern respondents indicated that the 24-month duration of the internship programme was adequate for them to gain the necessary skills for gainful employment. Some respondents indicated that the programme should be for longer. Some responses are given below:

RI 4

“Yes, it is, if you willing to learn and if you have supervisors who are able to teach you. Twenty-four months is enough to gain skills and knowledge.”

RI 5

“Yes, the 24-month period proved to be enough as I have understood everything and I am ready for a permanent post”

RI 10

“No, I think it should be three years, as the minimum requirements of some of the Level Seven positions is three-to-five years.”

These findings indicate that, whilst majority of the respondents agreed that 24-months were sufficient for the interns to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills and experience, there were some respondents who disagreed and indicated that the programme should be longer than 24 months. The length of the internship programme has always been a contentious matter. The internship programme was initially structured as a 12-month programme. However, this was changed to a 24-month programme from 2018 to comply with the DPSA’s Directive on Developmental Programmes. The reason for the extension of the internship programme was to give the interns sufficient time to gain work experience which would be considered as the minimum number of years of experience required for them to apply for entry level positions within government. Entry levels positions require a minimum of one-to-two years of work experience and by increasing the duration of the internship programme to 24-months it is in line with other developing countries. According to Bakwena and Sebudubudu (2016: 9), this gap, that had previously made it difficult for the interns to compete for permanent positions within government, has been bridged.

4.13.3.3.8 Gainful employment

All mentor respondents indicated that they knew of interns who had left the internship programme for permanent employment.

RM 2

“Yes. Interns have left the department for permanent employment.”

The findings from the study show that the mentor respondents were in agreement and knew interns who had left the programme for permanent employment. This suggests the

internship programme at EDTEA has made a meaningful contribution to the interns and has assisted them in acquiring gainful employment. Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh and Knight (2001: 276) suggested that there is a positive correlation between an intern's ability to find gainful employment and work experience.

4.13.3.3.9 Impact of COVID-19

The majority of the intern and mentor respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the internship programme.

RI 1

"I saved money for travelling costs while working from home, but the learning experience is not the same. Worse during COVID. Sometimes you forgot information you learnt in the office when you stay at home."

RI 3

"Yes, it was frightening. Did not know what to do as everyone was on rotation and not coming to the office every day. People were dying all around us, at work and at home, and we did not know what to do."

RI 6

"The pandemic did slow the process we were making in terms of continuous learning. It also created stress for us with workload that we didn't plan for."

RM 1

"It did have an impact. Mentors had resources. However, interns did not have resources, such as laptops and internet (3G)."

RM 2

"Yes. Many interns could not get to work or even work as a team."

Key findings of the study, at this point, show that the majority of the respondents agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the current intake of interns and highlighted that there was lack of resources, such as laptops and mobile devices, to work remotely. The lack of face-to-face supervision by mentors hindered the interns' ability to acquire the necessary workplace skills, and it was not possible to physically work as

teams. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the interns faced challenges of uncertainty in the workplace; were very fearful and confused; and had experienced the personal loss of colleagues and loved ones. Whilst the EDTEA's internship policy, much like other policies, did not anticipate the impacts of a worldwide pandemic like COVID-19, there needs to be a change in the way organisations conduct their business to become flexible and adaptable to change. The internship programme can be adapted to include responsive and better planning; and different ways of supervision and working remotely; whilst still having the resources to ensure connectivity. Wheeler and Waite (2023: 38) noted that the internship programme can be delivered on a virtual podium using platforms such as Microsoft Teams. These virtual platforms are commonly used in the public sector.

