

Labour market perceptions of students at a Technical and
Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in
Grahamstown, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In the context of South Africa, the supply of intermediate to high-level skills is central to economic growth and development. The post-school education and training sector is a critical source of these skills. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are expected to provide the intermediate to high-level skills that are required in a fast-changing global and national economy. In addition to fulfilling the goal of meeting the skills needs of the country, TVET colleges are expected to expand access to education and training opportunities and create pathways that will ensure smooth transitions for learners from college to employment. Using the third-generation labour market segmentation approach to the study of labour markets, this study sought to investigate the various socio-political factors that influence TVET college students' perceptions about employment opportunities in the labour market with a NCV qualification. Using a qualitative methodology, this research investigated whether TVET students at Eastcape Midlands College felt adequately prepared for the labour market with their prospective post-secondary school qualification. The findings varied, with some students being of the view that the theoretical component of their programme of study could be improved to better prepare them for the labour market, and others, being of the view that the practical component could be improved. At a general level, the findings showed that the students did not have perfect knowledge of the availability of employment opportunities for their prospective qualifications.

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ACRONYMS

AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
EMC	Eastcape Midlands College
FET	Further Education and Training
IOL	International Labour Organisation
JIPSA	Joint Initiative of Priority Skills Acquisition
LMS	Labour Market Segmentation
NATED	National Technical Programme
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NDP	National Development Plan
NGP	National Growth Path
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSF	National Skills Fund
NTSI	National Training Strategy Initiative
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
SAIVCERT	South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training
SDA	Skills Development Act
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authorities
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO LABOUR MARKETS

Considering the discussions surrounding graduate unemployment, the skills mismatch within the labour market and a schooling system that fails to deliver good quality education for all, various studies of South Africa's post-school education system have been conducted (see, for example, Kraak and Hall, 1999; McGrath, 2011; Kraak, 2010, Akoojee and McGrath, 2008). These studies not only focus on the quality of post-school education, but also pay specific attention to the notion of 'employability' among young graduates as well as their opportunities in the labour market. Although research has been conducted on the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges; very little is known as to why students enroll at these colleges and what their perceptions of the labour market are, which is why this research is important. Using a socio-political approach to the study of labour markets, this research seeks to understand the labour market perceptions of TVET students at Eastcape Midlands College (EMC) in Makhanda (Grahamstown) by exploring the various factors that shape their views. Essentially, the purpose of this case-study is to assess whether the students feel adequately trained and prepared for the labour market with their prospective post-secondary school qualification.

Broadly speaking, labour markets can be understood as "an imaginary market place where labour is bought and sold" (Fevre, 1992: 12). Essentially, labour markets are social institutions that govern the buying and selling of labour (Fevre, 1992). There are two theoretical conceptions of labour markets: orthodox or neo-classical approaches and labour market segmentation (LMS) approaches.

The neo-classical model provides arguments that underplay the structure and the function of labour markets. This approach uses a "commodity market based explanation" to the study of labour markets (Fleetwood, 2011: 17). The labour market is viewed as being akin to the markets of regular commodities (such as cars, furniture, and food etc.). In perceiving labour markets as being synonymous with commodity markets, it is assumed that the buying and selling of labour operates under the economic laws of supply and demand, which are the same behavioral rules applied in commodity markets (Fleetwood, 2011: 17). With the labour market being seen as possessing laws of supply and demand, it is assumed that, if unconstrained, the labour market will ensure an efficient allocation of people to jobs matching their skills and abilities (Fevre, 1992).

As an alternative conceptualization to the study of labour markets, the labour market segmentation (LMS) approach contests the economic approach that neo-classical proposes. LMS theory contests economic orthodoxy by presenting a socio-political perspective that studies the structure, patterns and processes of the labour market (Peck, 1996). There are three generations which form part of the LMS School, which provide multi-causal explanations to the way in which labour markets are structured and governed. LMS theory argues that the neo-classical tradition provides a simplified representation of reality as it is unable to adequately explain the complex social determinants of labour markets and labour market opportunities (Fleetwood, 2006). Essentially, the orthodox model fails to recognize that labour markets are embedded in social structures. Thus, the nature of this embedding requires a socio-political approach that analyses the complexity of labour markets. Segmentation theorists observe the way in which the structure of the labour market and labour market outcomes are influenced by “historical processes, economic forces and socio-political forces” (Reich et al., 1973: 359). These socio-economic forces encourage the division of the labour market into separate segments or submarkets that are governed by different behavioral rules rather than a single behavioral rule that the neo-classical model proposes (Peck, 1996).

In applying the LMS perspective, this research uses the third-generation LMS theory to explain the various forces that influence TVET college students’ labour market perceptions. The third-generation theory regards institutions and social forces as the central determinants of the structure and organisation of employment (Fevre, 1992). This means there is no division between ‘the economic’ and ‘the institutional’ (as in orthodox approaches) since markets are formed through institutions in society (Fevre, 1992). In addition, third-generation theorists argue that segmentation, in the sense of inequalities, influences access to employment. This segmentation is as much created by market or economic conditions as by social organisation.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO TVET EDUCATION

The overarching mandate that TVET colleges must fulfil is to “prepare learners for employability by developing an education and training system that is responsive to both the needs of the employers and learners in a fast-changing economic and industrial environment” (Powel and McGrath, 2014: 214). TVET colleges are imposed with the duty of providing learners with direct linkages to industry once they have completed their studies. Despite the important role that TVET colleges play in providing access to the labour market, studies have showed that there has been a slow entrance of TVET graduates into the labour market as some students struggle to complete their qualifications and

some are inadequately prepared for industry (Gamble, 2003; Cosser, 2010; Akoojee and McGrath, 2008; Akoojee, 2009; Kraak, 2010; Garraway et al., 2015).

When it comes to labour market prospects, research has been conducted on the labour market prospects of individuals with tertiary education, but limited attention has been paid to the labour market prospects of individuals who have a post-secondary school qualification from TVET colleges (Kraak, 2010: 5). Although research has been conducted on the purposive role of TVET colleges, very little is known as to why students enroll at these colleges and what their perceptions of employment opportunities in labour market are. Although this was a small-scale research, the main aim of this study was to provide a detailed analysis of perceptions relating to labour market opportunities from the TVET college students' point of view. Third-generation LMS theory was used to inform this study by explaining the ways in which socio-political forces shaped the students' perceptions.

1.3 AIMS OF RESEARCH

The main goal of this research was to investigate how external factors influence labour market perceptions of TVET college students, the same way that they influence labour market patterns and processes as asserted by the third-generation LMS model. In order to achieve this primary objective, the following secondary objectives were pursued during the research process which assisted in identifying the factors that influenced the perceptions of the labour market held by TVET college students:

1. What are the respondents' socioeconomic background, socioeconomic status and job aspirations?
2. How do the respondents understand the role of discrimination in labour market opportunities?
3. What are the factors that influenced the respondents' choice of enrolling at a TVET college?
4. What are the respondents' perceptions of the role of education in the labour market?
5. What are the respondents' views about employability in the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification?

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to gather an in-depth understanding of the interviewees' perceptions, a qualitative research design which draws on the interpretive paradigm was adopted. As an intellectual tradition, interpretivism asserts that in order to understand the way in which people think and act, social science

research has to “interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view” (Bryman, 2012: 28; Terreblanche and Kelly, 1999). The purpose of adopting a qualitative research method was to provide a descriptive and interpretive case study that explains the interviewees’ perceptions in detail.

The research technique that was used for this study was semi-structured in-depth interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were ideal for this research because this research technique was able to generate the detailed, in-depth information that was necessary to answer the central research question.

Non-random purposive sampling was employed to recruit students to participate in the study. The sample of this study consisted of six registered students, from different years of study, who are enrolled in various courses that are offered by EMC. The purpose of selecting students across different fields of study as well as different years of study was to obtain a variation in responses regarding their perceptions.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING LABOUR MARKETS AS SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into several sections that review the theory of labour markets. The first section will discuss the models of labour markets. The purpose of this section is to discuss the two theoretical underpinnings of the study of labour markets: neo-classical or orthodox approaches and labour market segmentation approaches. The shortcomings of the neo-classical model will motivate the argument that the LMS approach is a suitable alternative to the study of labour markets for this research.

Once the theoretical frameworks have been established, the South African post-apartheid labour market will be discussed. Using LMS theory, this section will discuss the way in which the South African labour market is segmented and how historical processes and social divisions have influenced the current form and structure of the post-apartheid labour market. In continuing with a description of the form and structure of the post-apartheid labour market, the notion of structural unemployment will be discussed. This section will explore the way in which the structural shifts that took place in the South African economy after 1994 led to the demand for a high-level skilled workforce.

With TVET college students being potential graduates who will enter the workforce, it is necessary to describe the characteristics of the South African graduate labour market. Describing the structure of the graduate labour market in relation to LMS theory will help explain the way in which the graduate labour market is divided into different segments. Establishing the different segments of the graduate labour market will assist in understanding which segment of the graduate labour market the TVET students will be categorised in once they have graduated.

This chapter will then conclude by providing a discussion of the notion of employability in the labour market. The notion of employability is an important feature in labour markets as it determines whether a worker is marketable in the labour market based on their level of skills and education and training. The notion of employability is key aspect in the objective of this research as the students' perceptions will provide insight into whether they perceive themselves as employable with their post-secondary school qualification.

2.2 MODELS OF LABOUR MARKETS

As a regulated social institution, the labour market is fundamental to the functioning of society and the economy. Labour markets are defined as institutions where “people offer their skills to employers in exchange for wages, salaries and various forms of compensation” (Fevre, 1992: 13). In other words, it is an institution that governs the buying and selling of labour power. Labour power can be understood as the human capacity to perform work (Braverman, 1998: 35). There are various connotations that are associated with the notion of work. Human work is conscious and purposive. It is directed by the ability of having “conceptual thought and physical attributes that enable us to perform activities that satisfy the human need for survival” (Braverman, 1998: 32). There is no objective definition of the concept of work as the meanings attached to what constitutes work are dependent on specific “social circumstances and social institutions under which such activities are carried out by those involved in performing such activities” (Grint, 1991: 6).

There are two main theoretical approaches that attempt to explain the characteristics, structure and function of labour markets. These are known as orthodox approaches and heterodox approaches. It is important to note that there are different versions of both approaches. This section discusses two specific versions of both approaches, namely the neoclassical approach and the LMS approach.

Like any other key institution in society, the labour market has been the subject of much theoretical speculation and research. Various attempts have been made to explain its structures and functions. In order to fully understand the labour market, it is important to make a distinction between labour markets and commodity markets as these are often misunderstood as being the same. As complex as they may be, labour markets have distinct characteristics that set them apart from commodity markets. Unlike commodity markets, the product that is bought and sold is the worker, not in the physical sense, but rather in the “intrinsic value and skills that the labourer possesses that enables him [sic] to perform productive activities” (Edgell, 2006: 56). In purchasing labour power, employers are essentially buying the “distinctive quality and potential” that human labour power possesses in rendering services and producing products that will expand their profits (Braverman, 1998: 38). Thus, the potential of performing work-related activities make human labour an important resource in the production process.

Since the labour market is highly competitive and profit-driven, labourers compete with one another for jobs. Generally, the more educated and skillful a labourer is, the more marketable he or she becomes. Employers are generally biased towards employees that have specific training that is related

to the job as such training increases the “marginal productivity of the worker and it reduces the labour costs that the employer has to incur in training them for the job” (Doeringer and Piore, 1971: 14).

The process of entering the labour market is simple. There must be “something done by the person who wants work, and something done by the prospective employer” (Fevre, 1992: 10). In the abstract form, the labour market is made up of five processes that occur separately and consecutively. The first labour market process is the process of informing employers. This is the initial stage where employers learn that workers are available for employment (Fevre, 1992: 11). This stage opens up the opportunity for employers to hire workers.

The second process is informing workers. This process involves informing workers of the availability of jobs and how to apply for the vacancies; here the workers learn that jobs are available. The third and fourth processes are merged together and are commonly known screening. In the process of screening workers, the prospective employer obtains enough information that allows him or her to decide whether the job-seeker is suited for the job and whether they should be offered the job (Fevre, 1992). It is important to note that this process is not only focused on screening the job-seeker, but also allows for workers to screen employers to gather more information than simply knowledge of a vacancy in order to decide whether they should pursue a particular vacancy (Fevre, 1992: 12).

The fifth and final labour market process is the offer to buy or sell labour. In this stage, the offer of employment is made by the employer and the offer to sell labour is made by the jobseeker. This transaction is usually concluded by a contractual arrangement, underwritten by various statutory protections for the employee, which binds the employer and employee to an employment relationship (Fevre, 1992: 13).

2.2.1 Orthodox and Neo-Classical Approaches to the Labour Market

Neo-classical economic theorists understand the labour market to be a single competitive entity that is synonymous with a product or commodity market. In this view, the market for labour is “no different to the market for bananas as the same concepts that govern commodity markets can be applied to this market” (Fevre, 1992: 25). Although the worker is a person and not an actual product, the neo-classical model applies the universal principle of ‘laws’ of supply and demand to the context of the purchase and sale of labour power in labour markets. In essence, the worker is viewed as a “standardised product” that has particular characteristics and skills that the employer buys (Fevre, 1992: 26). By applying this economic principle to the context of labour markets, the neo-classical

model presents a competitive model that assumes that the supply and demand of labour will always allocate people to jobs that match their skills and abilities (Rodgers, 1994).

LMS theorists have criticized the neo-classical model as an unrealistic, simple text-book model that fails to take into account the social nature of labour markets (Fleetwood, 2015). Neo-classical economists present a utopian idea of a self-regulating labour market that has a fixed structure that is free from social and political factors (Fevre, 1992). Using insights from mainstream economics has done more harm than good to this theoretical framework. A key point of difference between the neoclassical model and the LMS model is that LMS theorists recognise that labour markets are more complex and institutionally variable than the orthodox theorists would have us believe (Peck, 1996: 5). Essentially, LMS theorists see labour markets as inherently 'socio-political' in nature and not as an exclusively 'economic' phenomenon as neo-classical theorists believe (Fleetwood, 2015). The socio-political factors that are said to characterise labour markets are a combination of economic, social and political pressures that range from social class, educational attainment, economic status, to racial or ethnic identification, etc.

The neo-classical model rests upon three theoretical frameworks: the utility maximizing theory of individual labour supply, marginal productivity theory of labour demand and the competitive theory of market equilibrium (Berlinksi and Manacorda, 2011: 14). The utility maximizing theory is an economic model that assumes that workers are autonomous individuals who have a choice of working for an income or enjoying leisure time. It is assumed that this choice is influenced by the remuneration that is offered to them if they choose to work. In other words, the choice to work results in sacrificing leisure time. The more leisure time a worker sacrifices, the greater the incentives become (Berlinski and Manacorda, 2011: 15).

The marginal productivity theory refers to the market demand for labour. This theory proposes that supply of labour depends on the demand for it. This means that the demand for a particular product or service determines the labour demand that is required to produce the product or service (Berlinski and Manacorda, 2011).

The competitive theory of market equilibrium is underpinned by the economic theory, which focuses on the relationship between supply and demand (Fine, 1998). According to the market equilibrium theory, the labour market operates as a perfectly competitive model (Yates, 2003). The first assumption of the competitive theory of market equilibrium is that workers and employers possess full and complete knowledge of the labour market. Based on this assumption, it is presumed that

workers have access to all information on job vacancies and wage rates, while employers have full information on job seekers and wage rates paid by other employers (Yates, 2003: 14). This claim is particularly relevant to the focus of this research because as prospective employees, this research questions whether the TVET college students have full and complete knowledge of the labour market as asserted by the competitive theory of market equilibrium.

Secondly, it is assumed that workers and employers are entirely rational in that they base their decisions purely on wage rate increases, while employers always attempt to maximise their profits (Yates, 2003). The third assumption is that employers and employees do not have any collective influence over the market wage. The fourth assumption of the competitive theory is that the labour market is perfectly competitive and that employers compete against each other to hire workers that have the same skills. By suggesting that all workers have equal skills, it is assumed that the employer cannot discriminate and is obligated to pay the same wage to all workers that are doing the same job (Fevre, 1992: 27).

The final assumption of the competitive theory is that workers are perfectly mobile, which means that they can move costlessly and effortlessly between positions within or between organisations and regions. In reviewing the fifth assumption of the competitive theory, the secondary objective of this research was to investigate whether the students were ‘perfectly’ mobile to move costlessly between regions to obtain employment that matches their skills as presumed by the competitive theory.

With the labour market being perceived as an economic phenomenon that is free from external extra market factors, it is believed that, when the labour market is allowed to function at its optimum, the wage mechanism will automatically move it towards an equilibrium position in which supply and demand are balanced (Fevre, 1992). The equilibrium position ‘clears’ the labour market in the sense that all workers looking for jobs are in employment and all employers looking for workers have filled the vacancies. In reality, labour markets rarely, if ever, reach a state of equilibrium. Despite the reality that labour markets rarely reach a state of equilibrium, neo-classical theorists still argue that labour markets are constantly adjusting towards an equilibrium point (Fevre, 1992). Critics have rejected the idea of equilibrium and argue that disequilibrium depicts a more realistic picture of the labour market since supply never matches demand. The critics of neo-classical or orthodox economic theories suggest that real labour markets are either trapped in disequilibrium or are actually moving away from equilibrium (Fevre, 1992: 26).

By reducing human beings to mere commodities, the neo-classical approach disregards the impact that institutions and social forces have on structure and operation of labour markets (Fleetwood, 2008). Neo-classical economists are, of course, aware that a range of non-economic phenomena and institutions have an impact on labour markets, and many spend time and effort trying to consider phenomena like family, gender, race, trade unions, efficiency wages, insider-outsider distinctions and so on (Solow, 1990; Gerhart and Rynes 2003). However, even when economists consider the impact of social structures on the labour market, they confine this analysis to a ‘supply-and-demand’ paradigm. The possibility that socio-political forces may influence the economic determination of wages and the supply of and demand for labour is never seriously considered. As Hyclak et al., (2004: 19) put it: “adjustment to a demand and supply equilibrium may be complicated by institutional factors, but we would nevertheless expect supply and demand to be major influences on labour market outcomes”. Any observable deviations from the orthodox model, such as the discrimination against women or the role of the state in regulating labour markets, are regarded as temporary deviations from, or partial obstructions to, the operation of the laws of supply and demand (Fleetwood, 2008). It can be concluded that the neo-classical or orthodox approach has a questionable conceptualisation of the role played by socio-political factors in the labour market.

2.2.2 Labour Market Segmentation Approaches

LMS approaches are distinctly different from neo-classical models. Reich et al., (1973: 359) define LMS as the “historical processes whereby political and economic forces encourage the division of the labour market into separate submarkets or segments, distinguished by different labour market characteristics and behavioral rules”. From this definition, it is evident that LMS approaches are vastly different from neo-classical frameworks, as it takes into consideration the role that outer factors have in influencing the structure and operation of labour markets. Segmentation theorists are not only concerned with the patterns and processes of labour market inequalities, but also the socio-political foundations of labour markets (Peck, 1996: 74). These socio-political conditions range from economic status, social class, educational attainment, to racial and ethnic identification. There are three different generations of the LMS theories: first-generation, second-generation and third-generation theories. Each generation of LMS theory shows the way in which the theory has evolved and progressed over the past four decades (Doeringer and Piore, 1971).

The LMS theory emerged during the 1970s as a theoretical framework that aimed to conceptualize the highly unequal labour markets in the USA. The first-generation theorists introduced the idea of a division between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ labour markets. Primary labour markets are associated

with large firms in core sectors of the economy and secondary labour markets are associated with small firms in peripheral economic sectors (Doeringer and Piore, 1971). First-generation LMS theorists (also known as dual labour market theorists) maintain that jobs can be divided into two categories: those with low wages, bad working conditions, unstable employment prospects and little advancement; and those with relatively high wages, good working conditions and opportunities for advancement into higher paying jobs (Dickens and Lang, 1985: 792). These types of jobs are commonly known as secondary jobs and primary jobs, respectively.

Primary jobs are easily distinguishable from secondary jobs. These are jobs that have consistent and stable working habits, skills are often acquired on the job, the wage rates are comparatively high and there are opportunities to grow professionally as job ladders exist within organisations (Reich et al., 1973). Secondary jobs on the other hand, are quite different. These jobs are considered as the labour market's least desirable jobs (Reich et al., 1973). They often do not consist of stable working conditions, the wage rates are mostly low, turnover is high and there are a few job ladders available for advancement and career prospects. Another key distinction between these jobs is that primary jobs in the USA – where this theory originated – were dominated by white middle-aged men and secondary jobs were mainly (though not exclusively) filled by minority workers such as women, black people and youth (Reich et al., 1973). Given the first-generation segmentation theorists' claims about the differences between primary and secondary jobs, it can be argued that employers do not view the labour of all workers as equal.

Second-generation segmentation theorists are grounded in a radical school of thought. The second-generation LMS theories have strong ties with the work of Marxist scholars, who contend that the segmentation of the labour market according to race, class, gender, etc. is largely the work of monopoly capital and is designed to undermine the unity of the labour force (Peck, 1996:74). As radical theorists, both Marxist analysts and second-generation LMS theorists argue that monopoly capitalist firms seek to divide the labour force through the development of hierarchies and the exploitation of gender differences. By adopting divide-and-rule strategies and tactics, employers are able to divide the labour force into distinct and competing segments (Peck, 1996: 76). The first two generations of LMS theories have been criticized for providing a simplistic analysis of labour market dualism. Third-generation LMS theorists form part of these critics. They argue that the divide-and rule strategies and tactics that employers use are not the sole explanation of the division of the labour force. They argue that workers themselves and trade unions also play a role in reproducing divisions in the labour force (Peck, 1996: 77).

Third-generation LMS theorists sought to develop a more in-depth social analysis of the labour market that would serve as a refinement of the first two generations (Fine, 1998). Third-generation LMS theorists contend that the orthodox analysis of emphasizing that the labour market is a rational and efficient allocator of labour is erroneous. They argue that primacy is accorded to the demand-side of the labour market. Meaning, that employment opportunities, irrespective of one's level of education, are structured by the availability of jobs in the economy. This is particularly relevant to this research as the central research question seeks to assess whether the TVET college students are in the view that there is an availability of job opportunities in the labour market based on the level of their education. In addition, third-generation theorists seek to provide multi-causal explanations of segmentation in the labour market by recognising that institutions and social forces are central determinants of the structure and organisation of employment. Meaning there is no clear-cut division between 'the economic' and 'the institutional' (as in orthodox approaches) since markets are formed through institutions (Tilly and Tilly, 1992).

Segmentation is ultimately created by economic conditions as by social conditions. Since LMS is a product of multiple interactive forces, it requires multi-causal explanations that consider "historical contingencies, regulation and institutional variability" (Peck, 1996: 78). LMS theories stand in sharp contrast to the orthodox economic model: LMS theories prioritise the role of social, economic and political factors in shaping unequal labour market outcomes, which are not factors that are regarded as significant in the neoclassical approach.

In general, LMS theories can be understood as a set of heterodox approaches that seek to address the short-comings of orthodox or neo-classical approaches. LMS theories do not only acknowledge labour market inequalities, but also explain the forces that create the broader systemic processes that create variegated labour market outcomes (Doeringer and Piore, 1985). The role of these systemic processes is said to create barriers both before (pre-market segmentation) and after (in-market segmentation) individuals enter the labour market (Peck, 1996: 76). With this said, the ultimate focus of this study is to identify the factors that influence the students' perceptions of the labour market before they enter the labour market.

The difference between pre-market and in-market segmentation is that pre-market segmentation is closely linked to broader social stratification and can be understood as the differentiation in (among others) access to education and training opportunities that enhance a person's productive potential before entering into employment. In-market segmentation relates to the differentiation in

opportunities to increase skills, control and wages operating largely within the labour market, which are unaffected by broader social and political influences (Peck, 1996: 76).

The third-generation LMS theory will inform this study by facilitating an explanation of the ways in which social divisions influence the labour market perceptions of TVET college students. These social divisions entail the following factors: the interviewees' socioeconomic background, economic status, educational background, job aspirations and views concerning employability in the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification. By drawing on this theoretical model, this study seeks to show that labour market opportunities are systematically constrained for vulnerable groups, such as the youth and the poor, and that social and economic forces influence not only the structure of labour markets and labour market outcomes, but also the perceptions that people have of integrating into the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification.

2.3 LABOUR MARKETS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

The decisive changes in the political sphere after the ending of apartheid resulted in a slow and difficult socio-economic transition. In order to understand the structure of the post-apartheid labour market, it is important to analyse it in terms of its historical roots. Using a historical lens to understand the patterns and segments of the post-apartheid labour market will assist in conceptualising the way in which the segmented structure of the post-apartheid labour market developed. This is necessary for the focus of this research as the perceptions TVET students are based on the post-apartheid labour market outcomes.

During apartheid, the South African labour market was segmented along racial lines (among others) due to the policy measures that were pursued by the government to the advantage of white people and to the detriment of black people. These policy measures were restrictive in many ways and hindered the advancement of black people in various aspects of their lives (Festus et al., 2015). Discriminatory legislation played a key role in establishing a system of institutionalised discrimination in South Africa. The Bantu Education Act of 1950 limited the education attainment of black people as they received relatively inferior quality of education compared to their white counterparts. The Group Areas Act of 1950 and the Black Labour Act of 1964 established “segregated areas of residence in urban areas and strict limitations on the type and conditions of employment available to Africans” (Festus et al., 2015: 579). The Mines and Works Act 12 of 1911 reserved all highly-skilled and highly-paid jobs for white people (Festus et al., 2015). The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 introduced the establishment of industrial councils, which were permanent collective bargaining institutions.

These councils did not recognize African trade unions and prevented employees from participating in bargaining processes (Festus et al., 2015). Labour laws did not recognise black people as employees- hence; the councils did not allow black people to participate in bargaining processes. These and other laws contributed to the exploitation of black workers in the apartheid era.

Capitalist development was achieved largely at the expense of cheap black labour power (Kraak, 1995). The government was able to use “manpower planning to serve the needs of a small minority” (McGrath, 2004: 12). In turn, this created a legacy of inequality in terms of education, skills attainment, employment opportunities and it influenced the patterns of the labour market and labour force participation in the post-apartheid era.

Generally, segmented labour markets are shaped historically by the struggles between “capital, labour and the state over the institutional and other mechanisms of social control” (Kraak, 1995: 659). These socio-political factors (and others) are able to grant or limit access to jobs. In using socio-political forces, the National Party government was able to structure the apartheid labour market in a way that enabled it to gain high levels of control over the occupational mobility, labour participation and labour supply of black workers (Anand et al., 2016).

Segmented labour markets are shaped into three separate employment spheres: independent primary, subordinate primary and secondary jobs (Reich et al., 1973). The primary employment sphere is segmented between what is known as independent and subordinate jobs. Independent primary jobs are characterised as jobs of a professional standard whereas subordinate primary jobs generally consist of factory and office jobs (Reich et al., 1973: 360).

Secondary jobs are mainly, though not exclusively, occupied by minority workers. The concept of a racially-segmented labour market characterised the apartheid labour market. Its inter-relationship with social institutions such as the “labour process, racial division of labour, statutory job reservation and the industrial council system” enabled white workers to demarcate the more privileged primary market jobs as their sole preserve (Webster, 1985: 370). Ultimately, the racial segmentation led to the secondary jobs being dominated by “African migrant workers and the urbanised proletariat doing low-paid, unskilled and insecure work” (Kraak, 1995: 664). The subordinate primary segment composed of white, coloured and Indian semi-skilled workers. These workers occupied jobs which were a part of the “unionised industrial working class” which benefited secured employment won in union struggles with management (Kraak, 1995: 664). The independent primary segment was predominantly white. The jobs in this segment were bureaucratically organised. This allowed for

long-term employment with considerable job security, clearly defined career paths and relatively high income (Kraak, 1995). Essentially, the racially segmented structure of the labour market, led to racially based occupational structure.

The discriminatory labour market policies and laws associated with apartheid sought to divide the different racial and ethnic groups in South Africa. Social divisions such as those based on “experience, age, race, sex, and insider-outsider dynamics” have played a significant role in determining labour market outcomes and unemployment in South Africa (Anand et al., 2016: 4). With the apartheid labour market being structured along racial lines, post-apartheid labour market policies had to be recast through new laws and institutions that redefine labour relations and encourage affirmative action (Burger and Woolard, 2005). The introduction of the new framework for labour market regulation has been considered as one of the “most significant achievements of South Africa’s post-apartheid government” (Benjamin and Cooper, 2016: 3). By creating a progressive labour law framework, it is hoped that the rising levels of unemployment and inequality in the labour market will be addressed while at the same time empowering workers.

The introduction of progressive labour legislation since 1995 transformed the labour market and provides wide-ranging regulation and prohibits all forms of discrimination with the aim of integrating previously-disadvantaged groups into the labour market. The Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) of 1999, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998 and the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1999 all seek to regulate conditions of employment and encourage affirmative action in the labour market.

A key objective of the LRA is to regulate and strengthen collective bargaining, particularly at the sectoral level. This statute was developed with the intention of promoting collective bargaining by making the duty to bargain to be organizationally enforceable as opposed to it being judicially enforceable. Under the old system, the jurisdiction of collective bargaining created much uncertainty, confusion and inconsistency as the courts adopted inconsistent rulings in bargaining topics (Benjamin and Lucas, 2016: 10). This revised bargaining system allows for a more collaborated and consistent decision-making process between the employer and employees in the workplace. In ensuring that fair and just labour practices are adhered to, the BCEA ensures that the labour force is protected in various ways during their employment tenure. The Act has important provisions that extend labour standards to workers in sectors not previously covered; these sectors include state employees, domestic workers and farmworkers (Fallon and Lucas, 1998: 22).

The EEA is particularly relevant to the focus of this research. With the apartheid history of discrimination and inequality in the workplace on race, gender and other grounds one of the secondary objectives of this research was to investigate whether the TVET college students felt as though they would experience this form of discrimination or inequality during their employment search (pre-market) or once they were integrated in the labour market (in-market). In addition, the study went on to investigate whether the students believed that affirmative action measures would serve as an advantage pre-market and in-market (in aspects of promotions in the workplace and climbing job-ladders). By maintaining the ethos and principle of fair and just labour practices, the EEA the Act was passed with the intention of eradicating such inequality in the workplace and in the labour market. The purpose of the Act is to give effect to the implementation of affirmative action measures to “redress disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups in order to achieve their equitable representation in all occupational levels in the workforce” (Benjamin and Cooper, 2016: 48). The affirmative action measurements that the Act promotes are not to be misinterpreted as being a form of ‘reverse discrimination’ or ‘positive discrimination’, but rather as a necessary form of equality in the workplace that stems from the substantive concept of equality which is a fundamental principle in the Constitution (Fredman, 2012: 262).

The purpose of the SDA is to provide an institutional framework that encourages “workplace strategies to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce” (Department of Labour, 2008). The Act seeks to fulfil this goal by investing in the workforce by increasing and advancing their level of education and training in order to improve their prospects of work and labour mobility (Department of Labour, 2008). In addition, the SDA encourages employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment as well as to provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills and to employ people who find it difficult to be employed (Benjamin and Cooper, 2016). An integral part of the research goal was to evaluate whether the students were of the opinion that their future occupations would provide them with education and training opportunities that would develop their entry level skills and assist them in climbing job ladders in the workplace.

These regulative labour law models are an important feature in South Africa’s legislative development in that, for the first time, the entire labour force is protected by a body of labour law that has universal coverage. The reformed legislative framework is meant to transform a labour market that is marked by high levels of inequality and unemployment, low skill levels and low productivity (Benjamin and Cooper, 2016: 3).

2.4 SKILLS SHORTAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In light of the discussion of the segmented structure of the post-apartheid labour market, this section will outline the issue of skills shortages, structural unemployment and youth unemployment which are some of the key labour market challenges in the post-apartheid labour market. This discussion is necessary in the broader context of this research as TVET colleges are expected to meet the intermediate to high-level skills needs of the country and assist in solving the issue of youth unemployment by providing access to education and training opportunities.

During the 1970s, the domestic economy increasingly moved towards capital intensification due to the rapid technological change (Bhorat and Jacobs, 2010). It is important to note that technological change was not the only reason that caused the move towards capital intensification. Perceptions by employers of high costs of doing business, inflexible labour markets, and disruptive trade unions (among others) also contributed to increasing capital-intensive industrialisation in South Africa (Bhorat et al., 2013).