4.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the various worldviews, research designs and research methods and outlined the path followed in this study. The chapter outlined the objectives of the study; the research methodology chosen for the study; the study site; the target population; and the sample size selected for the study. Ethical requirements of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, and the EDTEA, were taken in account when conducting the research. The data collected was presented, together with the research findings, analysis and discussions. Emanating from the analysis, discussions and findings, the EDTEA has complied with national and provincial prescripts. There are, however, some aspects around skills and training that could be improved. The internship programme should be adaptable and flexible in a changing environment, in order to enhance the delivery of the programme.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa, and many countries around the world, are plagued by the common challenge of youth unemployment. This challenge has multifaceted implications for society and the economy of the country. Hence, the focus of this study was to investigate an internship programme that could alleviate poverty, and contribute to reducing graduate youth unemployment. Against this background, the internship programme at EDTEA in the province of KwaZulu-Natal was explored. This concluding chapter forms a synopsis of the previous chapters; presents a summary of the findings of the research in relation to the research objectives and questions; provides recommendations on the findings that were uncovered and that could be useful; and suggests possible areas that could be explored in future studies.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The study focused on the graduate internship programme at EDTEA. The objectives of the study dealt with policy implementation, skills development and employability of the interns. A brief summary of each chapter follows:

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, the research problem, the research objectives and the research questions. It also described the study site and included a brief introduction to the research methodology that informed the study. The ethical clearance process was also explained, as well as the due process within the university which was followed to obtain prior permission for data collection.

Chapter 2 presented the comprehensive legislative framework for the study, which started with the Constitution of South Africa and ended with EDTEA's departmental policy on internship programmes. Policy development and implementation were discussed, as well

as theories that impact on the internship programme: human capital theory and public policy theory.

Chapter 3 presented a discussion of internships as a way to mitigate youth unemployment. The chapter provided a background to global unemployment and poverty challenges. South Africa's triple challenges came into the spotlight, along with the need to eradicate poverty, inequality and unemployment; and in particular youth unemployment. The potential of internship programmes to provide graduates with the necessary skills, training and experience to find gainful employment was discussed, as well as their potential to alleviate youth unemployment.

Chapter 4 was directed to the research design and methodology used in the study. The research methodology discussed the general worldviews and research designs available, and provided details of the constructivist paradigm and the qualitative research method specifically used in this study. The chapter also discussed the research findings and presented the analysis of the data collected for the study.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter of this study and provides an outline of the previous chapters, and a summary of the findings of the study. The conclusion forms the foundation for the recommendations that follow, which could be realistically applied; and suggests future research in the field of public administration and governance.

5.3 SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

This study within EDTEA focused on different aspects of the internship programme as set out in the objectives of study. This section elaborates on the research findings of the study in relation to the research objectives and questions.

The research objectives are as follows:

- Evaluate whether the current internship policy of EDTEA is being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in the legislation;
- Ascertain if the interns are receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification; and

- Determine if the internship programme is providing the interns with potential opportunities for gainful employment.

5.3.1 Discussion of the research questions

The research questions derived from the objectives, together with a summary of the research findings of the study, are discussed below.

- **Is the EDTEA's current internship policy being implemented in line with the mandatory prescripts as set out in legislation?**

Various aspects critical to the implementation of the EDTEA's policy in accordance with the mandatory prescripts were discussed. Findings around these aspects showed that, although some mentor respondents displayed some knowledge and understanding of the internship policy and legislative framework, the mentor respondents lacked more detailed knowledge and understanding insofar as the mechanisms of the internship programme are concerned. Some mentor respondents had not undergone any mentorship training, and this could be one of the reasons for their limited knowledge of the programme. Trained mentors who are empowered with a good understanding of the internship policy would contribute more to the implementation of the internship policy. The findings further showed that, in implementing the internship programme, EDTEA did comply with the mandatory prescripts as set out in legislation in terms of ensuring that contracts were signed by all interns; that the duration of the contract period was aligned to the 24-month period; and that the necessary resources were provided for the interns to work in the office. The interns were paid stipends in accordance with the prescribed limits in relation to the qualification that the interns held. However, there was a general feeling that the stipends did not take into consideration the current cost of living. The findings also indicated that EDTEA provided training as prescribed in the internship policy and also provided a sound platform for the introduction of the public service through the induction programme, 'Breaking Barriers into Entry', although in terms of other training opportunities, there were varying views from the intern respondents. This, therefore, could be an area where the implementation of the internship programme could be strengthened. It was also found that there were conflicting views between the mentors and intern respondents on performance management for the interns, and this could imply

that it is an area of non-compliance in the implementation of the internship policy. The lack of performance management for the interns could also severely impact on the skills and experience that the interns receive on the internship programme. Therefore, this aspect warrants monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of the internship programme as a significant oversight function. This could be regarded as a gap identified for due consideration and incorporation by the department in the evolving nature of the internship programme.

- **Are the interns receiving exposure to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme in relation to their qualification?**

Many aspects were discussed to ascertain whether the interns were receiving the relevant knowledge, skills and experience from the internship programme that were relevant to their qualifications. The findings showed that EDTEA did capacitate the interns with sound knowledge of the public service with a thorough induction programme specific to interns. The interns were also capacitated with additional training courses. However, the training courses provided were more administration-related and readily available. Some intern respondents indicated that the training courses were not related to their fields of study. The findings further showed that the majority of the intern respondents were correctly placed and were receiving skills and experience that were relevant to their qualifications. However, a skills mismatch was also found, where intern respondents were placed in business units that were not aligned to their qualifications. Hence, the skills and experience gained through participating in the internship were deemed, in part, irrelevant. Other findings around supervision on the internship programme were that, whilst some intern respondents were guided by mentors, other intern respondents did not want to comment on the supervision from their mentors. In addition, some intern respondents indicated that they did not have mentors. These findings are concerning and require some intervention, as the guidance and supervision of mentors is vital in the transfer of knowledge, skills and experience for the interns, and provides a support base during their tenure in the internship. It was also revealed that the majority of the intern respondents' expectations of the internship programme were met. However, again, the issue of skills mismatch was clearly evident. Intern respondents mostly indicated that much could be done to enhance the internship programme by equipping the interns with necessary skills, such as interview preparation workshops, to capacitate them in their

search for gainful employment. Other findings indicated that the internship programme should be monitored to ensure that the interns are performing duties that are relevant. This aspect is important, in that the relevant knowledge, skills and experience can only be gained by interns if they are placed appropriately and are, in fact, performing the relevant duties and functions. The lack of monitoring and evaluation may hinder the transfer of the relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The study further found that, whilst most interns were willing to learn, others were not so willing and interested, having some form of distraction. In this respect, mentors could play an influential role; but ultimately this is an intrinsic aspect that resonates with the human capital theory. Interns must show a positive attitude regarding the knowledge, skills and experience that the internship programme offers.

- **Is the internship programme providing the interns with the potential opportunity for gainful employment?**

In this section, various aspects of unemployment and gainful employment were discussed in the context of the intern programme. The findings showed that, prior to joining the internship programme, the majority of the intern respondents had been unemployed for up to four years. This is supported by the statistics on unemployed graduate youth (RSA Statistics South Africa, 2023:25). The findings also revealed that the majority of the intern respondents had applied for two or three positions prior to joining the internship programme. This is concerning, as this could imply that there are limited job opportunities in South Africa's labour market. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents thought the internship programme did provide them with the necessary skills for gainful employment. The findings also showed that the intern respondents were actively seeking permanent employment, including going to interviews whilst on the internship programme. Most of the respondents also indicated that the internship programme was sufficiently long for them to learn and obtain the relevant skills and experience for gainful employment. The mentor respondents had indicated that they were aware of interns who had left the internship programme for permanent employment. Most of the respondents felt that the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced the internship negatively, as this impacted on their ability to work as teams; and the interns had no access to resources, such as mobile devices like laptops or networks. The interns were faced with uncertainty as people were dying, both in their personal and work environments. In addition, with the

rotation plans that were introduced to limit the number of employees and contacts, interns required information that they could only source in the office, while they were at home. This became challenging when they returned to work in the ‘new normal’ era.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study form the foundation for the recommendations that follow, which could be realistically applied in the EDTEA, and other provincial and national government departments.

5.4.1 Legislative Framework and Internship Policy Workshops

Line managers and mentors ought to have a good understanding of the legislative framework underpinning internships and the internship policy, given that it is fast becoming a national norm for, not only for EDTEA, but most government departments in the country, to support the idea of having an internship programme in the workplace. The implementation of developmental programmes, such as the internship policy, has far-reaching implications, both socio-economic and economic. The triple challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty that plague South Africa must be addressed with some expediency, through various means, to bring about meaningful change. Therefore, through the legislative framework and internship policy workshops, issues such as the performance management, monitoring and evaluation of the internship programme could be discussed and strengthened. These workshops should be aligned with the commencement of each new internship programme intake. The stakeholders who are responsible for the various activities related to the implementation of the internship programme should also attend the workshops to improve their knowledge.