Over the period of 1970-1995, the adoption of new technologies resulted in occupation-specific changes where there was a decline in the demand for unskilled workers and an increase in the demand for highly skilled workers (Altman, 2007). The economy witnessed a significant change in the structure of domestic output. This was due to a shift away from a dependence on the primary sector to the tertiary sector (Bhorat and Jacobs, 2010: 4). This resulted in changes in the labour supply and labour demand. Approximately 1.5 million jobs were lost in the primary sector, 400, 000 jobs were created in the secondary sector and the tertiary sector saw an “increase large enough to make net employment creation between 1970-1995 positive” (Daniels, 2007: 4).

Essentially, South Africa’s labour demand and supply trajectory led to *within-sector* employment shifts and *between-sector* employment shifts. Within-sector shifts are changes that result from a skills biased technological change. These are shifts that come from within the industry itself whereby “new technologies or methods of production are introduced by firms in an effort to increase productivity” (Daniels, 2007: 5). At an individual firm level, this form of change results in the need to train workers, but at an economy-wide level, this could result in a critical skills shortage- which was the case for South Africa’s domestic economy (Daniels, 2007; Bhorat and Jacobs, 2010; Bhorat et al., 2013).

Between-sector changes refer to a decline in primary sector employment experienced simultaneously as an increase in tertiary sector employment (Daniels, 2007: 5). This shift is said to create structural unemployment as the workers that previously had the skills to perform tasks in the primary sector (mainly agricultural and mining industries), now have to seek employment in the tertiary (services) sector (Bhorat and Jacobs, 2010: 7). These workers are consequently structurally unemployed and face a much longer duration of unemployment as they do not have the required skills to enter the

tertiary sector. In essence, structural unemployment occurs when there is a mismatch between the skills demanded by jobs and the skills levels of the unemployed (Akoojee, 2009). Those who are structurally unemployed tend to struggle to transition into a new occupation as skills that are generally required in the tertiary sector usually consist of “basic retail skills as well as literacy and numeracy skills” (Daniels, 2007: 4).

With South Africa’s reintegration into the global economy after the ending of apartheid, pressure was exerted on the domestic economy to change the methods of production and the world of work. The ANC government introduced social, industrial and economic policies that encouraged firms to become more competitive and export-orientated (Reddy et al., 2016). The drive to push local firms to export goods demanded a labour force that is highly skilled. As a result, the labour demand was insufficient to absorb the supply of labour. Simply, skilled biased changes to the methods of production led to few workers with adequate skills to meet the demand of a highly skilled workforce. This contradiction came to be known as the mismatch between labour demand and supply (Daniels, 2007: 5).

The skills mismatch in the labour market is said to be a contributory factor to the issue of unemployment. For many people in South Africa, integrating into the labour market is an opportunity to secure a stable income that will allow them to make ends meet. Securing employment is essentially the “main bridge between economic growth and higher living standards” (Burger and Woolard, 2005: 453). This means that job creation becomes a key aspect in economic progress as employment provides income security for the employed, and it increases the production of goods and services in the domestic economy (Cichello et al., 2014). In other words, job creation is important as it provides both social and economic benefits. Oosthuizen (2006: 12) argues that the economic growth that has taken place in post-apartheid South Africa has been unable to provide the employment opportunities that are needed by the rapid population growth and the rising labour force participation rate. This has resulted in a high rate of unemployment. Studies conducted in the first two decades of democracy by Kingdon and Knight (2006), Yu (2013) and Hodge (2009), amongst others, confirm this claim. The findings of these studies show that South Africa’s economic performance was not sufficient to absorb all new entrants into the labour market and that was not at the scale necessary to reduce unemployment.

The definition of unemployment is highly controversial as there are both strict and broad measures of unemployment. Stats SA (2018) adopted a strict definition of unemployment that was in line with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition “used by more than 80% of both developed and less developed countries, and South Africa’s major trading partners”. The strict definition of unemployment considers a person to be unemployed only if they have “taken active steps to look for

work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview (Stats SA, 2018). They are sometimes referred to as the “searching unemployed”. The broad definition of unemployment includes discouraged job-seekers: those that want to work but are not actively searching for a job as they have lost hope, wanted to work but there are no jobs in the area or were unable to find work that required their skills (Lloyd and Leibbrandt, 2014: 87). They are sometimes referred to as the “non-searching unemployed” (Stats SA, 2018). Some social scientists have suggested that there is little to distinguish from the “searching unemployed” from the “non-searching unemployed” in South Africa. Hence, they argue that discouraged job seekers should be considered part of the unemployed population (Lloyd and Leibbrandt, 2014).

As a vulnerable group in the labour market, the youth, and especially those with lower skill levels, are most affected by unemployment. Orthodox economists describe unemployment largely as “an economic issue” (Cloete, 2014: 523). Drawing on the socio-political claims made by LMS theorists regarding the vital role of social relations and institutions in determining labour market outcomes and labour force participation, it is argued here that unemployment is not only an economic issue, but also a social and political issue.

According to Stats SA (2018), the unemployment rate over the first quarter of 2018 was at 26.7 per cent, which remained unchanged compared to the fourth quarter of 2017. Although unemployment is high for both youth and adults, the unemployment rate among young people was estimated at 38.2 per cent, implying that more than “one in every three young people in the labour force did not have a job in the first quarter of 2018” (Stats SA, 2018). Youth unemployment is not only a national issue, but also a global one. According to the ILO (2018), there are about 71-million unemployed youth globally, a majority of whom face long-term unemployment.

A large number of young people have become discouraged from integrating into the labour market as many received a low-quality education. The issue of the poor education quality in South African public schools and post-school education institutions is a structural issue (Rogan, 2016). It is a structural issue because we are faced with “a post-school training sector which does not meet the needs of the majority of school leavers and the labour market” (Rogan, 2016: 343). Many of these young people are not building on their skills base through education and training. They are not in employment, education or training (NEET) (Sheppard and Cloete, 2009). Currently, the NEET rate is at 32.4 per cent, which is approximately 3.3 million people (Stats SA, 2018). This NEET rate implies that close to one in three young people in South Africa were disengaged from the labour market in the first quarter of 2018 (Stats SA, 2018). The NEET rate serves as an important labour market indicator and youth unemployment indicator as it shows the level of engagement of young people in the labour market.

There are various factors that explain the issue of youth unemployment in the post-apartheid South Africa. Research indicates that factors such as schooling background, academic performance, race and gender are linked with key post-school education outcomes (Rogan and Reynolds, 2015). Research also indicates that young people struggle to integrate into the labour market due to a “lack of work experience, low education levels, and soft skills” (Perold et al., 2012: 32). This points to the need to interrogate the idea of what constitutes ‘employability’ in South Africa.

Education, skills and expertise become important attributes of being employable in the labour market as employers are most likely to employ a labour force that is skillful and knowledgeable. Educational attainment is classified into four distinct groups: less than a matric qualification, matric qualification, post-matric/post-school education and those who have completed tertiary education (McGrath, 2004). With its commitment with skills development, the ANC government has resorted to policy interventions and the creation of new institutions and systems that will improve skills in South Africa. Despite these progressive efforts, the policy and institutional measures that have been undertaken have not been sufficient to increase the number of skilled workers (Allais, 2012).

2.5 ‘EMPLOYABILITY’ IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The concept of ‘employability’, which is central to any discussion of labour market prospects, has been interpreted in different ways (McGrath-Champ et al., 2010: 87). Paterson et al., (2017:13) define employability as “the possession of basic core skills or an extended set of attributes that a type of employer (discipline-linked, sector-related or company type) specifies”. Essentially, these are the set of skills and attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment. Based on this interpretation of the notion of employability, it follows that employability is equated with a set of skills that assist a person with “the gaining and retaining of fulfilling work” (Harvey, 2001: 97).

The concept of employability is an important feature of the labour market. In conceptualizing the notion of employability, the quality of post-school education and higher education becomes important. The quality of a good post-school and higher education system serve as an “employability performance indicator” (Harvey, 2001: 100). In evaluating the effectiveness of higher education institutions as well as assessing the quality of education, Rogan and Reynolds (2015) criticise the common indicators used to evaluate the success in higher education. Generally, a successful post-school education system is based on the quality of academic performance, and how higher education institutions “can convert potential human resources into types of high level and scarce skills which are in demand by the economy” (Rogan and Reynolds, 2015: 14). According to these authors, the literature on the success of higher education in South Africa is narrowly defined and is often “restricted to enrolment and graduation rates, employment and earnings” (Rogan and Reynolds, 2015:

2). This is also why Harvey (2001: 101) argues that, in measuring institutional effectiveness as well as the success/quality of post-school education and higher education, it is important to evaluate these using various indicators such as “an audit of the developmental opportunities of the institution, coupled with surveys of graduates’ satisfaction with their programme of study, the extent to which it prepared them for the world of work and their reflection on the skills developed”. With the focus of this case study being labour market perceptions of TVET college students, this research will draw on the argument presented by Harvey (2001), by evaluating the students at EMC satisfaction with their programme of study and whether they feel prepared for the labour market with the skills that they have developed through their practical work and coursework studies.

With employability being measured by the quality of education and training acquired by graduates, it becomes important for higher education institutions to provide students with skills and attributes that make them employable. Harvey (2001: 100) argues that higher education institutions need to be proactive in providing a range of employability-development opportunities for students that will provide the key attributes and skills that are needed by industry.

2.6 SOUTH AFRICA’S GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET

The graduate labour market comprises of three distinct segments. Each segment is categorized by the educational attainment that a graduate has upon entering the labour market. The first segment is known as the “post-school, pre-degree artisanal and para-professional labour force” (Kraak, 2010: 81). Those who occupy this segment of the graduate labour market are individuals who have completed 12 years of schooling (i.e. matriculants), who also hold a certificate or diploma acquired from a TVET college, university of technology or private education and training institution (Kraak, 2010). Practical work experience in the form of learnerships and apprenticeships form a significant part of the education and training of this sector and many learners in these programmes have been sponsored by donors or an employer who they continue to work for after graduating (Kraak, 2010: 81). Based on the prospective NCV qualification that the interviewees of this study will obtain once they graduate, they will be categorised in the first segment of the graduate labour market.

University-trained individuals occupy the second segment. Graduates in the second segment are individuals who have professional degrees in fields such as law, engineering, medicine and the like. In most cases, graduates of the second segment have self-funded their studies and are “usually supported by well-to-do middle-class families” (Kraak, 2010: 82). Unlike the first segment, where practical experience is acquired during the institutional training, university graduates gain their practical experience after graduation and the practical experience is generally a requirement for professional registration.

The third component of the graduate labour market comprises of generalist bachelor's degree graduates, who have an indirect link to the labour market. The types of degrees that these individuals hold are generalist degrees such as Bachelor of Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce and Public Administration (Kraak, 2010: 82). It could be argued that graduates with generalist qualifications are at a disadvantage in comparison to the first and second segment graduates as they do not have links with employers in the labour market, nor do they have practical experience to make them more marketable.

With the graduate labour market being highly competitive, academic debates have taken place regarding the quality of graduates from the post-school and tertiary education sector. These debates have raised issues of their employability as well as their ability to acquire work placements (Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen, 2012; Kraak 2010 and Bhorat 2004).

In the face of the skills shortage in the labour market, the topic of graduate unemployment has been prone to much speculation as it is believed by many labour market researchers that it is a much-exaggerated problem (Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen, 2012). Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) argue that the handful of studies that have been conducted on the 'rising' levels of graduate unemployment are subject to a wide range of shortcomings, which range from inadequate definitions of the term 'graduates' to the use of incomplete or dated data.

In order to overcome the deficiencies of these studies, Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) review the existing literature on the evidence of graduate unemployment in South Africa after 1994 and provide a descriptive analysis of the patterns, levels and trends of graduate unemployment. Their study focuses on graduates who are categorized as individuals holding bachelor's degrees or equivalents and higher educational qualifications (honours, masters and doctorate degrees). In contrast to what seems to be the general consensus in the media and public discussions of the 'graduate unemployment crisis', the study conducted by Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012: 21) shows "no evidence of a high level or markedly upward trend in graduate (i.e. degreed) unemployment". The main conclusion in this study notes that greater attention needs to be placed on rethinking educational policy recommendation in higher education studies. In particular, they note that South Africa needs a serious intervention to eliminate 'skills bottlenecks' in the country as the lack of primary skills in the labour market impact economic growth negatively (Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen, 2012: 22).

With his contribution to graduate unemployment studies, Kraak (2010) analyses unemployment patterns and trends among graduates from TVET colleges, universities of technology and universities. There are little to no studies of graduate unemployment that have been conducted that have included

graduates from TVET colleges. Therefore, Kraak's (2010) study is an important contribution to the post-school education and graduate unemployment discourse.

The third-generation LMS perspective provides a useful conceptual framework for a comparative analysis of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. In the apartheid era, first-segment labour-market pathways provided trainees with a "direct link to employment" (Kraak, 2010: 99). During the apartheid era, the labour market was racially structured. It is important to keep in mind that within the first segment racially-exclusive policies of apartheid preserved skilled technical jobs for whites only (Kraak, 2010). In his comments on the first segment labour market pathway in the post-apartheid era, Kraak (2010) notes that the apprenticeship model, which was predominant in the labour market during apartheid, has largely collapsed. In addition, his findings show that most graduates from TVET colleges and universities of technology are self-sponsored and have no guarantee that they will find employment with their specialized qualifications. Another distinct difference between the first segment in the apartheid era and the post-apartheid era is that the bulk of the graduates in the first segment are black (Kraak, 2010: 99).

In the apartheid era, the second segment of the graduate labour market (which consists professional occupations) required graduates to have practical work experience prior to official registration in their profession. This often linked them to their prospective employer (Kraak, 2010). A similar pattern of racially-exclusive policies which reserved jobs for white artisans in the first segment was observable in the second segment. In addition, some white graduates in the second segment enjoyed the benefits of receiving bursaries from the government and lifetime employment in the public sector.

The second segment labour market trends in the post-apartheid era show that "black access into the labour market has proceeded very slowly" (Kraak, 2010: 99). Large companies have turned to "outsourcing many professional competencies, resulting in a plethora of small specialist firms" (Kraak, 2010: 99). A large majority of these small firms are white-owned with few black associates. They do not participate in internship schemes or graduate programmes on a large scale. Furthermore, Kraak's (2010) findings show that a large majority of these graduates are finding it difficult to get into first-time employment in their field of specialization. This is largely because "they do not have the social networks linking them to sites of employment in the economy" (Kraak, 2010: 100).

Similar to the first and second segment of the graduate labour market, the generalist segment was governed by racially-exclusive policies under apartheid. Most of the middle to senior jobs were reserved for whites and there was little to no unemployment among white graduates with generalist degrees (Kraak, 2010: 100). The post-apartheid generalist segment is significantly different. Government made substantial efforts to do away with statutory job discrimination and racially-

exclusive policies. It is evident that the role of historical experiences and socio-political factors (as proposed by the third-generation LMS theory) has a critical function in the post-apartheid labour market as many of the graduates from all sectors are now inclusive of black people which was not the case during the apartheid era. What is important to note is that the third-generation LMS theory does not simply propose that history and socio-political factors shape the labour market, but rather it proposes how they do this at a specific time and place.

As asserted by the third-generation LMS theory, the different themes of the discussion in this chapter show how labour markets are social institutions which are a product of the implications of the historical, economic and socio-political forces. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the implications of the unequal segmented labour market have called for affirmative action measures to redress the injustices of the past. With the research focus being labour market perceptions of the post-apartheid labour market, it is imperative to explore the students' views on whether they believe that affirmative action measures will favour them in accessing employment opportunities in the graduate labour market. Considering the segmented nature of the graduate labour market, the research seeks to further investigate whether the students feel in competition with graduates from the other segments even though they have a different skill set which is deemed as necessary to solve the current skills mismatch crisis in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3

PURPOSE AND ROLE OF TVET EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past, the role of TVET education was assumed to simply provide job training. With the current policy developments, industrialisation and globalization, this narrative is changing as the role of TVET education is evolving in many ways. The redefined role of TVET education has been reimagined as being more purposive. With serving a purposive role, TVET education is expected to incorporate both theory and practice between the college and the workplace in order to equip students with skills that make them employable (Hull et al., 2000; Garraway et al., 2015).

In conceptualising the purposive role of TVET institutions, it can be argued that these institutions have a big responsibility in meeting these expectations. Historically, TVET has been closely linked to the process of industrial and economic development. The theoretical contestations over the role of TVET is rooted in the notion of ‘productivity’, which assumes that training leads directly to increased productivity which, in turn, leads to economic growth (Powel and McGrath, 2014: 213). Another key assumption about the purpose of TVET is that skills lead to employability, which ultimately leads to securing a job (Powel and McGrath, 2014). This chapter will outline the TVET landscape by providing a summary of the origins of this form post-school education as well as exploring the evolution of the sector from the international sphere to the national sphere.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF TVET

TVET education is both a complex and varied concept as there are various approaches towards defining the role and purpose of TVET. TVET is essentially a merger of two educational concepts: technical education and vocational education. Technical education is practical in contrast to higher education, which uses a more theoretical or academic approach (Williams, 1963: 92, cited in Terblanche, 2017: 19). This form of learning is essentially skills-based applied learning that “contributes to the academic knowledge, higher order reasoning and problem-solving skills of an individual” (Legal Information Institute, 2002: 6). The method of instruction which is used in technical education leads to the “acquisition of practical skills which enable an individual to be employed in a chosen occupation” that relates to general science, engineering, commerce, management studies and other traditional craft trades (Terblanche, 2017: 19).

Vocational education is a broad occupational field that provides learners practical training using a work-based learning approach (Terblanche, 2017: 20). This work-based approach exposes the learner an opportunity to work in a firm and learn while they do so. Essentially it involves both on and off-the job training. For the learner, vocational education prepares the learner for employment in the labour market by equipping him or her with work experience, knowledge and skills that are demanded by industry. For the employer vocational education is used as a means of skilling labour to meet the needs of the firm (Terblanche, 2017: 20). Vocational education is closely engaged with industry and the economy and changes as industries changes (Moodie, 2008: 172). Thus, it can be argued that vocational education is a key aspect in economic development as it contributes towards improving the productive capacity of society by developing a skillful productive labour force (Clarke and Winch, 2007: 6).

3.3 INTERNATIONAL TVET LANDSCAPE

According to Anderson (2009), TVET first emerged during the industrial revolution in Europe and North America. Historically, vocational education was linked to education for the “poor, or indigent, and the ‘less able’ in many countries” (Gamble, 2003: 9). With the industrial revolution came an increasing emphasis on science and technology. As a result, a number of technical schools, which provided a diverse curriculum, were developed in the nineteenth century (UNESCO, 2013: 42). At the time, TVET had an instrumental function of supplying a skilled labour force required by industry (Anderson, 2009). With employers exerting the responsibility of skills development to the post-school education and training (PSET) sector, it can be argued that this has significant implications to the sector as the sector is expected to consistently meet the demand of labour by supplying the workers who have the skills that are needed by industry.

Anderson (2009) provides a critique of the establishment of the TVET system as he believes that it is premised on two neo-classical assumptions: that training and skills development of labour leads to increased productivity, which in turn leads to economic growth. And that acquiring skills as a prospective labourer, leads to employability which in turn leads to securing employment. By placing the value of TVET in the scope of advancing economic development, Anderson (2009) argues that “the institution of TVET is based on a restricted and instrumental view” (Anderson, 2009: 44). This view perceives labour markets as neutral economic institutions that rationally allocates labour without considering the extra market factors that influence labour market outcomes and labour market opportunities.

Essentially, Anderson (2009) adopts an LMS critique of the limitations of the instrumental function that TVET institutions have in economic development. In contrast to the orthodox approach that is used in defining the purposive role of TVET institutions, Anderson (2009) recognises that integration into the labour market is not as simple as assuming that acquiring job-specific skills will lead to an individual securing employment. He recognises that labour markets are not universal pre-determined systems to which economic forces are always tending as proposed by the orthodox approach. The LMS perspective that he adopts in his critique is similar to the third-generation LMS perspective that this study will adopt in analysing the labour market perceptions of the TVET college students at EMC. The similarity lies in the fact that he recognises and acknowledges that labour markets have varied characteristics and behavioral rules that determine pre-market and in-market segmentation. Simply, there is differentiation in access to opportunities to enhance one's productive potential through school and post-school education before entering into employment, and there is further differentiation in opportunities to increase their skills once they're in employment. What is important to note is that, all these pre-market and in-market opportunities are by no means unaffected by broader economic and socio-political relations.

Globally, countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Germany and India have used TVET institutions as a mechanism of addressing the acute problem of youth unemployment (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014: 3). Internationally, there has been a persistent trend in the massification of both secondary schooling and higher education (UNESCO, 2013: 164). The international discussions surrounding TVET emphasize a need for government intervention and for TVET institutions to critically assess the relevance of the theory and practice that the curriculum provides to the skills that are needed for a country's economic growth and development. (Akoojee and McGrath, 2009; Rasool and Mahembe, 2014; Kraak and Press, 2008; McGrath, 2012; Allais, 2012,). Globally, the value of work-based learning that TVET provides has been recognised as an important foundation for further learning as TVET programmes provide the "application of scientific principles to practice" (UNESCO, 2013: 90).

In assessing the measures that countries from abroad have used to establish successful TVET institutions, McGrath (2012) suggests a 'TVET toolkit' that has contributed towards the success of TVET institutions overseas. He explicitly draws attention to the various challenges that local TVET colleges face such as "low pass rates, poor labour market insertion, poorly qualified teachers, inadequate resources; low curricular relevance; dead-end qualifications; and high inefficiency" of TVET colleges (McGrath, 2012: 630). According to McGrath (2012), this 'toolkit' has five elements that have the potential to address these challenges

The first toolkit element identified by McGrath (2012) is the ‘systemic (and sometimes sectoral) governance’ reforms that are focused on improving the role of the management structure in TVET colleges. It is presumed that this element will improve the efficiency of the bureaucratic structures within TVET colleges. The second element is the ‘qualifications framework’. This element is presumed to make the curriculum responsive and relevant to the skills that are needed by industry. In addition, this element aims to make “qualifications more transparent to all stakeholders; to encourage vertical and horizontal movement of learners within learning systems; and to facilitate the wider accreditation of informal and formal learning” (McGrath, 2012: 625). The third element is the ‘quality assurance systems’ that are designed to ensure that TVET colleges have applied the notions of quality and continuous improvement, which gives stakeholders the confidence in the quality of graduates that the colleges produce. Not only do the quality assurance systems ensure that employable graduates are produced, they also encourage the idea of colleges that have accreditation and inspection structures (McGrath, 2012: 626).

New funding mechanisms are regarded as another important element in the international TVET toolkit. Creating new funding mechanisms signals a shift away from block funding of public providers to a system whereby funding is more outcomes-oriented (McGrath, 2012). The fifth and final element identified by McGrath (2012: 627) is the ‘managed autonomy for public providers. This element introduces new governance structures that “give a larger voice to stakeholders (especially industry); and greater autonomy for TVET colleges to have an instrumental role in decision making; but also making stakeholders respond to national policy directions and to perform against targets promoted through funding, reporting and inspection regimes” (McGrath, 2012: 625). McGrath (2012) argues that the elements of this ‘international TVET toolkit’ have the potential of addressing the current TVET challenges that South Africa is facing.

In analysing McGrath’s (2012) recommendation of adopting the ‘international TVET toolkit’, it is important to remain cautious in adopting solutions that were applied in specific context. While we cannot dispute the fact that we can learn from experiences from elsewhere, it is important for South Africa to develop solutions that are unique to the context of the country as opposed to adopting solutions from abroad that were applied in different contexts than that of South Africa. In other words, if the toolkit were to be adopted, it would have to be modified according to the specific needs that relate to the context of South Africa.

The literature on how other developing and middle-income countries have developed their TVET policies suggests that the success of the TVET system is based on the involvement of the government

in ensuring that the “purpose of the TVET system is reformed in line with the phases of the country’s economic development” (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014: 4). Therefore, it can be concluded that the success in vocational education is built on understanding that “each stage of development requires a TVET approach that prepares the country for the next stage of its developmental path” (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014: 4).

3.4 SOUTH AFRICA’S TVET LANDSCAPE

3.4.1 Apartheid-Era TVET

Since the ending of apartheid, developmental policies in the TVET sector have been an important aspect of the advancement of education reform in South Africa. As part of the national developmental agenda of building a fair, just and inclusive society, it was necessary for government to transform the education sector that was deeply fragmented. The structure of the TVET sector in South Africa is complex and diverse compared to TVET structures abroad. This is because in South Africa “the senior secondary phase of formal schooling has been merged within the TVET phase”, whereas internationally “the senior secondary schooling phase remains within the general education phase” (Kraak and Hall, 1999: 19). The ANC government has made considerable efforts to endorse the establishment of TVET colleges as means of effectively dealing with skills development. TVET policy frameworks have been developed to address key labour market challenges such as the skills mismatch and the issue of youth unemployment.

The apartheid government created TVET institutions (previously referred to as Further Education and Training [FET] colleges) with the intention of equipping white working-class youth with the skills that would make advance them in the labour market (Bisschoff and Nkoe, 2005; Akoojee and McGrath, 2008, 2012). During the apartheid era, the division of labour was racialized. Unskilled and rural Afrikaans-speaking workers felt ‘threatened’ by having to compete for jobs with black workers (Bisschoff and Nkoe, 2005: 205). To prevent this threat, the state developed policies during the 1920s that would protect the narrow interests of whites in the labour market. In 1922, the Civilised Labour Policy was introduced. It enforced a racially-based system of job reservation (DoE, 2001: 3). This system reserved artisanal and tradesmen’s jobs for workers who were classified as white, whereas black workers were limited to accessing jobs at the lower end of the labour market that required little to no skills. Simply put, the Civilised Labour Policy prohibited all black workers from occupying skilled jobs. In addition, skills development and artisanal training was exclusively for white workers who were institutionalised through a system of national apprenticeships. This left black workers with no access to apprenticeships and TVET education (DoE, 2001). Eventually, black workers were

allowed access to TVET education as the apartheid labour market demanded more skilled workers to sustain the process of industrialisation. However, it is important to note that although black people were eventually allowed access to TVET education, they had separate state TVET institutions that were funded separately from the white TVET colleges (DoE, 2001).

TVET education under apartheid was characterised by many inequalities, from unequal access to learning opportunities based on race to unequal allocation of funding between historically-white institutions, which were described as “state-aided colleges”, and historically-black colleges, which were described as “state colleges” (Bisschoff and Nkoe, 2005: 204). Although black youth were permitted to participate in technical training during the 1980s, it is important to highlight that the “state colleges” were poorly resourced and highly regulated under strict control of the former Department of Education and Training (DET) (Kraak, 2016: 20). For black students in state colleges, the available programmes were limited to low-level technical and commercial subjects with minimal access to artisanal training. While black students were receiving inferior education, white students were able to benefit from better quality state-aided colleges.

Consequently, the inequalities within the TVET system were inherited by the democratic government after the ending of apartheid. In inheriting these inequalities, it became necessary for the post-apartheid government to reform the system by providing education and training opportunities that are inclusive of all citizens of South Africa.

3.4.2 Post-Apartheid TVET

The post-apartheid government has developed a range of policies that reflect a commitment to reforming the TVET sector. The first FET Act of 1998 was enacted with the aim of reaching groups that have been historically excluded from education and training opportunities (Akoojee and McGarth, 2008). The FET Act is a broad legislative framework that regulates the TVET system by stipulating the establishment, governance, funding of public TVET colleges and the registration of private TVET colleges (Angelis and Marock, 2001). In 2006, the FET Act was amended with new and refined objectives of changing the status and operation of TVET colleges. The implementation of the amended Act encouraged new skills development policies like the Joint Initiative of Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), which was launched in 2006 with the intention of addressing skill shortages as well as achieving the objectives of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsigiSA). The main objective of AsigiSA was to “increase economic growth to six per cent by 2010

and halving unemployment by 2014” (Ngcobo, 2009: 13). It is important to highlight that the objectives that were set by the AsigiSA policy were not met in 2010 and 2014.

In addressing the shortcomings of the TVET sector, the implementation of effective TVET policies became of paramount importance for the post-apartheid government. A foundation of a “state-driven transformation agenda for vocational education and training” was laid early on in the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI), which encouraged a shift from “the market-led system which had been introduced by the apartheid government in the 1980s” to a “more structured, employer-led, competency-based system” (Kraak et al., 2016: 24). It is argued that a structured, employer-led system is necessary for the TVET colleges as there is a misalignment in the current post-apartheid system. Broadly, the misalignment in the system is due to historical processes, economic and socio-political forces. Historically, the racially structured TVET system resulted in black people having unequal employment opportunities due to the minimal access they had to artisanal training and certain TVET programmes.

The economic and socio-political forces that contributed to the misalignment of the TVET system is linked to the unequal allocation of funding between state and state-aided colleges. With poor funding of the state colleges, these colleges were poorly resourced. This impacted negatively on the quality of education in state colleges as certain programmes could not be offered due to lack of resources. Therefore, it became necessary for the government to create structured, well-funded TVET colleges in order to ensure that learners in these institutions receive education which is of a good quality standard.

Broadly speaking, the concept of skills can be understood as “having both qualifications and experience” (Daniels, 2007: 2). With South Africa facing shortage of artisans in the current labour force, there is a need for government to be proactive in addressing the issue of addressing scarce skills by producing a technically-skilled workforce. The Department of Labour and the Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) define scarce skills as “a scarcity of qualified and experienced people, currently or anticipated in the future, either (a) because such skilled people are not available, or (b) because they are available but do not meet employment criteria” (Foodbev SETA, 2005: 42, cited in Daniels, 2007: 2). According to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), intermediate skills are qualifications that are “below university-acquired high skill degrees but above the entry-level skills and qualifications that are obtained from primary and lower secondary schooling” (Daniels, 2007: 3). At the intermediate level, South Africa needs to increase the production of a skilled workforce, with a “strong focus on artisans and to a lesser extent, technicians” (Kraak, 2008: 197).

The availability of a skilled labour force is of paramount importance to South Africa's economic growth.

PSET researchers have observed a great need for intermediate skills in the South African labour market. Kraak (2008) identifies three distinct labour market pathways that will lead to enhancing the intermediate skills level in South Africa. These labour market pathways are: the traditional apprenticeship route, the learnership pathway and TVET college programmes in technical fields such as engineering. Kraak (2008: 210) argues that these three pathways have the ability to “cater for employer skills needs and create access to employment pathways” that will assist learners with integrating into the labour market upon completion of their studies. It is hoped that investing in these pathways will boost broad-based economic empowerment and employment equity as well as reduce the structural issues of unemployment and poverty (McGrath and Akoojee, 2007).

In upholding the constitutional right to access to education, TVET colleges are officially administrated under the amended Continuing Education and Training Act, 16 of 2006. As a result of this, the TVET sector has seen a major change as 150 technical colleges that were previously racially segregated were merged into 50 TVET colleges (DHET, 2018). The purpose of merging the 150 technical colleges was to create multi-campus institutions that would provide the prospect of local responsiveness and access. The multi-site TVET colleges “reach into almost every town or township and some sites are served by rail or bus link or closer to taxi ranks” (Ngcobo, 2009: 12). The 50 multi-site, public TVET colleges have 250 registered and accredited campuses which provide both full-time and part-time qualifications (DHET, 2018). These programmes are designed to provide post-school education that leads to “intermediate and high-level learning” (DHET, 2018: 32). Unlike universities, the programmes at the public TVET colleges are not restricted to learners with a matric certificate and are offered to learners who have completed at least Grade 9 at school.

In general, public TVET colleges provide three broad categories of qualifications: the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) qualification, the National Technical programmes (NATED) certificates; and the occupational learning qualifications (DHET, 2017: 34). NCV programmes are divided into three levels, Level 2 (which is at the same level as grade 10), Level 3 (at the level of grade 11) and Level 4 (at the level of grade 12) of the NQF. In contrast to NCV programmes, there are six levels of the NATED programmes, level N1- N6. NATED programmes are not to be misunderstood as being on the same level as NCV programmes. Each level of the NATED programme is completed over a period of a trimester or semester, while each level of the NCV programme is completed over a period of a year (DHET, 2018: 33). The fields of study that NATED

programmes cater for are “Engineering Studies as trimester enrolment, and three or four levels (introductory, N4 to N6) for Business or General Studies as semester enrolment” (DHET, 2018: 33). As part-qualifications, NATED programmes conclude in a National Diploma, provided that the students meet the requirements for work experience. Students that enrolled for “Business or General Studies programmes require 18 months (2000 hours) of applicable work experience, while those enrolled for Engineering Studies programmes require a minimum of 24 months (2 670 hours) of applicable work experience or a relevant trade test certificate to obtain the National N Diploma” (DHET, 2018: 33).