5.4.2 Empowerment and Capacitation of Mentors

Mentors should be empowered with the relevant supervisory skills so that they are equipped to undertake their supervision of the interns. Mentors should also be provided with opportunities to be trained as mentors, and be able to assist interns with professionalism and guidance on tasks in the workplace. Mentors should be selected from

a trained pool of mentors, and should be rotated to spread the much-needed skills. Job descriptions of mentors should be inclusive of the mentorship-related activities that they perform so that mentors are assessed accordingly. This would enhance the mentors' overall commitment to the internship programme. Ganesh *et al.* (2015:27) noted that mentoring programmes assisted in enhancing performance and resulted in improved career prospects for mentors.

5.4.3 Interview Skills and Capacity Building Training

As stated in human capital theory, much can be done through interview skills preparation workshops and other capacity building programmes, where the interns can be prepared to transition into gainful employment, or even explore opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship. The EDTEA has an array of business units that focus on youth development, including small, medium and micro-enterprises. It also assists start-up businesses with business plans and business registration matters within the province.

5.4.4 Recruitment and Placement of Interns

Interns' qualifications should be carefully considered during the recruitment process, and this should provide a guide for the placing of interns in the relevant business units. This practice would reduce the potential mismatch of skills. This could also ensure that the interns receive the relevant knowledge, skills and experience for their qualification. It will also assist the EDTEA in reducing the number of interns who are dissatisfied with their placement, thereby contributing to the successful implementation of the internship programme.

5.4.5 Implementation of Hybrid Systems of Working

Whilst EDTEA's internship policy did not anticipate the impact of a worldwide pandemic like COVID-19, much can be done in terms of planning work, supervision and working remotely, whilst still having resources in terms of connectivity. Such aspects are not only affected by pandemics, but can also be influenced by various other factors, such as the N3 toll road upgrade between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, where the EDTEA's head

office is located. This national road construction upgrade has affected many activities and businesses across the country as this is a primary route connecting KwaZulu-Natal to other provinces. It has resulted in many time delays, the loss of lives, and costs related to damages and profits; which in some cases could have been avoided by adopting more hybrid methods of working. This should also be given due consideration by the EDTEA, as it stimulates economic activity in the province. A review of the internship policy could be considered, and the policy could become more flexible and adaptable to the rapidly changing environment.

5.4.6 Government and Private Sector Collaboration

Government should strengthen its efforts to partner and collaborate with the private sector to reduce youth unemployment by increasing access to job opportunities. The creation of a skills pipeline for the youth would tremendously assist with entry into the economy and reduce unemployment (RSA South African Government, 2023:1).

5.4.7 Innovative Methods to Mitigate Youth Unemployment

Government should foster innovative ways of stimulating employment, especially for the unemployed youth sector. The Social Employment Fund, proposed by government in 2022, is an innovative method to assist unemployed youth by employing them in community-based programmes to build their skills. This is a collaborative initiative between government and non-government organisations. It is worth noting that such initiatives should be accelerated to mitigate youth unemployment (RSA South African Government, 2022:1).

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Recommendations presented in this study provide a backdrop for future research in the field of public administration and governance, focusing on this dynamic area of internships. Future studies that may be beneficial could include a comprehensive study of internships in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, incorporating the various government departments. Another study could track multiple intakes of interns over a longer time

frame to ascertain the long-term impact derived from the internship programme. The current study focused on a small sample using a qualitative methodological approach. However, a longitudinal, mixed methods approach is envisaged to gauge the responses on a much larger scale. This could also be done comparatively in more than one province in the country.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study set out to evaluate the internship programme within EDTEA. Key objectives related to the implementation of the internship policy within the prescribed legislative framework; whether the interns were being exposed to the relevant knowledge, skills and experience in relation to their qualifications; and whether the internship programme was assisting the interns to secure gainful employment. These objectives were addressed and the findings from the study were discussed. Interns, whilst serving on the programme, would benefit from, and be capacitated with, the relevant knowledge and skills to facilitate their successful entry into the job market. The implementation of some of the recommendations could assist the EDTEA in addressing current gaps in the internship policy, and issues in the implementation of the internship programme in general. This could contribute meaningfully to address issues of graduate youth unemployment, currently deemed a major issue, not only within the EDTEA, but as a national imperative in the country at large.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