In differentiating between NCV and NATED programmes, it is important to note that NATED programmes do not offer any access to learning and training beyond level N6 as they are “unit standard programmes, meaning that they are not full qualifications but rather part qualifications” (Dlamini, 2014: 13). The NCV programmes on the other hand are full qualifications which grant access to studying beyond NQF Level 4. Such continued learning can be done at universities or universities of technology within South Africa and outside the country (Dlamini, 2014: 13).

NATED programmes are “technical and practical skills-oriented programmes that are linked to apprenticeships”, while NCV programmes are a collection of learning and training programmes that aim to equip learners with “practical skills, theoretical learning and academic knowledge” (DHET, 2018: 35). The NCV programmes were introduced in 2007 as a replacement of NATED programmes in order to enhance the learning and training offered at TVET colleges by combining “theoretical and practical training in a manner that promotes lifelong learning while producing skilled graduates” (Dlamini, 2014: 13). However, in 2009 the NATED programmes were reintroduced after “business expressed being unhappy with the methods and structure in the NCV programmes, displaying a preference for the skills focused NATED programmes” (Dlamini, 2014: 14). The interviewees of this research were all registered in various NCV programmes offered at EMC.

In addition to the NCV and NATED programmes, the occupational qualifications and part-qualifications that are offered at TVET colleges include workplace-based learning are closely linked to workplace demands and opportunities, and a large majority of the occupational learning programmes are funded by SETAs and the National Skills Fund (NSF) through the levy grant system (DHET, 2018). It is also worth noting that the NCV and NATED qualifications are listed as — ministerially-approved programmes and are funded by the state in terms of the National Norms and Standards for Funding TVET Colleges (DHET, 2018).

The number of students enrolled in TVET colleges has increased significantly over the years. It could be argued that the increase in the number of enrolments shows that education has become more accessible compared to the apartheid era. In March 2018, DHET released its seventh issue of statistics on PSET in South Africa. Amongst other statistics, the report includes 2016 enrolment and graduate figures obtained from public and private higher education institutions, TVET colleges and Community Education and Training (CET) colleges (DHET, 2018: iii). Based on the statistics provided by the report, the number of students enrolled in TVET colleges increased from 358,393 in 2010 to 705,397 in 2014. Of these, 166, 433 (23, 6 per cent) were NCV students. (DHET, 2018). The data provided by the report covers the period from 2010 to 2016 and official enrolment figures from the period 2015 to 2018 are not available yet.

South Africa, like many other developing countries, considers TVET as “a key factor in improving the competitiveness of enterprise and national economies” (SAQA, 2016: 5). With these high expectations, it can be argued that TVET colleges to expected to make an unrealistic, “superhuman contribution in bringing the sector into alignment with the national planning” (Kraak et al., 2016: 18). The expectation for the PSET sector to meet the economic objectives creates added pressure to the sector as there are various institutional challenges within the sector that need to be addressed. Zungu (2018) argues that the sector faces various challenges that range from low student pass rates, human resources shortages and financial support from key stakeholders.

Currently, the sector is facing governance problems regarding financial management (Kraak et al., 2016: 19). The mismanagement of finances in the sector needs serious attention as financial accountability ensures that funding to the sector is used effectively and efficiently. Although financial accountability is an important aspect in the functionality of the sector, Zungu (2018) warns against the sole focus on the financial management of the sector. He argues that more attention needs to be directed towards academic support that aims to improve student performance, as the sector is facing low pass rates.

In 2014, South Africa’s 50 public TVET colleges achieved an overall pass rate of 34 per cent in the NCV level 4 November examinations, while the following year it increased to 40 per cent (City Press, 2018). The pass rates of 2014 and 2015 did not meet the department’s initial targets of a 65 per cent pass rate. Although these statistics are not a representation of all the programmes that are offered at TVET colleges, they are useful in assessing the student performance rate in the NCV programme; particularly at the final year level which is a critical year of study where students are faced with the choice of studying further at a university/university of technology or entering the labour market.

There are various contributory factors that serve as possible explanations to the unsatisfactory pass rate. These factors range from “students who leave the school system ‘underprepared; the high standard of the NCV; poor lecturer competencies for certain subjects requiring high levels of specialisation; and internal assessment standards for national examinations” (City Press, 2018). As part of the investigation of this research, the students were asked to reflect on four of these contributory factors (their schooling experience in preparing them for post school education studies; the standard of the NCV and the competencies of their lecturers). These factors, amongst others, contributed in answering the central research question of the TVET college students’ labour market perceptions.

As part of a broader ‘developmental state’ agenda, the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014) highlight the importance of building strong working relationships between TVET colleges and employers. The reasoning behind the idea of colleges having close partnerships with employers is to assist colleges to locate opportunities for work-integrated learning and help them place students when they complete their qualifications (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014). This development agenda of building close partnerships with employers is particularly relevant to the focus of this research as the main objective of the investigation was to analyse whether the students believed that the partnerships that the TVET colleges have with industry would favour their employment prospects upon completion of their studies.

The TVET sector has undergone major institutional, structural and curricular changes over the past 14 years (Buthelezi, 2018). As one of the key policy developments that seeks to contribute towards strengthening the efficiency of colleges, the 2012 Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training recommends a regulatory framework that will sustain partnerships between public and private institutions. Among others, the policy encourages the creation of “longer-term developmental partnerships between employers and public institutions” through short-term contract opportunities (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014). The 2012 Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training has been criticized for providing a limited approach in establishing partnerships in the TVET sector. A notable omission is the “lack of consideration of formulating partnerships with various government entities (on a national, regional and local level), social groups, state-owned entities, educational institutions and labour market actors that than just employers” (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014: 3).

The 2014 White Paper on Post-School addresses this shortcoming by adopting a broadened perspective on partnerships. It calls for partnerships with various agencies, including ‘SMMEs,

government departments at various levels, SETAs, other post-school institutions and international bodies' (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014: 5). The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2014 addresses the ways in which skills development can support the creation of a developmental state (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014). As a new policy direction, the 2014 White Paper makes several important proposals on "how to transform the PSET system and how it will form the basis of a developmental plan up to 2030" (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014: 2).

The first proposed goal is to increase enrolments in TVET colleges. This goal aims to increase the current enrolment figures of 702,383 to 2.5 million students by 2030. In addition to the goal of increased enrolment, the policy recommends the development of 12 additional TVET colleges by 2030 (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014: 4). Furthermore, the White Paper of 2014 proposes the introduction of a new type of institution in the PSET system. This new institution will be created by converting Public Adult Learning Centres into community colleges by 2030. It is envisaged that the proposed community colleges will play a significant role in increasing enrolment numbers and access to PSET (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014). Like TVET colleges, the community colleges will integrate both youth and adults who have never attended school or dropped out of formal schooling. The difference between the community colleges and TVET colleges is that the community colleges will also integrate people who have never attended school in the system.

The current quality of TVET colleges and Public Adult Learning Centers continues to be of great concern as throughput rates at these institutions remain low and learner success is disappointing (Rasool and Mahembe, 2014). As means of addressing these problems, the White Paper of 2014 proposes a new structure to support quality improvements. The South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCERT) is developed with the intention of being the structure that will facilitate such quality improvements (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014). Its responsibilities will include providing much needed support to TVET colleges and the proposed community colleges by (among others) improving the curriculum that is offered at the colleges. These improvements should be responsive and relevant to "upgrading technical knowledge and pedagogical skills of staff in colleges in collaboration with universities, employers and experts" (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014: 4). It is hoped that SAIVCERT will initiate ongoing research and address pertinent issues that are related to college management and student support. The DHET remains committed to supporting college lecturers in performing their functions at a high level by providing the "necessary infrastructure and equipment to support their pedagogical practices and collaborating with employers, curriculum developers and the expertise required for designing curricula" (Kgobe and Baatjies, 2014: 5).

Another important measure that the White Paper of 2014 proposes is to improve student support services (and academic support) and finding workplace opportunities for students in TVET colleges and community colleges. This proposal is particularly relevant in this research as the focus of the research is to assess whether the students are under the impression that there are workplace opportunities for them with a post-secondary school qualification. In supporting the revision of the curriculum offered at the TVET colleges, the White Paper encourages a review of the qualifications and programmes offered by the sector. This can be done, according to Akoojee (2010), by creating a coherent framework that reflects curriculum innovation that is in line with the values of empowerment, self-sufficiency and self-reliance. With the continued emphasis on the need for the TVET sector to build linkages, the White Paper of 2014 also highlights the importance of the university system as part of a coordinated and integrated post-school education and training system (Motala, 2014). It is hoped that alliances with the university system will provide much needed support for the development of lecturers' practices and create an opportunity for retired academics to assist with the teaching of very large classes where possible (Motala, 2014).

In essence, the White Paper's approach towards developing a well-functioning and appropriate PSET system suggests a commitment to an educated population that will lead to greater social cohesion and drive the economic development of the country (HRDC, 2014). However, scholars such as Akoojee (2010) and Motala and Pampallis (2007) caution that relying solely on policy reform to resolve the legacy of apartheid is misguided and short sighted. In other words, the commitment to social justice and equitable reform in education requires broader changes in social and economic policy, including the redistribution of resources, and a careful consideration of the historical conditions that produce inequalities (Akoojee, 2010).

Although the 2014 White Paper Policy on Post-School Education and Training presents valuable proposals, it is important to the reform of the PSET sector, it is important to note that in general, White Papers are not binding in and of themselves. They perform the dual role of presenting future government policies while at the same time inviting comments on them. Essentially, they lay the foundation for legislative frameworks.

3.5 EASTCAPE MIDLANDS COLLEGE PROFILE

This research is a case study of the Eastcape Midlands College (EMC), Grahamstown campus which is one of the eight multi-site campuses of EMC. EMC was established in March 2002 with the merger of Uitenhage Technical College, KwaNobuhle Technical College and the satellite campus of

Bethelsdorp, and the Technical College in Graaf-Reinet (which was officially launched in October 2003) (EMC, 2018).

The institution offers both NCV and NATED programmes with specialisation in science, business, and social sciences programmes. The Grahamstown campus offers three NCV programmes out of the seven programmes that EMC offers. The School of Art and Social Sciences offers two NCV programmes: Tourism and Hospitality. Whereas the School of Business offers one NCV programme: Finance, Economics & Accounting. The courses that are taught in the Tourism programme are: Science of Tourism, Client Services and Human Relations, Sustainable Tourism in SA and International Travel and Tourism Operations. The courses that are available in the Hospitality field are: Generic Hospitality, Food Preparations, Hospitality Services and Client and Human Relations. The courses that are provided in the Finance, Economics & Accounting programme are: Applied Accounting, Financial Management, Economic Environment and New Venture Creation. All of courses which have been mentioned are offered from Level 2 – Level 4 of the NQF (EMC, 2018).

Under the NATED programme, there are five business-related programmes that EMC offers. Out of the five NATED programmes that are provided at EMC, the Grahamstown specialises three programmes: Management Assistant, Financial Management and Business Management. The Management Assistant programme specialises in Communication, Information Processing, Computer Practice, Office Practice and Public Relations. The Financial Management programme offers courses in Financial Accounting, Computerised Financial Systems, Cost & Management Accounting, Income Tax and Economics. The third and final NATED programme that the EMC Grahamstown campus offers is Business Management. The courses under Business Management are Entrepreneurship & Business Management, Sales Management, Computerised Financial Systems, Marketing Management, Marketing Communication and Computer Practice. All courses which have been mentioned are available from level N4 up to and including level N6.

In 2017, the EMC obtained a 73 per cent certification pass rate and 874 distinctions in the NCV examinations (EMC, 2018). In addition, a 49 per cent pass rate for NATED engineering-related programmes and 66 per cent pass rate for NATED business-related programmes was obtained in the same year. The 2018 pass rate statistics has not yet been made available. The interviewees that were interviewed for this study were all registered NCV students at EMC.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the interviewees' perceptions of labour market opportunities with a post-secondary school qualification, it was necessary to adopt a qualitative research design in order to meet the study's objectives. This chapter outlines what qualitative research entails and explains why this approach was chosen. Once this is established, I will discuss the research methods that were adopted: namely, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Thereafter, I will provide a brief description of the participants who were involved in the study, show how access to interview them was gained, and outline the ethical considerations that had to be taken into account when the research process was conducted.

4.2 TYPES OF RESEARCH

4.2.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods aim to “describe, interpret and explain social reality through the medium of language (as opposed to quantitative research, which aims to do so through the medium of mathematics)” (Beuving and de Vries, 2015: 19). In other words, qualitative research generally uses words rather than numbers to report findings.

Qualitative research makes use of empathy to observe participants, interprets results in specific contexts and may in the process strive to empower participants (Terreblanche and Kelly, 1999). The purpose of this research is not to empower the interviewees, but rather to interpret their labour market perceptions. Qualitative research is considered as a naturalistic approach that analyses the meanings people attach to their experiences within their social reality (Beuving and de Vries, 2015). It strives to produce a “detailed description and analysis of the quality, or the substance of the human experiences” (Marvasti, 2004: 7). Essentially, qualitative research techniques provide an in-depth understanding of human behaviours and the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences rather than explaining them through statistical analyses and quantification (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is that quantitative research quantifies the subject matter by counting and measuring the extents and distributions of the subject matter (Lune and Berg, 2017). With quantitative research, the purpose of the investigation is to conduct a ‘preparatory inquiry’ whereas with qualitative research the purpose of the investigation is to conduct a naturalistic inquiry that explores the actors’ interpretations of the social world (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research requires the researcher to have a distant relationship with the subject by using a structured research strategy that depicts a static social reality that is external to the actor (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In contrast, qualitative research calls for a close relationship between the researcher and the subject which provides an insider approach to the social reality that is being documented.

In investigating the labour market perceptions of TVET students, a qualitative approach was more suited to this study as it allowed the researcher to explore a detailed analysis of the students’ perceptions by discussing the various factors (and in some cases experiences) influence their viewpoints. The aim of this study was not to generalize findings, but rather to produce rich data that reflects the students’ viewpoints on labour market opportunities with a post-secondary school qualification.

4.2.2 Research Paradigms

Since this research was based on a descriptive and qualitative case study, an interpretive paradigm was adopted. According to the philosophical underpinnings of the interpretivist paradigm, social reality is understood as something that does not exist “independently of human experience but rather is constructed through the interpretations and experiences of the individual” (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009: 166).

Interpretivism adopts the view that social phenomena should be studied and understood according to how humans understand their situations and how they act upon them. Essentially, this research paradigm proposes that knowledge is socially constructed and that “reality is not something that is out there that the researcher can clearly explain, describe into a research report, but rather reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction and practice” (Tracy, 2013: 40). In summary, the interpretive paradigm highlights the importance of analysing the social world from the actors’ standpoint (Tracy, 2013: 41). This is exactly what this study sought to do: to understand what it means to have a TVET qualification in the post-apartheid labour market from the students’ standpoint.

Although interpretivism adopts a valuable approach to studying social phenomena, it is important to note that it is subject to various shortcomings. For instance, the assumption that social reality is what people believe it to be, often leads to a false belief that one person's views are as valid as those of anyone else's. Secondly, the assumption that society only consists of people's perceptions suggests that we can change society simply by changing our perceptions. The purpose of this research is to not to change society or to change the TVET college students' perceptions; but rather it is to provide an explanation of the objective, structural conditions in society that shape the students' perceptions as it is these conditions that determine the perceptions.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative data collection techniques vary as they can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. The central qualitative methods that are generally used to collect data are in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations (Boyce and Neale, 2006). In order to meet the study's objectives, it was necessary to choose a suitable methodology. According to Hammersley (2011: 32), methodology is concerned with studying "the methods employed in carrying out some form of enquiry". In an effort to capture the students' labour market perceptions, a semi-structured, in-depth interview schedule was devised as the data collection method. Although in-depth interviews can be time-intensive, the primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more "detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys" (Boyce and Neal, 2006: 3). Bryman (2012) notes that the in-depth interview is probably the most widely used method in qualitative research. The flexibility of the interview makes it a desirable method of gathering qualitative data.

With semi-structured in-depth interviews, the researcher prepares a list of questions that covers specific topics (Bryman, 2012: 471). This is often referred to as an interview guide/schedule. The questions are structured in such a way that gives the interviewee the opportunity to have a great deal of freedom in their responses as the questions may not follow the same logic, or the same way as outlined on the interview schedule (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of using the semi-structured interview technique was to guide the interview in such a way that allowed the researcher to explore the responses to the questions in a rich, detailed, in-depth manner. The interview schedule of this study was structured using closed and open-ended questions that explore the respondents' demographics, socio-economic context, educational background, their job aspirations as well as their

views of the job opportunities of a TVET qualification in the contemporary South African labour market.

4.4 SAMPLING METHODS AND GAINING ACCESS

Qualitative research involves some form of sampling or selection that will lead the investigation (Hammersley, 2011: 38). There are four different sampling techniques that can be applied in a qualitative study: convenience sampling, purposive sampling and snowball sampling. As a simple sampling technique, purposive sampling was employed to recruit students to participate in the study. Purposive sampling differs from the other kinds of sampling in that it is a “non-probability” sampling technique that bases the selection on “characteristics of the population as well as the objective of the study” (Yin, 2011: 88). The selection of the units of the study should seek to “obtain the broader range of information and perspectives on the subject of study (Kuzel, 1992: 37). In other words, the purpose for selecting the specific sample is to obtain data that is most relevant to the topic of the study. The sample of this study consisted of six registered students, from different years of study, who are enrolled in various courses offered by the institution. The purpose of choosing students across different fields of study as well as different years of study was to obtain some variation in responses regarding perceptions of the labour market.

Six face-to-face interviews were carried out on the premises of the EMC. The interviewer was able to interact with the students on a deep and personal level in order to gain rich data that captures their perceptions. With the interviews being semi-structured, I was able to have follow-up questions which led to unpredictable responses. The interviews were conducted in IsiXhosa and in English, which led to me being tasked with the challenge of translating the interviews from isiXhosa to English.

Gaining access to the participants took place through a formal process. With the participants being a part of an institutional environment, permission was obtained from the campus manager of the college to access the students for the project, as well as to conduct the interviews on the college premises. Once permission was granted, I was required to complete the Eastern Cape DHET 001 Data Confidentiality Standard Form, which has terms and regulations that stipulate that identifiable data (except if it is a legal requirement) is not to be released to any person, and that the use of the data was solely for the purpose of this study. Once the declaration form was signed by myself and the campus manager, and once it was approved by the Eastern Cape DHET, I was granted access to the campus and the students to conduct the interviews.

Table 1: List of interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Year of study	Field of study	Interview date
Buhle	25	Female	4	Tourism	01/10/2018
Sindy	26	Female	3	Tourism	27/09/2018
Thulani	25	Male	4	Tourism	28/09/2018
Nolwazi	23	Female	2	Hospitality	05/10/2018
Thembi	28	Female	4	Finance, Economics & Accounting	08/10/2018
Phumzile	26	Female	3	Finance, Economics & Accounting	08/10/2018

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before the investigation could commence, a range of guidelines had to be adhered to. The ethical standards that were used in selecting research subjects followed Rhodes University's protocols. Prior to conducting the research, the proposal was approved by the Rhodes University Sociology Department's Ethics Committee where minor revisions had to be made regarding the questions contained in the interview schedule.

Kent (cited in Burton, 2000: 65) defines confidentiality as the "right to control information about oneself". A researcher should not reveal what has been shared during an interview to others without the relevant interviewee's permission. All means of identification should be removed if the results are to be published in any form (Kent cited in Burton, 2000). According to the ethical standards of Rhodes University, the researcher needs to ensure that there is 'informed consent' from the research participants prior to conducting the interview process (RUSEC, 2014). Informed consent is defined by Berg and Lune (2017: 46) as "the knowing consent of individuals to participate in an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation". Participation in this study was voluntary and all respondents were informed that confidentiality will be guaranteed throughout the study. Voluntary participation creates a platform whereby participants come forward if they wish to participate in the study rather than being forced through "physical or psychological" coercion (Marvasti, 2004: 135).

A consent form was given to each participant which contained the necessary information regarding the purpose of the study, what participation in the study would entail as well as a confidentiality

declaration. Participants were verbally informed that the purpose of the study was solely for academic purposes and that they have the right to withdraw at any stage during the interview, and that the research does not intend to expose the participant to any harm (emotional or physical). The interviews ranged from an hour and 30 minutes to an hour and 45 minutes, and were conducted in safe environments on campus, mainly vacant seminar rooms. Once consent was given, the interview process could begin and participants were provided with my contact details in case they wish to see the final draft of the study or a copy of their transcribed interview (RUSEC, 2014: 24: 5).

CHAPTER 5

LABOUR MARKET PERCEPTIONS OF TVET COLLEGE STUDENTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is a small-scale qualitative study of perceptions. It is important to emphasize that the findings of this study are not representative of all TVET college students as the sampling method that was applied was a non-random purposive sampling technique. This means that the findings of this study are concerned with the perceptions of specific individuals (TVET college students at EMC) and are not representative of all TVET college students in South Africa. In employing the interpretivist research paradigm, this research is concerned with providing a contextualised understanding of the interviewees' perceptions.

This chapter will describe and analyse the research findings according to the various factors that influence the labour market perceptions of the TVET college students at EMC. These factors will be discussed under specific socio-political and economic themes that emerged during the research process. The research findings will be discussed in relation to third-generation LMS theory. The latter, as noted above, is the most appropriate conceptual framework to inform and guide this study as it will assist in revealing the way in which economic conditions and socio-political conditions influence students' labour market perceptions. Essentially, the third-generation framework will guide this study in a way that provides "multi-causal explanations" of the perceptions that the students hold with regard to the labour market opportunities that are available to them with a NCV qualification.

The following themes will be explored in this chapter: demographic profile, socio-economic background, transition from secondary school to PSET, and the perceptions of transitioning from PSET to the labour market. The demographic profile will briefly describe the interviewees' demographic characteristics according to their race, gender, highest qualification before enrolling at EMC and their registered course. The socio-economic section will discuss the economic conditions and socio-political conditions of the interviewees' place of upbringing. The transition from secondary school to PSET section will provide a discussion on the factors that motivated the students to continue with their studies after high school; while the perceptions of transitioning from PSET to the labour market will provide an extensive discussion that details whether the TVET students are in the view that knowledge and skills that they will obtain from EMC upon graduation will serve as an advantage pre-market and in-market. As noted in chapter four, pseudonyms will be used in place of the

interviewees' real names. The terms 'interviewees' and 'students', 'EMC' and 'college' are used interchangeably.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

The demographic profiles of the six interviewees of this research are similar in various respects. The importance of obtaining the interviewees' demographical characteristics contributes towards the secondary research objective of contextualising the socio-economic background of the students in order to analyse how their upbringing influences their labour market perceptions. During the interviews, the interviewees were asked demographic questions on the following: race, age, gender, highest qualification before registering at the TVET College and their registered course. In terms of race, all interviewees were black. The non-random sample of this study only includes black students draws on Kraak's (2010) evidence that black students are the largest racial composition in the post-apartheid TVET sector; which is a noticeable shift in the racial grouping in the TVET sector because during apartheid, students that were enrolled in TVET colleges were mostly white.

All interviewees of this research were youth. The oldest interviewee was 28 years old whilst the youngest was 23 years old. Two students were 25 years old and the other two were 26 years old. In terms of gender, five interviewees identified as female and one interviewee identified as male.

The interviewees are all registered students under various NCV programmes offered by EMC. Out of the sample, three students were registered for Tourism, two were registered for Finance, Economics and Accounting, and one student was registered for Hospitality. The qualifications of students before enrolling at EMC were similar in the sense that none of the interviewees had completed grade 12. In assessing their level of qualification before enrolling at EMC, two students had completed their secondary schooling right up to grade 11, one discontinued with their studies at grade 10, and the other three students had made it to grade 12 but did not complete or pass grade 12. Based on this information, it can be said that the interviewees have intermediate skills (as defined by the NQF) as they have obtained the basic entry-level skills and education from primary and lower secondary schooling.

The reasons as to why they did not complete their secondary schooling varied according to their personal circumstances. Most importantly, their choices of not continuing with their studies were related to socio-economic circumstances. The social circumstances of discontinuing with their secondary schooling ranged from peer-pressure and the lack of a conducive learning environment at

school to teenage pregnancy. The economic conditions related to financial challenges in the household.

When asked why he did not continue with his studies, Thulani reported that he found himself succumbing to peer pressure:

I was in school up until grade 12. But I failed my matric because my results were very bad. I think it was because I was caught up with the wrong group of friends. The friends that I had back then weren't serious about life. Many of them had dropped out of school and weren't doing much with their lives. They were heavily involved in alcohol and weed. I found myself being influenced by their behaviour and ended up not taking my studies seriously, which resulted in me failing my matric dismally.

For Sindy, the unconducive learning environment that she was subjected to in high school demotivated her to continue with her studies:

Yhuuu mntase! (sigh) I struggled a lot in high school. We basically relied on textbooks and what the teacher taught in class, nothing else. For certain subjects, I would be at a disadvantage because textbooks had to be shared amongst the class and sometimes, I wouldn't get a chance to complete my class notes because I had to return the textbook to the person that I borrowed it from.

She added:

We were lucky if the teacher was kind enough to print out certain sections of the textbook. Other than that, we had to hustle and find a way to get notes of the sections that weren't covered. Sometimes we wouldn't finish the syllabus and the sections that we didn't cover in class would be in the exam. It was so frustrating because our marks would be affected because there were some questions that we couldn't answer in the exam. I was tired of failing so I decided to drop out of high school because I thought that school wasn't for me.

Phumzile shared her personal experience of how the social environment of feeling isolated from her peers influenced her choice of not continuing with her studies in high school:

Although I fell pregnant in grade-11, I was able to continue and still pass. The problem began in grade-12. I felt as though I didn't belong in school because most of my schoolmates judged me for having a baby at a young age. Grade-12 was quite challenging. I found it difficult to cope with my schoolwork because I had to juggle my studies with my responsibilities of being a mother to a new-born baby. Plus, it didn't help that I had no one to relate to now that I was a mother. I just couldn't cope anymore, that's why I dropped out.

Unlike Phumzile, Nolwazi discontinued her studies due to the economic circumstances that she was confronted with at home:

I really wanted to finish my matric but this wasn't possible because of the circumstances at home. My father lost his job, and this really affected us because he was the breadwinner. We basically depended on him as well as the social grant. When he lost his job, things became difficult at home. The social grant wasn't enough to make ends meet. I had to drop out of matric and help run the tuck-shop at home for us to have an additional source of income at home.

Overall, the explanations of why the interviewees did not continue with their secondary schooling links to the third-generation LMS theoretical concepts. Evidently, there are varied explanations, which are related to social and economic determinants, which explain why they could not continue to develop their skills through secondary schooling before employment (pre-market). This means that the opportunity to increase their educational level in secondary school was affected and limited by factors relating to socio-economic conditions.

5.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS OF INTERVIEWEES

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the socio-political conditions of the interviewees' place of upbringing as well as their economic status. This discussion will provide contextual information on the how their socio-economic backgrounds influenced their choice of studying towards a post-secondary school qualification as opposed to entering the labour market without a qualification.

In gathering information relating to the social background and economic status of the interviewees, the interview schedule required the students to provide a brief account of their upbringing by describing the conditions of where they grew up. The interviewees' descriptions of their social conditions were remarkably similar as the findings showed that all the students were born and raised in a township. The communities in which they grew up had numerous infrastructural issues and other socio-political issues relating to access of basic amenities and services. Essentially, the interviewees came from poor backgrounds.

When asked to describe the conditions in which he grew up, Thulani noted:

Life in the township is hard. It forced me to grow up quickly and learn to be independent. It's sink or swim there. There's definitely a big difference between towns and townships. We don't have a lot of opportunities to better ourselves. People who live in towns have less struggles than those who live *ekasi* [township]. Basic things such as electricity, clean water and good schools were an issue and still are an issue where I come from.

Nolwazi resonated with Thulani's dissatisfaction about the social environment in her community, but also provided positive feedback on some of the developments that she has noticed in her community:

Ever since I've lived in Alice, Zone 16 we've always had a water crisis. A month can go by without us having water and nothing will be done. Whenever there's a water outage, people have to travel far to a dam to get water. People suffer because it's quite a long distance and carrying heavy pails of water just for survival is strenuous. In terms of development, I'd say that we've seen some slight changes especially with the infrastructure because they (municipality) have started paving the roads to make sure that they're in a better condition.

Overall, the interviewees were dissatisfied by the lack of development in their communities. The grievances that were expressed about public services, infrastructure, basic amenities such as water and electricity are issues of concern for many people living in townships across South Africa. The students felt as though the socio-political challenges that they were confronted with in their hometowns influenced their upbringing and limited their opportunities towards advancement.

In evaluating the economic status of the interviewees, the interviewees were asked to list the sources of income in their household and explain whether there have been any challenges in meeting their household expenses. In answering the questions on economic status, most of the students perceived their current economic status as being of a low standard. Even though two of the interviewees could be considered as coming from middle-income households as the bread winners of their household were in professional occupations (teaching and nursing profession), they still perceived their household economic status as being of a low standard.

There were various indicators that were used to evaluate the students' economic status. The indicators chosen were the number of bread winner/s in their family, their occupation, the sources of income in their household and the various financial challenges that their families face in running the household. When it came to the question relating to the number of breadwinners in their household, four out of the six interviewees answered that their household had one main breadwinner. The other two interviewees answered that various members of their families contributed in whatever way they can in covering the monthly household expenses. The occupations of the interviewees' family breadwinners ranged from performing precarious work to undertaking work in professional occupations.

A consistent pattern emerged in evaluating the economic statuses of the interviewees. This pattern showed that all the interviewees' households had more than one stream of income to cover their

household expenses. The sources of income ranged from state grants, selling of goods, to leasing part of the household property. The most popular supplementary source of income was the state grants. Those that relied on state grants felt as though even though the grant money was little, this form of income was more consistent and guaranteed. Most of the households that relied on state grants as an additional source of income had breadwinners who were either casual labourers or informal entrepreneurs.

A common trend in the responses was that the financial challenges that the students faced at home are one of the key factors that motivated them to study further. In elaborating on her financial challenges, and how these challenges motivated her to study further, Sindy noted the following:

We face a lot of challenges at home. Money is always an issue because we have a lot of expenses. My little brother uses a local school kombi to take him to school every day, which is paid for monthly. My other sibling is also studying far from home, so he also needs money for rent, groceries, electricity and other personal things. In addition, I too need money to cover my expenses. As you can see, it's a lot. Sometimes, I feel like studying far from home has disadvantaged my family because it has put them under a lot of financial strain. Knowing where I come from and the money situation at home, I feel pressured to complete my studies so that I can get a job and help at home because things are bad.

Thembi also feels the pressure to complete her studies so that she can assist her family's financial situation:

There's a lot of people to take care of at home, the money that we get is never enough. What makes matters worse is that my mom is the only person working at home, the rest are unemployed and there are three children that need to be taken care of. With the kids, we must make sure that they have school uniforms, stationary, baby formula and nappies for the youngest. Food is ridiculously expensive. There's eight of us so you can imagine how quickly food runs out. I'm really trying to complete my studies as quickly as possible so that I can get a good job that will help me assist my family financially.

In reflecting on these responses (amongst others), the financial challenges that the interviewees face in their households are one of the key driving forces that motivate them to complete their studies. For the interviewees, completing their studies places them in a better position in the labour market to secure employment. Based on these responses, it can be understood that the students perceive getting a job as an opportunity to ease their families' economic strife. In addition, it can be argued that their views contest the utility-maximizing theory (as proposed by the neo-classical approach), which suggests that workers have a choice of working or enjoying leisure time. For the students, the choice

of wanting to work is not necessarily based on sacrificing leisure time but rather it is based on the need of improving the economic conditions at home.

5.4 TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO PSET

The interviewees of this study did not complete grade 12 due to various reasons, which have been outlined above. In continuing with the conversation of discontinuing with their secondary schooling, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on why they chose to study after secondary school as opposed to looking for employment or remaining unemployed. The answers to this question were similar in that the students expressed that in addition to the financial challenges faced at home, being NEET and not economically active contributed to them deciding to study at a PSET institution after dropping out of secondary school.

Drawing on the discussion of the purposive role that TVET colleges have in providing access to education and training to alleviate youth unemployment, many of the interviewees felt that enrolling at a TVET college was the solution to their unemployed circumstance. They opted to study further as they were discouraged from integrating into the labour market because they had low-skill levels that limited them to get jobs in the lower end of the labour market. As a result, they opted to enroll at EMC in order to develop skills that would advance their position in the labour market when seeking employment.