08 December 2022

Cheryl Singh (210556094)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear C Singh,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005037/2022

Project title: Evaluation of the internship programme within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 21 November 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, 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. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 08 December 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howare College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

ANNEXURE B: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND GOVERNANCE

My name is Cheryl Singh, a student in Public Administration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Management, IT and Governance in the Discipline of Public Governance. I am undertaking a research study towards the Master of Public Administration Degree. My contact details are: Cell No. 066 054 5675 and e-mail address: Cheryl.Singh@kznedtea.gov.za

Supervisor is Professor M. Subban, and her e-mail address is: subbanm@ukzn.ac.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study entitled: “Evaluation of the internship programme within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal”. The aim of this study is to examine the efficacy of the current internship policy in the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal. The participants interviewed would be from the District Offices and Head Office. The study will involve the following procedures, face-to-face interviews or through virtual platforms done through an interview. The interviews would take approximately 20-25 minutes. The study is not funded by any organisation or individual.

The study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort. The study will provide no direct benefits to participants. It is hoped that the findings will improve understanding of the internship programme and policy within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal. Participants are free to choose an interview contact session in total compliance with COVID-19 Regulations. This option will require 1.5m social distancing, wearing of face mask and constant hand sanitising. The other option requires Microsoft teams’ virtual interviews and, in this option, participants will be sent necessary links for the session.

There are no potential risks associated with participating in the study. This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research

Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00005037/2022). Participation is voluntary and in accordance with the University of KwaZulu-Natal research requirement.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at Cell 0660545675 or E-mail: Cheryl.Singh@kznedtea.gov.za or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS

ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

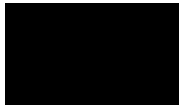
Participation in the research is voluntary and participants may withdraw their participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. There are no potential consequences to the participants for withdrawal from the study, a verbal indication to withdraw will be regarded as orderly withdrawal from participating in the study. The indication of withdrawal from participating in the study will be welcomed and the participant will be immediately terminated from the study.

There will be no costs to be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. There are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

The study does not involve personal/clinical information, and there are no limits of confidentiality applicable. Electronic data will be stored in an online Dropbox where the student and supervisor have access to the file. The supervisor will have access via the encryption of the data. Hard copy responses from interviewees will be stored with the

Supervisor for safekeeping for a period of 5 years in accordance with the University policy for postgraduate research. The data will be disposed by shredding hard copies and deleting files that refer to same in accordance with the University policy.

Sincerely



.....

Cheryl Singh

Date: 13/12/22

ANNEXURE C: CONSENT

CONSENT

I (_____) have been informed about the study entitled: Evaluation of the internship programme within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal by Cheryl Singh.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at: Cell No. 066 065 5675 or E-mail: Cheryl.Singh@kznedtea.gov.za

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview

YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

ANNEXURE D: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERNS

1. Biographical Information

1.1 State your gender:

Male	Female	Other
------	--------	-------

1.2 Indicate your Race Group:

African	White	Coloured	Indian
---------	-------	----------	--------

1.3 State which age group you fall into:

18 – 24	25 – 30	31 – 35	Above 35
---------	---------	---------	----------

1.4 State your highest level of education:

National Diploma	Degree	Post Graduate/ Honours	Master's Degree
------------------	--------	---------------------------	-----------------

2. Availability of Internship Programme

2.1 Where did you find out about the Internship?

2.2 How long were you unemployed prior to entering the internship programme?

2.3 How many positions did you apply for?

2.4 Why did you apply for the internship programme?

2.5 Describe the Application process.

2.6 Did you sign a contract for the internship programme?

2.7 Did the internship provide sufficient information about the position?

3. Skills and Experience

3.1 Do you have a work plan for your current position?

3.2 Are you regularly assessed in terms of the workplan by your mentor?

3.3 Are you provided with feedback after being assessed?

3.4 Did you attend an Induction Training Programme?

- 3.5 Were you sent on other relevant training programs to enhance your skills relevant to your qualification?

- 3.6 Do you have access to relevant resources to complete your work, such as computers and printers?

- 3.7 Do you think you have acquired the relevant skills and experience relevant to your qualification?

- 3.8 Provide your view/s of your mentor and mentorship received.

4. Employability post the Internship Programme

- 4.1 Did you feel the Internship programme was structured and assisted you in attaining the skills you require for permanent employment in your field?

- 4.2 Have you been actively looking for permanent employment during your internship period?

- 4.3 Have you attended any interviews and was the experience during your internship beneficial in the interview?

4.4 In your opinion, is the 24-month internship programme adequate for you to attain the necessary skills to gain long-term employment?

4.5 What is your view of the stipend?

4.6 Did the internship programme meet your expectations?

4.7 Do you feel that the internship programme can be enhanced to further assist interns in finding permanent employment?

4.8 Did the COVID-19 pandemic have an impact on the internship programmes?

Thank you for your participation

ANNEXURE E: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MENTORS

1. Biographical information

1.1 State your gender:

Male	Female	Other
------	--------	-------

1.2 Indicate your Race Group:

African	White	Coloured	Indian
---------	-------	----------	--------

1.3 State which age group you fall into:

25 – 30	31 – 39	40 – 49	Above 50
---------	---------	---------	----------

1.4 State your highest level of education:

National Diploma	Degree	Post Graduate/ Honours	Master's Degree	Doctorate
------------------	--------	------------------------	-----------------	-----------

1.5 What is your current position in EDTEA?

1.6 How many years of experience do you have in the department?

2. Mentorship

2.1 How long have you been a mentor in the internship programme?

2.2 Have you been trained as a mentor?

3. Policies relating to Internships

3.1 Do you know which policies relate to the internship programme?

3.2 Do you think the internship policy and the Skills Development Act are related?

3.3 Do you feel there is enough communication between the mentors, interns and the policy implementors?

4. Skills and experience of interns

4.1 Do you develop workplans for the interns?

4.2 How do you evaluate the progress of the interns?

4.3 Are the interns provided with feedback after being assessed?

4.4 Did the interns attend any external training courses aligned to their qualifications?

4.5 Do you think the interns show a willingness to learn?

4.6 Are the necessary resources such as computers provided to the interns to fulfil their duties?

4.7 Do you think the interns are provided with the necessary skills and experience?

4.8 Do you know if any interns have left the programme for permanent employment?

4.9 Have any interns left the programme for other reasons?

4.10 In your opinion, is the internship contract period sufficient?

4.11 Do you think that the stipend is sufficient?

4.12 Did the COVID-19 pandemic have an impact on the internship programme?

Thank you for your participation

ANNEXURE F: GATEKEEPERS LETTER



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

273 Jabu Ndlovu Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Private Bag X 8152

Pietermaritzburg, 3200

www.kznedtea.gov.za

Programme/Sub-Programme: HRM

Enquiries: N. Msimango

Telephone: 033 264 2556

Email: nhlakanhla.msimango@kznedtea.gov.za

THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL RESEARCH OFFICE

DEAR SIR/MADAM

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, KWAZULU-NATAL - MS. CHERYL SINGH

This letter serves to confirm that the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, has granted approval to Ms. Cheryl Singh, Student No: 210556094, to undertake research within the Department, which is titled, "Evaluation of the Internship Programme within the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal".

We wish the student the best.

Regards,


MR. NHLAKANIPHO NKONTWANA
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM
& ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (EDTEA)

28/8/2022

DATE

ANNEXURE G: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

ETHEL ROSS

English language editing and proofreading

17 July 2023

To whomever it may concern:

This letter serves to confirm that I worked as the proofreader and language editor on Cheryl Singh's Master's thesis:

Evaluation of the internship programme within the Department of
Economic Development, Tourism and
Environmental Affairs, KwaZulu-Natal

In no way did I change the content.

Yours faithfully



Ethel Ross (BA Hons; H Dip Ed)

Email: clanrossl@icon.co.za

Tel: 083 954 5412