Buhle and Phumzile shared similar experiences as they both fell pregnant whilst in high school and decided to drop out due to not coping with parenthood and being learners. In reporting on why she decided to continue with her studies after high school, Phumzile noted the following:

I had no choice but to carry on with school. I spent so many years sitting at home doing piece jobs because I didn't have a matric. These jobs weren't fulfilling, I was mainly doing domestic work and they weren't paying very well. I knew that I had to go back if I want a better paying job. The father of my child doesn't even pay child maintenance, so everything is my responsibility. Stopping at a high school wasn't going to give me a good job because these days even a matric isn't good enough, you need an actual qualification if you want to get a good job.

Adding to what Phumzile said, Buhle reported on the following:

Being unemployed when you are a parent is tough. Especially if you don't even have a matric. After falling pregnant in grade 11 and dropping out of high school, I felt like my life was at a stand-still. I realized that if I don't get my matric, I would be unemployed forever. So, I decided to go back to school and get a qualification that would help me get a decent job.

With Buhle reporting that being unemployed felt as though her life was at a ‘stand-still’, we can observe that her NEET status raised feelings of extreme insecurity and instability as she felt as though her life could not progress any further if she remained unemployed. For Thulani, the choice of going back to school was based on his observations of NEET youth in the township:

A lot of young people who are around my age are stuck *ekasi* [township] because they chose not to study after high school or because they chose to drop out. As a guy in the township, it is very easy to get caught up with the hype of being cool and carefree. I knew that if I continued to hang around my friends who weren’t motivated to study, I was going to be stuck in the township and be forced to commit crimes like robbery so that I can get some money because nobody employs you if you don’t have a matric. I began to outgrow the lifestyle that my friends were living. I had to make sure that I don’t end up like them, so I decided to leave home and come here to study further.

With Thulani feeling the pressure to further his studies so that he does not turn out like the NEET youth in his community, Sindy she felt pressure from her family:

My family put a lot of pressure on me to study at a TVET college after failing grade-11 twice. At first, I didn’t listen to them. I was quite demotivated to go back to school after failing and sat at home for a few years. As the years went by, I started noticing that I was falling behind. Cousins who were younger than me were matriculating and going to varsity, while cousins who were my age were graduating. At family gatherings, family members would ask whether I’m studying or working, and I’d be embarrassed because I was just sitting at home doing nothing with my life. After years of my family begging me to go back to school, and watching everyone around me progressing, I was tired of being the black sheep of the family so decided to go back and actually do something with my life.

Although most of the interviewees explained that the choice of enrolling at a TVET college was to change their NEET statuses, for Thembi, the choice to study at a TVET college after high school was to fulfil her career aspirations:

The marks that I got in matric were too low for me to get accepted at a university for what I wanted to study- I basically failed matric. I really wanted to be a chartered accountant so when I couldn’t study accountancy at university because of my low marks, I became demotivated and depressed. After sitting at home for a few years, I heard on the radio about how completing a NCV level four programme can grant you access to university. After hearing this, I became motivated to register for the FEA [Finance, Economics and Accounting] course because I realised that this option could potentially lead me to reach my goal of being a chartered accountant. Even though it will take me longer than others, I know that once I am done here, I can go to university to register for a degree in accountancy.

In evaluating the responses as to why the students decided to study after discontinuing with their secondary schooling, the general conclusion that can be made from these responses is that the

interviewees were discouraged work seekers who were motivated to change their NEET statuses. In conceptualising these responses in relation the third-generation LMS model, it can be understood that students' motivation to enhance their education level at a PSET institution before entering into employment (pre-market segmentation) is connected to social and economic factors. These factors serve as (multi-causal) explanations of how their educational levels, their social class and economic status of coming from poor backgrounds influenced their decision to develop their skills at a TVET college. According to them, this would place them in a better position in the labour market when seeking employment.

In continuing with the topic of NEET, the interviewees were asked to provide their views on youth unemployment in South Africa by outlining some of the factors that they think contribute towards youth unemployment. Most of the responses seem to suggest that the students understand the notion of unemployment as a social issue as opposed to an economic issue as proposed by the orthodox approach. Drawing on her personal experience, Phumzile noted:

I think that a lot of young people are lazy to work or to study. If I'm being honest, when I was unemployed, I was not motivated to look for a job nor to study. It is only when I became a parent to my daughter did I see the need to go back to school and complete my studies because I realised that I would not be able to get a good paying job if I don't have a relevant qualification, let alone a matric certificate.

Thulani noted how a lack of skills and work experience contributes towards the issue of youth unemployment:

Youth unemployment is something that is a big problem in South Africa. Another thing that causes unemployment is the fact that people don't have qualifications and work experience. Employers want to hire people that have both qualifications and work experience. Most young people haven't been successful in finding work because they don't have both of these things. They find themselves losing out of jobs because they don't have the relevant experience.

When asked what can be done to solve the issue of youth unemployment, most of the interviewees reported that education and training opportunities are a driving force in addressing the issue of youth unemployment. Adding to his comment about how a lack of skills and work experience contributes towards the issue of youth unemployment, Thulani noted:

For me, the only solution is for people to go back to school because you can't expect to get a job if you do not have any qualifications and work experience. That's why TVET colleges are important because even if you don't have a matric, you have an opportunity to further your studies. For me as a young person, I saw that going to a TVET college was a second chance

in life because here you are not treated like a failure or less than just because you did not complete your matric.

Adding to Thulani's comment, Nolwazi reported:

Although government can do more to create jobs for young people, I do think TVET colleges are doing a lot to addressing the issue of youth unemployment because they are giving the youth something to do other than to sit at home and do nothing. The fact that education at TVET colleges is free makes it a great opportunity for young people to go back to school and get useful qualifications that can assist them in getting. It is better to be unemployed with a qualification rather than to face unemployment with no qualification because at least if you are unemployed with a qualification, you have a better chance of getting a job as opposed to being unemployed with no qualification.

5.5 PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSITIONING FROM PSET TO THE LABOUR MARKET

An integral part of the labour market process is the first two processes where employers learn that workers are available for employment and the subsequent process where workers learn that jobs are available. As previously discussed, one of the key purposes of TVET colleges is to provide learners with employment pathways in the labour market. Essentially, part of their role as institutions of higher learning is to facilitate the first two labour market processes by connecting employers with prospective graduates that are trained in the relevant industry field. With the central research focus of this study being the labour market perceptions of the TVET college students at EMC, this section seeks to analyse whether the students are of the opinion that EMC will provide them with employment linkages to industry once they have completed their studies.

5.5.1 The passage from NEET to PSET

It is evident that most of the interviewees chose to study further after high school with hopes of changing their NEET status and acquiring qualifications that would enable them to be employed in better-paying jobs. When asked whether a TVET college was their first choice of post-secondary school education, all the interviewees with the exception of Thembi answered 'yes'. Thembi reported that her first choice was to study at a university. The most common reason why most of the interviewees chose to study at a TVET college was fact that they had limited options to other institutions of higher learning due to not having completed their matric. Others reported that the opportunity to gain practical work experience whilst studying was an additional advantage which influenced them to study at a TVET college. Thulani noted the following when asked why a TVET college like EMC was his first choice of post-secondary school education:

Because my matric pass wasn't a bachelor pass I had very limited options. I heard that if you study at a TVET college you can study and get practical work experience. And I figured that this would be an awesome opportunity because the school would provide me with work experience, which is something that is very important when looking for a job.

In evaluating Thulani's response in relation to the pre-market segmentation concept of enhancing one's productive potential through education and training, the opportunity of gaining work experience whilst studying was an added advantage to his learning experience as he believes that this form of experience will enhance his employment opportunities once he has completed his studies. In addition, his response reflects Kraak's (2010) claim of the advantages that graduates in the first segment of the graduate labour market have, as he notes that practical work experience in the form of learnerships and apprenticeships is an advantage when seeking employment.

Nolwazi stated that in addition of not completing grade 12, she chose to enroll at a TVET college because of funding opportunities:

There was no money for me to go to private colleges. So, when I heard about how EMC helps students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds like me get funding through NSFAS [National Student Financial Aid Scheme] or bursaries, I knew that this was the place for me to build my future. I was never going to be able to afford a fee-paying college.

Based on Nolwazi's response, one of the forces that influenced her decision to study at a PSET was her economic condition of not being able to self-fund her studies at other institutions of higher learning. Nolwazi's response supports Kraak's (2010: 81) evidence on how learners in the first segment of the graduate labour market are generally funded by donors or prospective employers.

5.5.2 PSET learning experiences

In assessing the students' PSET learning experience in preparation for the labour market, the interviewees were asked various questions relating to their programme of study as well as the resources and academic support that is available to them to enhance their education and training experience. The purpose of asking questions relating to these factors was to evaluate whether the students perceived the education and training that they received at EMC as sufficient to prepare them for employment in their chosen field of study. Essentially, the purpose was to understand whether the students were of the view that the sets of intermediate to high-level skills and theoretical knowledge that they acquire from the TVET College make them employable candidates in the labour market.

Drawing on Harvey's (2001) reflection of PSET programmes regarding skills development, the interviewees were asked to evaluate their programme of study and the extent to which they felt it will prepare them for the world of work. All the interviewees reported that the theoretical aspect of their coursework studies was challenging. For some, the difficulty was due to the testing methods that are used during examinations; and for others the difficulty of the coursework was due to lack of academic support. Despite the level of difficulty, the students reported that the theoretical component of their programme is relevant and necessary as it relates to the practical component. In fact, the students reported that without the theory component, they would struggle to perform the practical component of their programme.

Overall, most of the students (with the exception of Nolwazi), felt more comfortable doing practical work which is essentially a work-based learning approach as opposed to a theoretical learning approach. The consensus among the interviewees was that the practical component of their field of study is useful because it provides them with the experience of applying their knowledge to the field and it provides with them opportunities to network with people who work in the related industry.

In evaluating the theoretical component of her programme of study, Sindy shared her satisfaction with her programme of study:

As far as I know, the tourism industry is one of South Africa's fast-growing industries. The course covers various theoretical concepts on how to boost the sector and it even has various courses that will allow me to branch off in different fields in tourism when I decide to look for a job. For example, we cover, the science of tourism, transport tourism, accommodation client services and human relations, how to create sustainable tourism in SA and stuff like that. With knowledge in these different fields of tourism, I think that once I have completed my NCV level 4 and post-graduate studies, I will be able to branch off to different fields of tourism and not be restricted to one field.

Nolwazi reported that the practical component of her programme of study could be improved in order to match the theoretical component:

I think the coursework is good because we cover different aspects of hospitality. For the practical side, we struggle quite a bit as hospitality students because the school doesn't have certain equipment that are used in the field. This puts us at a disadvantage because when we're doing prac (practical) work, we have to ask how to use certain equipment that we're expected to know how to use. Sometimes we worry that employers won't consider us when selecting students to do internships at their companies because we are lacking certain skills on the practical aspect of the programme. This is one of my worries because I specialise in Food Preparation. The hospitality industry is high intensity, there is a lot of pressure to prepare food

that is of a high-quality standard and you need to know your way around the equipment that is used to prepare certain dishes.

Thulani claims that the practical component of this programme of study is helpful to him as it provides him with an opportunity to network with people in industry:

I like the fact that we get to go out to the field. Not only are we given an opportunity to apply what we've learnt in class to the field, we are also given an opportunity to interact with people who work in the industry. I've found this very useful because I get to ask them questions about their job and advice about the type of jobs and internships that I should be on the lookout for.

Based on this response, it can be argued that Thulani views the practical component of his programme of study as a labour market pathway for him to develop connections with people in the industry. For him, the ability to develop networks with people in the industry creates access to information regarding employment opportunities in the industry. With that said, it can be understood that as a prospective graduate, Thulani, regards the practical work experience in his programme of study as the second step of the labour market process as he is able to learn about employment opportunities in his field, pre-market.

In continuing with the evaluation of their programme of study, some of the interviewees felt as though the academic support from the lecturers could be improved to better prepare them for the labour market. Mainly, the Finance, Economics and Accounting students explained how the shortage of staff members in their field of study has negatively affected their learning experience. According to Phumzile, the lack of staff members makes her feel as though she must self-teach herself certain subjects. She noted:

You can ask any finance student and they'll tell how difficult our programme is. Not only because of the level of difficulty of the coursework, but because we don't have lecturers for certain subjects. Because there are staff members who aren't knowledgeable in certain subjects, they bring in postgraduate students from Rhodes to help us with those subjects. In my opinion I think that these courses should not be taught if there is no one who's going to teach those courses. We're in somewhat at a disadvantage as finance students because we must self-teach ourselves certain sections due to lack of staff. At times you don't even know if you're learning the content properly because there's no one to ask to clarify what you don't understand. Sometimes I feel like I am studying this qualification via correspondence because of the shortage of staff.

Thembi, (another Finance, Economics and Accounting student) added to what Phumzile reported:

Sometimes when the Rhodes University students come to help us, we have to work according to their availability because they are also students. They sometimes have tests and exams; so,

they're not always available to do the tutoring services. This ends up affecting our studies because we have to prepare for our tests and exams without receiving that extra help.

Buhle reported on how absenteeism of staff affects her studies:

Sometimes lecturers will be absent without telling us beforehand. So, we end up coming to campus only to find that class is cancelled. This ends up affecting us because we end up being behind with the syllabus and when it's close to exams, the lecturer wants to make up for lost time by rushing through the coursework. We end up having gaps in our knowledge with certain courses because the lecturer was not consistent in their teaching.

5.5.3 Employment pathways from PSET to industry

As part of the investigation of evaluating the students' perceptions of whether the college creates employment pathways to industry, the interview schedule required the students to provide some insight into the career guidance services that EMC offers. All interviewees reported that the college does not offer specialised services that relate to career guidance. In other words, the college does not provide services relating to assistance with career choices or job opportunities in their related field of study. The interviewees did however note that the college hosts a career fair once a year where prospective employers come to the college to inform the student body about employment opportunities and internships that their companies provide. When asked whether the career fairs were informative, all students expressed that the career fairs provide limited information relating to the various questions that the students had relating to job opportunities because they had limited time with them during the career guidance presentations.

The interviewees were asked whether they would find having career guidance services useful to them. In response, the students unanimously agreed that not having a career guidance officer was a disadvantage to them gaining access to information about employment opportunities. Buhle expressed her dissatisfaction about not having a career guidance service to facilitate their employment search as final-year students:

Having a career guidance office would be so helpful because there are a lot of opportunities that we miss out on with regarding internships and jobs. Having someone who specialises in helping us find jobs, especially as final year students would be very helpful because we have so many questions about finding jobs. Some of us don't even know where to start when it comes to looking for jobs.

Thulani notes that having career guidance services is an important aspect of academic support, particularly for first-year students:

Not only would it be helpful in finding a job, but I also think it would have been a great help when we were in our first year making subject choices because a lot of us come here just for the sake of being at school and we are unsure of what we want to do when we get here. As a result, some end up enrolling for courses that they don't enjoy because we were unaware of what each course entails and what type of jobs we could get in that career field.

For Sindy, the career fairs that the college hosts are not as informative as she would like them to be as they tend to focus on students who are in their final year:

I don't find the career fairs helpful at all. These people only come once a year and they tend to focus on people who are in final year. I usually don't go because I know that whatever it is that they will be presenting isn't related to me because I'm not in my final year.

Adding to Sindy's views of the career fairs that the school hosts, Thembi responded:

People from industry only come once in a while and even when they do have presentations about internships, we often get to ask questions because they are only here for a limited time. When people apply for internships or jobs, they often get discouraged because it is so competitive because they (employers) usually pick the students with the top marks. Sometimes I feel like the only way you can get a job is if you know someone in high places.

In reflecting on these responses (among others), it is evident that the students do not have "full and perfect knowledge of the market" as proposed by the neo-classical view as they have expressed that they do not have full information on jobs that are available in their fields of study. According to them, having a service that provides them with information on available jobs and internships would ensure a smooth transition into the labour market. In other words, market forces do not and cannot operate effectively in the absence of a range of social and institutional factors.

Following the investigation on the services that EMC offers relating to career guidance, the interviewees were asked whether they had actively started to look for a job and whether they were aware of the different avenues of seeking employment. All interviewees answered that they have not been active in their job search. Part of the reason why they have not begun with their employment search is because they had limited information of the different platforms that are available for them to find jobs.

There was a consistent pattern in the responses from the final-year students. The three final-year students that were interviewed for this study reported that they had not yet looked for a job because they perceived their qualification as an entry-level qualification. They all reported that they would rather further their studies at a university or university of technology once they have completed their studies as opposed to entering the labour market with their NCV level-4 qualification. The reasons to why they will opt for furthering their studies as opposed to integrating into the labour market were quite similar as they responded that they wanted high-paying jobs as opposed to entry-level jobs that require a NCV level-4 certification.

Buhle believes that she would become more employable if she studied further than a NCV level-4 qualification:

I haven't thought of looking for a job yet because right now, I'm applying to tertiary to study towards a diploma. I know that with my NCV level 4 qualification, the chances of me getting a good paying job are not good. That's why I would rather start looking for a job once I have gotten a diploma. Although there's pressure for me to get a job and assist financially at home, I know that I can contribute more at home if I add onto my current qualification. The good paying jobs are those that want people with degrees and diplomas. The only job opportunities that I know of that are available for people with a level-4 (NCV level-4 qualification) are internships which pay very little.

Adding to Buhle's comment, Thembi responded:

My goal has always been to get a degree in accountancy. If I were to apply for a job right now, the type of job that I would get would probably be related to bookkeeping or admin work. I want to be an accountant so that I can make more money to help at home.

Thulani noted that the competitive nature of the labour market requires him to study further:

When we graduate, we will be competing with people who have degrees. Even though we have work experience and they don't, it doesn't count for much because our qualification level is not on their level. I want to study for a diploma so that I can have better opportunities when looking for a job. That way I can have both work experience from my level-4 and a diploma which is a higher qualification.

Based on these responses, it is evident that the TVET college students perceive their position in the labour market in competition with university/university of technology graduates even though they have a different skill set from them that is relevant in the labour market. It is argued here that this perception is based on the fact that interviewees are unaware of the different segments of the graduate labour market and how each segment has different characteristics and behaviour rules. In other words, the TVET college students compare their skills set to higher education graduates because they are

uninformed of the way in which the structure of the labour market is segmented according to post-secondary school qualification. In addition, they are misinformed that their qualification relates to a specific segment of the labour market that requires the high-level skills that they acquire from their qualification. Lastly, this illustrates that the students are unaware of the different segments of the labour market and how each economic sector requires a specific skill set.

5.5.4 Students' job aspirations

In gaining more insights into the interviewees' labour market perceptions, the students were asked what type of employment they anticipate and to provide reasons for this anticipation. The majority of the interviewees answered that they anticipate permanent employment because of employee benefits such as pension funds, medical aid cover and a guaranteed stable income that permanent employment offers. Two interviewees answered that they would rather go into entrepreneurship. The other four answered that they would rather work in the public sector or the private sector as opposed to the NGO sector or entrepreneurship due to the unpredictable and sometimes low wage rates that those sectors offer. Nolwazi explained why her job aspirations relate to entrepreneurship:

I want to run my own business in hospitality that provides services in catering for big functions such as weddings, funerals or birthday parties. Having my own company would be better than working for someone because I get to decide what I do with the profits of my business rather than having to work for someone who will get the most gains in the business and then decide to pay me less. Another reason why I want to have my own business is because I want to help create jobs back home.

Thulani prefers to work for the public sector because of the networking opportunities that are available in the public sector:

I want to work for the public sector rather than the private sector. I think that working under government will allow me to grow network connections for when I decide to start my own business. Also, if I start by working for government, I will be known in the tourism industry which means that it will be easier to get tenders when I apply for them.

The interviewees were asked whether geographical boundaries would influence their ability to seek employment in different regions. Most students answered that the geographical location of a particular job would influence whether they accept the job or not as they have particular preferences of where they want to work. None of the interviewees want to work in rural areas, most of want to work in cities or towns that are close to their birthplaces as they want to be close to family. In contrast to the neo-classical theory that proposes that workers are perfectly mobile, the students' responses

show that mobility and geographical location decisively influences experiences of integrating in the labour market.

In evaluating the interviewees' knowledge of the post-apartheid labour market and the legislative frameworks that seek to protect workers and advance labour market opportunities for historically marginalized social groups, the students were asked whether they had any knowledge of the labour laws (discussed above) and whether they felt that affirmative action measures would advantage them in attaining employment or to climb the job ladder. None of the interviewees viewed affirmative action measures as an advantage in gaining employment opportunities or climbing the job ladder in the labour market. Instead, many of them shared similar sentiments as they presumed that there are various barriers that will influence their advancement in the labour market. For example, according to Thembi, affirmative measures will not increase her access in the labour market:

I don't think that I will benefit from affirmative action because at the end of the day it's just a policy. People in management positions are very biased when it comes to picking graduates for jobs. They will employ people that they want because corruption and nepotism is something that will always make it easier for you to get a job.

5.5.5 Students' perceptions of the pre-market and in-market

In relation to the interpretation of the purpose of the EEA, the students were asked whether they anticipated experiencing any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and other forms of discrimination during their employment tenure when they are in the labour market. A common trend in the responses amongst the female interviewees showed that they felt as though their gender and race could have the ability to prevent them from climbing job ladders as they felt as that management positions in their industry fields were dominated by males. Whereas the only male interviewee of the study did not anticipate experiencing any forms of discrimination once in industry.

In relation to the SDA, the interviewees were asked whether they expected to develop the skills with which they enter the labour market once they are employed. Most of the interviewees answered that, in addition to gaining work experience in the field, they anticipate developing their skills when working with their prospective employers. Generally, the students associated skills development in the workplace with opportunities of climbing job ladders in the workplace. Phumzile elaborated on the importance of skills development in her career field:

It is necessary to develop skills as you work because you can't only be limited in the set of skills that you acquired in college. After I get my diploma, I want to study part time when I work and upgrade my diploma to a degree so that I can get promotions that will lead me to managerial positions in the workplace.

Overall, the discussion on the perceptions of TVET college students at EMC demonstrates the way in which the students' conceptualisation of the labour market is based on interactive forces that relate to socio-economic determinants. These determinants influence their motives for studying further at a PSET institution as well as the way in which they view how socio-political forces are the central determinants of the structure and organisation of employment opportunities in the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Using a socio-economic approach to the study of labour markets, the overall aim of this research was to understand the labour market perceptions of TVET college students at EMC by identifying the various factors that shape their views about employment opportunities in the labour market. In addition, the research sought to investigate whether the students felt adequately trained to integrate into the labour market with their prospective NCV qualification. Specifically, the research was contextualised within the third-generation LMS theoretical framework in order to provide multi-causal explanations of the various factors that influence the interviewees' understanding of the structure and organisation of employment opportunities in the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification.

The underlying dispute between LMS theorists and neo-classical theorists is largely based upon conceptions of understanding labour markets as social institutions. In contrast to the neo-classical view of the labour market as an exclusively economic institution that is free from socio-political factors, the findings of this study support the third-generation LMS approach of the way in which socio-political factors such as social class, education level and economic status influences access to the labour market as well as perceptions of employability in the labour market.

The findings of this study showed that the interviewees had similar socio-economic backgrounds. With all the interviewees coming from poor, underdeveloped areas, five of the interviewees, with the exception of Thembi, attended poorly-performing schools where social conditions of not conducive learning experiences, teenage pregnancy and peer pressure influenced the students' academic performance, which resulted in them not completing their secondary studies. Ultimately, their failure to complete secondary school studies was affected by socio-political conditions. In attempts to access the labour market with their low education levels, the findings of the study showed that many of the students struggled to find jobs, or if they did, the jobs that they found were in the lower end of the labour market. As a result, the interviewees became discouraged work seekers.

The difficulty of finding work in the labour market, as well as their households' financial circumstances, motivated the students to enrol at a TVET college to continue with their secondary studies. With their social conditions of being unemployable, the students sought to further their studies with hopes of changing their low economic status. Drawing on the discussion of structural and youth unemployment, the interviewees' responses support the notion that having insufficient

skills and qualifications limits employment opportunities, as they were all NEET prior to enrolling at EMC.

TVET colleges are expected to fulfil the second step of the labour market process by connecting students with prospective employers in their relevant field. The findings of the study showed that the students viewed the employment pathways that the college creates as insufficient in assisting them in integrating into the labour market. The students were of the view that more could be done by the college to ensure a smoother transition into the labour market. The lack of academic support and career guidance initiatives are the issues of concern that the students have with regard to the college assisting them in obtaining information about jobs that are available in the relevant industries. This perception disputes the competitive theory proposed by the orthodox approach that makes a flawed assumption that workers and employers possess complete knowledge of the labour market. The findings of the study showed that the students do not have full knowledge of the labour market as most of them reported that they lack information regarding available jobs for their prospective qualifications and they have limited information regarding the various platforms that they can use for their job search.

Due to not having perfect knowledge of the availability of employment opportunities in the first segment of the graduate labour market, the students at EMC perceived their NCV qualification as an entry-level qualification in the labour market. Most importantly, the interviewees are of the view that they must obtain a higher qualification such as a degree or diploma in order to gain access to higher paying jobs in the graduate labour market.

The students were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with their programme of study by commenting on whether they feel employable or prepared for the labour market with the skills that they developed in their practical component and theoretical component of their programme of study. The Finance, Economics and Accounting students were of the view that the theoretical component of their programme of study could be improved if the college had enough staff to teach certain subjects in their programme. As a result, they were of the view that their theoretical knowledge has gaps because certain subjects were self-taught due to lack of staff members who specialise in those subjects. The Hospitality student noted that the practical component of her programme of study had shortcomings as the college lacked the equipment that is used by industry. This student was of the view that this made her less employable as she felt that employers would not employ her due to her lack of knowledge of using certain equipment in the industry.

In assessing the students' perceptions of the post-apartheid labour market, they were asked to comment whether they thought that affirmative action measures would advance them in attaining employment opportunities or climb job ladders. Overall, the students were of the view that affirmative action measures would not play an integral part in attaining employment opportunities or climb job ladders. Regarding in-market labour market opportunities, the female students were of the view that they are most likely to experience discrimination on the grounds of race and gender whereas the male student did not anticipate to experience any form of discrimination in those grounds.

The findings of this research show that the interviewees' socio-economic background influenced their choice of enrolling in a PSET institution in order to advance their position in the labour market. In addition, the lack of academic support in their programme of study; lack of information about employment opportunities in the labour market with a post-secondary school qualification are one of the key reasons why the students prefer to study further as opposed to integrating in the labour market with a NCV qualification.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Eastcape Midlands TVET College Students Interview Schedule 2018

Section 1: Respondent Details

- Name and Surname
- Field of Study

Section 2: Demographic Information

- 2.1) How old are you?
- 2.2) What gender do you identify with? *optional*
- 2.3) Which population group do you identify with? (e.g. Black, Coloured, Indian, White)

Section 3: Socio-economic background

- 3.1) Name the province and town where you spent most of your childhood.
- 3.2) Describe the socio-economic conditions of this place (e.g. service delivery etc.)
- 3.3) How many members are in your household?
- 3.4) What is the highest qualification of all of the members in your household?
- 3.5) Who is the bread winner/s in your family?
- 3.7) What is their current occupation?
- 3.8) List the sources of income in your household (e.g. state grants, selling of goods, *stockvels* etc.)
- 3.9) How would you describe your family's economic status?
- 3.10) Have there been any challenges in this regard? Explain these challenges.

Section 4: Educational Background

- 4.1) Describe the type of school you mostly attended (e.g. public, private, and rural)
- 4.2) Did your school have facilities such as computers, internet and the like to help facilitate your learning experience?
- 4.3) If answered no to the above, do you think that having these facilities would have made a difference to your learning experience?
- 4.4) What grade did you stop at school and why?
- 4.5) Explain whether you think that your school prepared you for post-school education and the labour market?

Section 5: Transition from school to post-school

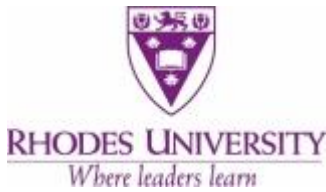
- 5.1) Why did you choose to study after high school?
- 5.2) Was a TVET college your first choice of post-school education?
- 5.3) If answered yes to the above, explain why. If no, explain why not.
- 5.4) What field of study were you interested in when you were in high school? Has this changed?
- 5.5) What factors influenced your choice of study? (E.g. career interest, scholarship/bursary opportunities in this field, employment opportunities etc.)
- 5.6) How are you finding the course?
- 5.7) Do you think that this course needs to be redesigned to cater for the specific skills that industry needs?
- 5.8) Discuss some of the challenges that you face as a TVET college student.
- 5.9) Discuss the quality of resources offered in the college.
- 5.10) Does this college have facilities such as computers, internet and the like to help facilitate your learning experience?
- 5.11) Does the college provide academic counselling, tutoring, extra- classes, mentoring etc?
- 5.12) Does the college provide other forms of services or programmes that cater to student wellness? (e.g. counselling, health centres, sports facilities).
- 5.13) Does the college have career guidance officers that inform the student body about job opportunities, learnerships, internships and graduate programmes?
- 5.14) If no, do you think having these particular services would help you in finding a job?
- 5.15) Have any prospective employers ever come to the college to recruit students or to offer career advice?
- 5.16) What do you think can be done to improve the TVET college sector in general and the Eastcape Midlands Grahamstown college in particular?

Section 6: Transition from post-school education to the labour market

- 6.1) Have you actively started looking for a job?
- 6.2) Are you aware of the different ways there are to find a job? (E.g. word of mouth, online searches, recruitment agencies, advertisements etc.) What are your general impressions of these various options of finding a job and, which option are you going to use when you are looking for a job?
- 6.3) How do you understand the labour market specifically, in South Africa?
- 6.4) Are you aware of the different employment spheres in the labour market? (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary spheres)
- 6.5) What kind of employment do you want? (e.g. permanent, casual, fix-term employment) and why do you want this form of employment?
- 6.6) Where would you like to work? (E.g. town, city, rural area) Why would you prefer to work there?

- 6.7) Which sector would you like to work in and why? (E.g. public, private, NGO, entrepreneurship)
- 6.8) Are you aware of the different affirmative action policies and labour legislation that we currently have in South Africa?
- 6.9) Do you think that these policies will benefit you or hinder you from in securing a job?
- 6.10) What do you think causes unemployment, specifically youth unemployment in South Africa?
- 6.11) Do you think that government is doing enough to solve this challenge?
- 6.12) Do you think that having TVET institutions is a solution to addressing this problem?
- 6.13) What are your thoughts on graduate unemployment?
- 6.14) Do you think that TVET colleges have links to the business world? In other words, is there a direct route from college to a job or graduate programme?
- 6.15) What do you think it means to be an “employable” person?
- 6.16) What type of skills, qualities and abilities do you think a person must have to get a job in your chosen field?
- 6.17) Do you think that the college has equipped you with these skills that are to make you more employable?
- 6.18) Explain as to whether or not you think that having a TVET qualification is an advantage or disadvantage in the labour market as compared to people without a matric, those with matric and those with a university degree.
- 6.19) Do you feel as though the college has prepared you with employable skills for the labour market? If not, what do you think needs to be done to improve the current skills that are taught?
- 6.20) When it comes to the conception of the labour market, what would you say is the general of bias in the labour market?
- 6.21) Do you think that the labour market has some form of discrimination (e.g. racial, ethnic, sex and gender, etc.)? If yes, explain what forms of discrimination are evident in the labour market.
- 6.22) Would you say then, that the conceptions of biases and discrimination influence employment opportunities?
- 6.23) Do you think that employers have a bias towards university graduates? Why do you think this?
- 6.24) Do you think that you are likely to work in the field of your qualification? Explain.
a promotion in your career field?
- 6.25) Do you think you will have an opportunity to progress (climb the job ladder) in this job?
- 6.26) Do you think that having a TVET qualification can help you achieve all of your future aspirations?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



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Participant Consent form (Interviews)

Name of researcher: Nelisa Khambule

Research topic: Labour market perceptions of students at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in South Africa: The case of Eastcape Midlands College, Grahamstown.

Brief description of the research topic: In light of the debates surrounding graduate unemployment, the skills mismatch within the labour market, and a schooling system that fails to deliver good quality education for all, various studies of South Africa's post school education system have been conducted. These studies have paid specific attention to the notion of employability among young graduates as well as their opportunities in the labour market. The proposed research seeks to understand the labour market perceptions of EMC TVET college students and to identify the various factors that inform and shape their views.

Declaration

1. I confirm that the purpose of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally or in writing.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason - however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
3. I understand that data collected during the study, will be used by the researcher and that my personal details gathered during this research, especially my name or identity, will be kept private.
4. I agree to be interviewed and to allow audio or video recordings and transcriptions to be made of the interview.

5. I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the report is written.

Signature of participant:

Signature of the researcher:

Date: