Students' perceptions of their employability as revealed by their understandings of the South African Labour Market.

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ABSTRACT

The state of the South African labour market is characterized −among other things− by inequalities and the chronic issue of unemployment, with a rate that has come up to 27.7% in the third quarter of 2017. Considering this, unemployment in South Africa is explained by numerous authors as a structural issue. In a sense that unemployed people do not have the skills required by the labour market. But, since education attainment improves an individuals' employment prospects and outcome. It would be expected that people with higher education would have high prospects of getting employment. Yet, people with higher education qualifications also face challenges of obtaining employment. Even though research finds that graduate unemployment is not as bad when compared to general and overall unemployment of the country. It still remains that skills shortages and/or mismatch are deemed to be the main contributor of the South African graduate unemployment. Existing research finds that just as the labour market is characterized with differences on the grounds of gender and race. This also reflects on how graduates enter the labour market. With the white race having more employment outcomes than blacks and males than females.

It is against this background that this dissertation set out to explore what Rhodes University final-year students' −who are nearing the transition from varsity to the labour market− perceive to be their employment prospects and outcomes. Taking into consideration the issue of unemployment and inequalities in the labour market. In essence, one of the key issues that the dissertation focuses on, is what students think of their employability based on their understanding of the labour market. More than that, the dissertation investigates how aspects such as the student's field of study, race and gender factor into how students understand the labour market and ultimately how they perceive their employment prospects and outcomes. As a consequence, evidence suggests that students' perceptions of the labour market influences how they perceive their employability. Over and above, the research finds that the students field of study especially, features significantly in how students perceive the labour market and their employability. While race and gender also factored in students' responses, it was not as significant as compared to their field of study respectively. The general finding is that students are well aware of the issues of the labour market and are concerned about the implications of these issues on their employability. This awareness and concern varied based on students' field of study, race and gender.

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CHAPTER ONE

THESIS INTRODUCTION

The research focus stems from the discourse of employability and the issue of unemployment (particularly, graduate unemployment) as one of the trends of the South Africa labour market. Existing literature claims that unemployment is a concern for the policy makers and labour market participants. In addition to this, one may argue that the issue of unemployment ought to be a cause for concern to final-year students as they prepare to enter the labour market. In light of the fact that there is an issue of skills mismatch and the idea that a degree alone does not guarantee employment. Also considering that the labour market is plagued with inequalities that can potentially impact their employment outcomes. This dissertation is inspired by this reality to explore the way in which final-year students (completing their undergraduate degree) understand their employability.

To this end, the research concurrently seeks to investigate students' views of the South African labour market. That is, in finding out what students' perceptions are about their employability, the research also seeks to show students' understanding of the South African labour market. Furthermore, the research investigates students' perceptions of their employability and views of the labour market based on their race, gender, and field of study. The research highlights these three factors because they play a vital role (among others) in anyone's entry and occupation in the labour market. As stated by Moleke (2005:6) 'in a labour market marked by differences and inequalities, factors such as race and gender can be expected to play a significant role in an individual's employability.' Therefore, this dissertation provides a discussion of the state of the South African labour market and discourse of employability from Rhodes University's students' point of view.

1.1. STATE OF SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

The contemporary South African labour market is characterized by stark inequalities on the ground of race and gender (among others) and its unemployment trends are a reflection of the labour market of the apartheid era in part (Moleke, 2003-2004; Bhorat & McCord, 2003; Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015). As some changes have been represented by the adjustment of the South African labour market into the global economy (Standing, Sender & Weeks, 1996; Burger & Woolard, 2005; Budget Speech, 2016). According to Patel, Hassen & Paton (2011) an assessment of the South African labour market cannot ignore the racial and gender dimensions inherited from apartheid. During apartheid, racial

discrimination transpired through systemic legislation and rules that favoured the white population over the Africans predominately, Coloured and Indians. As a result, this segregation shaped the structure of the labour market at that time.

In particular, during apartheid the South African labour market was characterized by racial dualism in that there was a 'White' sector and 'Black' sector (Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015; Bhorat & McCord, 2003). This was preceded by a historical process of segmentation in the labour market. In which the distribution of individual jobs and income was determined predominantly by race. As a result, the labour market showed major differences between whites and black workers. Essentially, during apartheid, South Africa had two separate labour markets, one for white labour and one for black labour. Each labour market was regulated by different laws, institutions and, training and allocation of workers to jobs (Bhorat & McCord, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Mariotti, 2009).

Today the South African labour market reflects these discriminations (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2004). Despite the changes that were preceded by various policies and legislation aimed at redressing the injustices of the past. Research still finds that the labour market is still characterised by inequalities and disparities between race and gender most especially. For instance, Moleke (2003-2004) finds that just like in the apartheid labour markets whites, particularly white males dominate high level occupations (i.e. management). Research also finds that while there has been progress in terms of redress, it has been relatively low as Africans and women are still relegated in secondary sectors and occupations with the characteristics of the secondary sectors (Burger & Jafta, 2006; Oosthuizen, 2006). As a result, past inequalities are perpetuated. What is more, is that access to jobs is unequally distributed across different groups and genders as also confirmed by Stats SA reports (Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002; Rankin, et al, 2014). It is against this background that one of the goals of the dissertation is to find out if students are aware of this state of the labour market. And what they think the implications of these inequalities in the labour market are for their employment prospects.

1.2. UNEMPLOYMENT/GRADUATE UNMPLOYMENT

In line with global economic trends, South African unemployment is one of the devastating trends of the South African labour market. According to numerous authors, this unemployment issue is structural. In a sense that there exists a shortage and mismatch of skills. This implies that the unemployed people either have skills that are not necessarily demanded by employers

or they have low skills (Bhorat, 2005; Pauw, Oosthuizen and Westhuizen, 2008). This demand for high skills is explained to be a result of structural shifts of the economy. According to Bhorat (2004) the structural shifts were heralded by −among other changes− the shift in output from the primary sectors towards the service sector and the implementation of technologically more advanced production process. These shifts have since fashioned a high-skills driven labour market which prefers people with high skills, thereby negatively affecting people with low or no skills at all (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999; Bhorat, 2004; Arora & Ricci 2005; Dias & Possel, 2007; Bhorat et al, 2011). This is what is attributed to high levels of unemployment.

Notwithstanding the high rate of unemployment which has come up to 27.7% during the third quarter of 2017 (Stats SA). Several studies pertaining to graduate unemployment have revealed that graduate unemployment is relatively low with a rate of 7.3% (Altbeker & Johnston, 2013; Van Broekhuizen, 2016; Quarterly Labour Force Survey- Q1:2017) when compared to the overall unemployment. These finding are confirmed by the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (quarter 4:2016) which reports that people with higher levels of education participate more in the labour market than those with low or no education at all. However, though the Stats SA report confirms that graduates do get employment by virtue of them having higher education. It also takes cognizance of the inequalities and disparities of job attainment on the grounds of race and gender that confronts graduates. The report submits that males constitute high participation rates than females, and the black population usually has the lowest participation rates, followed by coloureds and the white population being the highest (Oosthuizen, 2006; Labour Force Survey, 2016,2017). This indicates that race is still a factor that determines an individual's labour market entry and success thus perpetuating the already existing inequalities.

Furthermore, despite the evidence that graduate unemployment is better in comparison to overall unemployment (Altbeker & Johnston, 2013; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). It still remains that some graduates encounter challenges in their attempt to enter the labour market. Some research also finds that what causes unemployment amongst graduates, is that they lack experience which is one of the requirements of employers. Pauw *et al* (2008), National Treasury (2011) and Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) amongst other authors submit that employers look for skills and experience. Considering that, employers regard unskilled and inexperienced jobseekers as a risky investment. According to Bhorat, Goga, Ncube and Pauw (2006) Pauw *et al* (2008) there is a mutual agreement from employers that there are enough graduates available in the economy. However, they also do feel that graduates often do not

possess the necessary skills and experience to be considered even for entry level positions (Bhorat et al, 2006; Pauw et al, 2008). This indicates that there are factors that hinder some graduates from entering the labour market. It is on this account that the dissertation seeks to find out if students are aware of these issues and what they think of the impact these issues have on their employment outcomes.

1.3. EMPLOYABILITY

Bernston (2008) and Symington (2012: 1) posits employability has become an important construct and has been existing since the 1900s. The essence (amongst other key features) of employability is that it brings with it a shift in responsibility for career development. Making the employee principally responsible for the investment and on-going development of his/her career (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012). It is largely accepted that the labour market today has put pressure on both the employer and especially the employee that was formerly not there. For instance, nowadays the employer now pursues individuals that are flexible, creative, innovative, adaptable, etc. And the employee bears the brunt to possess these skills in order to be employable (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2005; Bernston, 2008; Wye & Lim, 2009; Symington, 2012; Tymon, 2013).

This means that the individual has to be well-rounded in order to make it into the labour market and can no longer rely solely on the attainment of a degree when it comes to securing employment (Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012; Wye & Lim, 2009). This also means that any individual who is looking for employment must have these qualities, competencies and skills that are recognised and demanded by employers. Failing which, one may be unemployable according to the definition of skills mismatch and skills shortages. Which entails that people are not employed because they lack the skills needed by employers. Again, it is against this background that the dissertation set out to investigate what students, as future labour market participants think of their chances of being employed. The underscoring assumption is that students' belief of their employability is informed by their understanding of the labour market they aspire to enter in their near future.

1.4. MOTIVATION OF STUDY

This study is inspired by the three above mentioned subject matters (state of South African labour market, graduate/unemployment and employability). Given that these subject matters play a role in determining peoples' employment prospects and outcomes. Considering things like the issue of skills mismatch/shortage as a cause for unemployment, the changing nature of

the labour market which has shifted the responsibility from employers to employees to develop their employability. And the fact that while higher education qualifications are of high value, they are no longer in and of themselves sufficient to secure employment (Saunders & Zyzel 2010). It becomes interesting to find out how students (as future participants of the labour force) prepare for the labour market.

Most studies investigate the perceptions of graduates who are already in the labour market, who most likely give their responses based on their experience of the labour market. But the dissertation finds it equally important to investigate students' perceptions of the labour market and their employability while they still prepare for entry into the labour market. Doing this will help understand their idea of the labour market and how it influences how they prepare for it, in order to make themselves employable. Since the responsibility lies with them to make themselves employable. However, it is worth noting at this stage that the study is in no way taking any particular stance, except to cast light on the idea that students have of the labour market (though they are still outsiders of the labour market). As well as how their understanding of the labour market influences how they prepare for the labour market.

1.5. GOALS OF RESEARCH

The principal goal of research is to explore and understand final-year students' views/perceptions of the labour market and what students think about their chances of entering the labour market (in essence, their employability). This will help understand the labour market young people/students actually have in mind and how it informs their beliefs of their employability. Fundamentally, the thesis wants to find out (i) what students know about the labour market, (ii) how they view their employability (what they think of their chances of being employed) based on their understanding of the labour market. (iii) And to find out if factors such as race, gender and field of study feature into how students view the labour market and their employability. It was interesting to find out that indeed student views differed on grounds of race, gender and degree in one way or the other, though not always. Sometimes all three factors factored into the students' response but sometimes it was just one or two factors.

1.6. DISSERTATION OUTLINE

In accordance with the attempt of the dissertation to achieve the abovementioned goals. The dissertation is divided into seven parts and is structured as follows. Chapter two briefly encapsulates the theory that informs the dissertation. It also reviews the literature and existing research that pertains to the state of the South African labour market and unemployment as the

major trend of the labour market, as well as the discourse of the of employability. This is followed by chapter three, which outlines the research design that was espoused for the purposes of gleaning information that was needed to achieve the research goals. Following this, are the four chapters that discuss the data gathered. Chapter four is the first chapter that illustrates in tables the demographics of the sampled students in order to give a background of who the students are and to illustrate the distribution of the respondents based on their gender, race and gender.

The two following chapters (five and six) focus on the descriptive report (using tables) of data as was gathered in respect of the students' views of labour market and their perceptions of their employability. Since the objective of this dissertation is to analyse what students views of the labour market and how these ideas influence the perceptions of their employability. It was imperative first to explore the students' views about the labour market (described in chapter five). Before seeking to understand how these views informed their perceptions of their employability (described in chapter six). Chapter seven provides the actual analysis of the data in relation to the literature reviews in chapter two. Finally, chapter eight draws a conclusion of the entire chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The dissertation is concerned with the discourse of employability and the issue of graduate unemployment in the South African labour market. Therefore, the research focus stems from the literature on these subject matters. This chapter consists of two parts, the first being on the state of the South African labour market which will be discussed through the lens of the Segmented labour market (SLM) theory as the theoretical framework informing the study. The second part will focus on existing literature of employability as the driving topic of the research. Both these sections are key to the ultimate goal of answering the main research question. Which aims to explore students' perceptions of their employability based on their understandings of the labour market. It is knowing what the state of the labour market is that we can understand students views of it. Similarly, it is in knowing what employability entails that we can comprehend what students perceive of it. Considering that, this chapter will engage the literature accordingly.

This chapter is divided into six sections, some of which will comprise of subsections. The first section encapsulates the theoretical framework that informs this dissertation. This will be followed by the discussion of the state of the South African labour market (focusing on pre-1994 and post-1994) as the focal context of the research. The dissertation acknowledges that there are numerous trends of the South African labour market or of any labour market for that matter. However, focus will be cast on a few trends that inform this research (unemployment-youth unemployment especially, inequalities/discrimination in the labour market). Thereafter, the concept of employability is analyzed as the main discourse that animated this research. This will be followed by the discussion of the studies of employability most of which are international studies. Fundamentally, the chapter will first discuss literature on the state of the South African labour market and the issue of unemployment in South Africa and consequently analyze the discourse of employability. It is worth noting that though this chapter will provide an overview of these sections, it will mainly focus on the literature in respect of graduates or university students as the main impetus of the research.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Fleetwood (2006, 2008), there are two broad models that account for the labour market: (i) the orthodox model that is grounded in the mainstream economic theory and (ii) a variety of heterodox socioeconomic accounts. The former is rooted in a neo-classical economic framework, which likens the labour market with the market for any products (Cassim, 1982, Fleetwood, 2006,2008; White, 2010). The orthodox economist sees labour markets in the same way they see all markets; as places of exchange upon which prices are set (Fleetwood, 2006.2008). Where it concerns labour markets, their theories are largely about the impact of labour markets on wage rates (Cassim, 1982). Cassim (1982), White (2010), Berlinski and Manacorda (2011) among others, explain that these theories accept that the price of the thing being sold in the labour market is regulated by laws of supply and demand. According to Berlinski and Manacorda (2011) law of supply and demand refers to how the availability of a particular product and the demand for that product has one price. In essence, a low supply and a high demand increases price, whereas, the higher the supply and the lower the demand, the lower the price will fall (Berlinski & Manacorda, 2011). This is the core premise of the Orthodox economists' approach.

Conversely, the heterodox approach, is a body of socioeconomic theorists who are all rooted firmly in the idea that the labour market is segmented as a result of social structures amongst other factors (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998; Fleetwood, 2006, 2008; White, 2010). They all reject ideas advocated for by the Orthodox model which also consists of the neoclassical theories. Fleetwood (2006) explains that the socio-economists appear committed to the general idea that whatever labour markets are, they cannot operate without institutions and or social structures that establish and perpetuate disparities in the labour market. According to Cain (1976) one of the socioeconomic theories is the Segmented Labour Market (SLM) theory which will be used to refer to the heterodox approach throughout the dissertation. Cassim (1982) explains that the SLM theory provides a better explanatory framework and generates greater insight into the issue of poverty and discrimination confronting the labour market in South Africa.

This is because, unlike the neoclassical analysis, the SLM theory takes cognisance of a broad range of factors in the labour market analysis, such as social structures, institutional aspects, race and gender, among others (Reich, Gordon & Edwards, 1973; Cassim, 1982; White, 2010). For this reason, that Cassim (1989) and (Fleetwood, 2006) submit that the SLM theory is an alternative to neoclassical analysis and it provides a useful basis to analyse the South African

labour market. The dissertation adopts the SLM theory to analyse students' understanding of the labour market and how these views have shape how they perceive their employability. This theory is especially appropriate because the study also investigates how factors such as race and gender have a bearing on how students view their chances of getting employment. This goal of this research will be qualified by the SLM theory which, unlike the neoclassical analysis, also takes cognisance of these factors in analysing the labour market amongs others.

2.2.1. Human Capital Theory (HCT) as a tenet of the orthodox approach

The Human Capital theory derives from the neoclassical approach which assumes that individuals seek to maximize their own economics interest (Tan, 2014:412). According to neoclassical theory the market for labour is determined like any other commodity, that is, by the intersection of demand and supply curves. On the demand side firms view labour in terms of its productive quality. On the supply side is the human capital theory which entails that employment and wages are determined by the skills or educational attainment level that an individual has (Cassim, 1989: 2). Hence, supply and demand jointly determine wage levels and employment. Therefore, it is left to the individual to increase their productivity through prolonged education and learning on the job (Cassim, 1982; Biddle & Holden, 2014; Tan, 2014). It is for this reason, that the neo-classical theory would argue that the poor remain poor because they lack marketable skills or have failed to invest in themselves (Cassim, 1982). This indicates that education and skills have economic value and people who invest in education have good employment outcomes (Biddle & Holden, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tittenbrun, 2017).

This rationale is explained better by the Human Capital theory which claims that individuals invest in education and training with the hope of obtaining employment and higher income (Tan, 2014; Tittenbrun, 2017). The basic prediction of the Human capital is that there exists a positive correlation between education, training and earnings (Cassim, 1982; Biddle & Holden, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tittenbrun, 2017). According, Margison (1989,1993 cited in Tan, 2014: 422) 'the line of assumptions in HCT goes as follows: the individual acquires knowledge and skills through education and training that is human capital. These knowledge and skills will increase higher productivity in the workplace. This increased productivity will bring a higher salary to the individual since the wage of a person in the ideal labour market is determined by the person's productivity.' In light of this set of assumptions, the logic of HCT becomes clear that education and training increase human capital and leads to a higher productivity rate, which in

turn bring a higher wage to the individual (Biddle & Holden, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tittenbrun, 2017:41).

However, according to Bowles and Gintis (1975: 78) Cassim (1989), Biddle & Holden (2014), Tan (2014), Tittenbrun (2017: 41) assert that this theory may questionably be true on some parts. But just like the orthodox theory of the labour market, it tends to circumvent social barriers and inequalities that exist within the labour market and that impact the access to education or the skill that ensure good employment prospects. This sentiment is confirmed by the Stats SA (2016) and some existing research that shows that education is generally good insurance against unemployment. As it increases access to decent job, which may not necessarily be gained by people with lower education attainment (Branson & Leibbrandt, 2013.

However, despite this, existing research also finds that employment prospects and outcomes of the people who invest in higher education (such as graduates) are impacted by factors such race and gender. This indicates that though education increases job prospects, there are other factors that impact employment outcomes. Meaning people may not find employment even though they have the relevant skills and education. Hence, Tan (2014) argues that, HCT created the illusion that education can solve any kind of problems on its own. But evidence exposes the weaknesses that the theory has, one being, that it considers the exogenous variables that not totally within the control of the individuals control. It is for this reason that this theory has always been the subject of bitter criticism from the very beginning (Tan, 2014:411).

2.2.2. Critique of Human Capital Theory

It has been argued that the analysis provided by the HCT as the tenet of the neoclassical theory is flawed (Bowles & Gintis, 1975: 78; Cain, 1976; Cassim (1982); Biddle & Holden (2014), Tan (2014), Tittenbrun (2017: 41)**.** Cassim (1982) argues that to simply correlate education with earnings is highly misleading, since there are significant wage differences within occupations despite the level of skills. For instance, men workers are paid more than their women counterparts even though they have the same level of education or set of skills (Bhorat & Goga, 2012; Naidoo, Stanwix & Yu, 2014). For this reason, some critics assert that one must turn to the structure of the labour market to determine wage differences for the same occupation and level of human capital that individuals possess (Bowles and Gintis. 1975: 78; Cassim, 1982; Biddle & Holden, 2014; Tan, 2014; Tittenbrun, 2017:41). However, the HCT falls short of this analysis because it solely focusses on educational attainment and does not take heed of the variables that create variations within occupations and wages.

Furthermore, Cassim (1982) explains that the fact that a large number of variables, such as race, class, sex and age are outside of an individual's control results in different amounts of human capital being obtained within different groups of people in society. Bowles & Gintis (1975) 'confirm this point by maintaining that the process of individual choice aggregation −even if it is relevant to educational change− works within economic limitations determined by almost entirely outside of the consumers and citizens arena of choice.' By this Cassim (1982) argues that the economic inequality is not merely a result of individual differences in skills and ability, but it is a structural aspect of existing society. Again, the HCT fails to realise this, hence the SLM theory is an appropriate alternative to the HCT. Given that it (SLM theory) recognizes the variables outside an individual's control that factor into one's entry in the labour market and the distribution of employment based on occupations and wages.

However, despite its short comings and imperfections it would be fair to realize that it is still a strong theory for as long as it sees education as the key to success **(**Tan, 2014: 436). Hence, as maintained by Cassim (1982) until an attempt is made to incorporate both economic and extra economic variables, neoclassical explanations (including the HCT) will be subject to limited explanatory power. It is in light of this, that the dissertation cannot apply the HCT. It fails to account for the factors (race, gender among others) that the dissertation is interested in investigating. However, these are the weaknesses and limitations which plague neoclassical theories and given that the neoclassical framework fails to explain the persistent problems of inequality, race and sex discrimination. This led to the emergence of the SLM theory, which argued to be the appropriate alternative of analysing the labour market (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998; Fleetwood, 2006; White, 2010). It is for this reason that the thesis elects the SLM theory as a theoretical framework.

2.2.3. Segmented Labour Market Theory (SLM theory)

SLM theory has been identified with a group of economists who challenge the classical explanation of the working of the labour market. And claim that both the neo-classical and classical approach leave unexplained many key labour market policy issues (i.e. the dispersion of wages and as a result income distribution, unemployment and discrimination) (Cassim, 1998; Leontaridi,1998). It is this central accusation against the neoclassical theory that lies at the heart of the SLM theory (Leontaridi,1998). This theory insists on the fragmented nature of labour market and the importance of institutional and social influences on employment and wages Cassim, 1982; Leontaridi,1998; Fleetwood, 2006,2008; White, 2010). Unlike the

neoclassical theorists the SLM theory moves the emphasis away from the supply side of the LM and places the focus on the demand side (Cassim, 1989; Leontaridi, 1998; White, 2010). According to White (2010: 97) SLM theory is founded on the logic that 'labour demand and thus labour employment are governed by forces independent of society's capacity to produce.' This approach rejects the notion that employment, unemployment and real wages can adequately be explained by reference of the labour market only. On the contrary, these phenomena must be explained by reference to forces outside the market (Reich et al, 1973; Cassim, 1989; Leonataridi, 1998, Fleetwood, 2006).

Furthermore, while the neoclassical theory assumes that individual workers can freely make a choice among a wide range of job options in the labour, by investing on education based on their preferences and thus receive rewards for their human capital accordingly (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998; White, 2010). The SLM theory on the other hand argues that labour market is not a single competitive market. But rather characterised of a variety of non-competing segments between which rewards to human capital vary. Because institutional barriers hinder some parts of the population from benefitting equally from education and training (Cassim, 1989; Leonataridi, 1998). It is argued further that vulnerable groups of workers may become stuck in the lower segment of the labour market thereby restraining the mobility of employees between the lower and upper segments (Cassim, 1989; Leonataridi, 1998). It is for this reason that the supply side explanations of human capital theory regarding the operation of the labour market are rejected and replaced by a more demand-oriented theory (Cassim, 1989). While the Human capital theory focusses of education and skills attainment, the SLM theory focussed on the mobility of employers in the labour market. Hence what emerges as the crux of the SLM approach is the idea that the segments that exists are not parallel to skill differentiators in the labour market, but rather that institutional rules create barriers in the labour market (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998).

With that said, the SLM theory, opposes the neoclassical analysis. It rejects it on the grounds that it fails to take cognizance of the entrenched inequalities and existing barriers in the labour market (Cssim, 1982; Uys & Blauuw, 2006 Fleetwood, 2006, 2008; White, 2010). The SLM theory claims that the labour market is segmented and noticeably different from other competitive markets (Fleetwood, 2006:59). This segmentation arises because of the existence of barriers generated by geographical, occupational and institutional factors as well as gender, race and age factors (Reich et al, 1973; Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998, Fleetwood, 2006; Uys & Blaauw, 2006). Furthermore, this theory maintains that because of these inequalities

and barriers, the labour market is broken into more distinct sectors; primary sector and secondary sector. Thus, the notion of a homogenous labour market claimed by the neoclassical theorists is rejected (Cassim, 1982). Contrary to the neoclassical ideas the SLM theory holds that labour market does not operate in an open market whereby all jobs are simply available to those who bid for them (Reich et al, 1973; Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998, Fleetwood, 2006; Uys & Blaauw, 2006). In fact, there are institutional and social forces/rules that severely impede mobility (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 19986).

Edwards *et al* (1973) gives what one may think of as a profound explanation of the different segments of the LM. They maintain that the present labor market conditions can most usefully be understood as the outcome of four segmentation processes. These segments may cut horizontally across the occupational hierarchy as well as vertically (Edwards, et al, 1973). To this end, Edwards et al (1973) outline four segments, namely: (i*) segmentation into Primary and Secondary markets*, (ii) *segmentation within the primary secto*r, (iii) *segmentation by Race*, (iv) *segmentation by Sex*. According to Edwards et al (1973) under the *segmentation into Primary and secondary markets*, these markets are differentiated mainly by stability characteristics. Primary jobs require and develop stable working habits; skills are often acquired on the job; wages are relatively high; and job ladders exist.

Secondary jobs do not require and often discourage stable working habits; wages are low; turnover is high; and job ladders are few (Edward et al, 1973; Cassim, 1982; Uys & Blaauw, 2006). Again, secondary jobs are mainly (though not exclusively) filled by minority workers, women, and youth present labor market conditions can most usefully be understood as the outcome of four segmentation processes (Cassim, 1982; Uys & Blaauw, 2006). On top of that, Edwards et al, 1973, explain that even under the primary market there are further divisions which they refer to as sub-ordinate and "independent" primary jobs. Subordinate primary jobs are routinized and encourage personality characteristics of dependability, discipline, responsiveness to rules and authority, and acceptance of a firm's goals (Edwards et al, 1973). Both factory and office jobs are present in this segment. In the contrary, independent primary jobs encourage and require creative, problem- solving, and self-initiating attributes and often have professional standards for work. Voluntary turnover is high and individual motivation and achievement are highly rewarded (Edwards et al, 1973).

Moreover, under the *segmentation by race*, the notion is that minority workers face distant segments within the secondary, subordinate and independent primary sub-markets (Reich et al,

1973). Certain jobs are what Gordon *et al* (1973) calls “race-typed," segregated by prejudice and by labor market institutions and geographic separation plays an important role in maintaining divisions between race segments. Whereas under the *segmentation by gender*: Certain jobs have generally been limited to men but others to women. For instance, wages in the female segment are usually lower than in comparable male jobs; female jobs often need and encourage a "serving mentality" an orientation toward providing services to other people and particularly to men (Edwards et al, 1973). Cassim (1982:7) explains that many workers are not likely to enter the primary labour market especially those with poor work histories, low education and blacks particularly black women. This segmentation plays out in the labour market of South Africa both historically and contemporarily as will be discussed below.

In general, SLM theories focus on barriers of mobility, as opposed to human capital theorists who simply focus on the acquisition of human capital. Thus, the important contribution of the SLM theory is that it distinguishes between the primary and secondary sectors and the lack of mobility between them (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1996). This means that the nature of such markets is more adequately explained by institutional and structural forces than narrow economic variables as in the neoclassical approach. For this reason, Cassim (1982) contends that the contribution that the SLM theory offers a potentially better explanatory framework. In light of that, the SLM theory has been elected to inform the entire dissertation. Because it allows for the analysis of the labour market as influenced by factors such as race and gender (among others). In essence, the dissertation explores how these factors influence how final year students picture the labour market and thus what they believe about their employment prospects,

2.2.4. Segmented Labour Market Theory and the South African Labour Market

Before, we can engage the literature on the South African labour market, the dissertation seeks to first show how the SLM theory is applicable to the South African labour market. According to Cassim (1982:10) in attempting to apply the SLM theory approach to the South African labour market, race becomes a strategic feature in the analysis. This sentiment is shared by Moleke (2003-2004:204) who maintains that during the apartheid era, race was a determining factor in the allocation of people to jobs. Therefore, Cassim (1982) submits that in illustrating a model of racial dualism in South African labour market, we can assume white sector and the black sector. Which results from a historical context of segmentation of the LM, in which the distribution of the individual jobs and income have become determined by race (Cassim, 1982,

12). He explains that the South African labour market reflects considerable disproportion between white and black workers. On top of that income occupation and training indicate that black workers are still confined to certain sectors of the LM (Cassim, 1982; Moleke, 2005).

To confirm this, Cassim (1982), makes some important generalizations, one of which maintains that in SA we have two distinct labour markets, one for white labour and the other for black labour. Just like Edwards et al (1973) explains the two sectors, Cassim (1982) maintains that each market (White and Black) is governed by different laws and institutions and mechanisms of recruitment, training and allocation of jobs to workers. He goes on to explain that the black labour force is relegated to the secondary sector. The nature of those jobs usually entail low wages, little skills and education and frequently suffer from seasonal or cyclical unemployment (Cassim, 1982; Moleke, 2005). Again, here we see how the SLM theory is applicable to the South African labour market.

The above phenomenon according to Cassim (1982, 13) has resulted in entrenched structural relationship which persists today. Hence the differences in income, employment, occupation, training and labour force participation rates indicate the existence of a dual labour market as can be seen even on the Stats SA reports. This indicates that there are two separate and persistent patterns of employment characteristics which cannot be explained in terms of a unitary labour market as advocated by the neoclassical ideals (Edwards et al, 1973; Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998). But can only be explained by the SLM theory which recognizes structural and institutional factors that lead to this segmentation.

With this in mind, the focus of the study is to find out what students make of the labour market and how these views affect how they view their chances of getting employment in the same labour market. Therefore, the thesis aims to use the Segmented Labour Market theory to discuss the state of the labour market as it reflects the principles the theory advocates for. Reliance on the SLM theory is integral in that it recognizes factors that shape up the South African labour market as well as many other labour markets from other countries. Also, because the study does not only investigate in general what the perceptions and views of students are but also wants to differentiate the perceptions, on the basis of their degrees, age and race (some of the factors that are recognized by the SLM theory as the inherent make-up of the labour market) therefore this framework will enable the thesis to do that.

2.3. SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

Given that this dissertation is primarily concerned with finding out what the views of students of the labour market is. It is important to discuss the state of the South African labour market in order to investigate the views of students against the existing literature of the state of the labour market. This will help understand how students understand it and thus how it plays a role in how students perceive their employability and how they prepare to enter it. For the reason that the South African labour market has undergone a political transition. This section will first give an account of the state of the labour market during the apartheid period which has since been overthrown by the new democratic dispensation. This will be followed by the discussion of the contemporary state of the labour market. In addition, due to the scope of the limited dissertation the discussion of the state of the labour market will only be reduced to the issue of racial policy and its impact on the apartheid LM as they are the most issues that the dissertation is concerned about.

This section consists of two sub-headings. The pre-1994 state of the labour market and the post 1994 state of the South African labour market. The former particularly looks at some of the apartheid legislations and how they shaped the labour market. Engaging with this literature will aid the understanding of how the labour market operated during the apartheid and thus to understand the changes that ensued after 1994 and are still afoot now. The second sub-heading looks particularly at the impact of the apartheid system on the current labour market, the changes that occurred as a way to remedy the injustices that came with the overthrown system. Again, due to the limited scope of the dissertation, this subsection will focus on the issue of unemployment and how the democratic labour market laws have impacted the LM now.

2.3.1. South African Labour Market Pre-1994

The SLM theorists maintain that the present divisions of the labor market are best understood from a historical analysis of their origins (Edwards et al. 1973). This view is shared by numerous authors who are of the view that the contemporary South African labour market and its unemployment trends are a reflection of the labour market of the apartheid era (Moleke, 2003-2004; Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015). Marioti (2009:4) posits that apartheid from 1950- 1994, imposed a series of social and economic measures that separated South Africa's four racial groups. Therefore, labour markets restrictions were enacted to the benefit of white worker predominantly, while they negatively

affected the African population which in 1969 constituted 80.7% of the population (Moleke, 2003-2004; Marioti, 2009). As a result of this discrimination the African population was for the most part poorly educated. The much smaller coloured and Indian groups 12.4% of the population were only remotely better educated (Marioti, 2009).

Considering that, Patel, Hassen & Paton (2011) submit that an assessment of the South African labour market cannot ignore the racial and gender dimensions inherited from apartheid era. During apartheid, racial discrimination transpired through systemic legislation and rules, and this fashioned the structure of the labour market (Moleke, 2003-2004; Patel, Hassen & Paton, 2011). Therefore, from the apartheid era, the labour market in South Africa was characterized by racial dualism, whereby there was a 'White' sector and 'Black' sector (Cassim, 1982; Patel et al, 2011; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015). Therefore, the race was the determining factor of the distribution of individual jobs and income (Cassim, 1982; Moleke, 2003-2004). As a result, the labour market showed major differences between Whites and Black workers.

This dual labour market was preceded by the education policy implemented by the apartheid government. The education system of that time was designed to promote white education, while forcing African education to stagnate (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Moleke, 2005; Bunting, 2006; van der Berg, 2007; Brandson & Leibrandt, 2013). This led to the creation and perpetuation of two education systems, one for whites and one for blacks (which was dubbed the Bantu education and was poor in quality). This racial differentiation of universities reflected the racial organization prevailing in the South African society as a whole, especially in the labour market (McCord & Bhorat, 2003. According to Fiske and Ladd (2004:43-46) and Moleke (2005) the education Africans received was poor in quality and designated to keep them out of the modern sector of the economy- thus ensuring a steady supply of cheap labour, particularly for the agricultural mining and domestic service sectors.

This led to the South Africa labour market to have two distinct labour markets, one for white labour and one for black labour. Each labour market was regulated by different laws, institutions and mechanisms for the recruitment, training and allocation of workers to jobs (Cassim, 1989; McCord & Bhorat, 2003). This dualism bred the inequalities and differences that plague the contemporary labour market. According to Moleke (2003-2004:206) the inequalities in the labour market were heightened by the shortcomings of the education system. Lack of access to quality education meant that a large section of the population was functionally illiterate. These people, which were blacks especially black women were relegated in the

secondary sector. This sector is characterized by under-payed and poor working conditions jobs (Cassim, 1982). On the other hand, whites were concentrated in manufacturing, commerce and finance and the professional service sectors, and these were the well-paying sectors with benefits and promotional opportunities (Cassim, 1982). This also indicates that the inequality in educational opportunities between the races played a significant role in the segmentation of the South African labour market during apartheid (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Moleke, 2005; Dias & Posel, 2007:7; McCord & Bhorat cited in Ntikinca, 2014; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015). The SLM theorists would then propose that whites during apartheid were mostly employed in the primary labour market, whilst blacks were mostly employed in the secondary labour market (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Moleke, 2005; Dias & Posel, 2007; McCord & Bhorat cited in Ntikinca, 2014; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015). This means that the South African labour market has a complex and segmented labour market which cannot be explained by the orthodox labour market theory (Cassim, 1982; Leonataridi, 1998; Fleetwood, 2006).

Moreover, some authors agree that the apartheid labour market during the apartheid era was also segmented by gender (Moleke, 2003-2004; Dias & Yu, 2007; Festus, et al, 2015). For instance, women, especially Africans were relegated to certain occupations within the labour market (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; McCord & Bhorat cited in Ntikinca, 2014). Even though, the apartheid labour market subjected all women to discrimination. Women from the black population endured worse discrimination than their white counterparts (McCord & Bhorat, 2003 cited in Ntikinca, 2014; Moleke, 2003-2004). This was also a result of the unequal access to education which, while favouring the white population. It confined black women to mostly domestic labour and other unskilled jobs and clerks (McCord & Bhorat, 2003; Morris, 2012 cited in Ntikinca, 2014). Therefore, it is argued that these inequalities which were manifest on ground of race and gender, among others, are reflected in the post-apartheid labour market (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Moleke, 2005; Dias & Posel, 2007; McCord & Bhorat cited in Ntikinca, 2014; Festus, Kasongo, Moses & Yu, 2015).

The crux of the pre-1994 labour market is that the laws that were upheld then led to a segregated population, affecting different races, relegating them to different education systems and thus creating a segregated and unequal labour market.

2.3.2. Contemporary South African Labour Market: Post-1994

The contemporary state of the South African labour market is a product of the changes from the apartheid system and the need to adjust to the global economy requirements. As according to Standing, Sender and Weeks (1996) South Africa has had to adjust its institution and policies very rapidly to the country's reintegration into the global economy. Furthermore, when South Africa emerged from its long night of apartheid, it was clear that among the many changes required were a wide range of labour and social policies that needed to be overhauled and redressed by something more attuned to the dynamic economy being integrated into the global economy (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Moleke, 2005; Dias & Posel, 2007; Festus, et al, 2015). The dissertation reduces the discussion of the post 1994 labour market to changes from the the apartheid system.

Today the South African labour market has undergone many changes since the demise of apartheid − these changes were preceded by various policies aimed at redressing the injustices of the past (Bhorat, 2004; Moleke, 2003-2004; Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Festus et al, 2015). According to Moleke (2003-2004; Arora & Ricci, 2005) one of the major pieces of legislation that was enacted since 1994 to address issues of equity and skills shortage in South African labour market is the Employment Equity Act (EEA). The EEA deals specifically with equity that recognised racial and gender inequalities affecting labour market opportunities (Bhorat, 2004; Moleke, 2003-2004; Arora & Ricci, 2005). Its main aim was to eliminate discrimination and establish measures to foster equal opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups (i.e. women, blacks and people with disabilities) by using the Affirmative Action− the medium that aims at ensuring that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories (Bhorat, 2004; Moleke, 2003-2004; Arora & Ricci, 2005).

In essence, the EEA prohibits discrimination− that originates from the apartheid system− by a designated employer on the grounds of race, gender, age, amongst other things. However, authors such as Moleke (2003-2004), Burger and Woolard (2005) and Arora and Ricci (2005) argue that though there have been some changes effected by the EEA and the other pieces of legislation. The impact of these have been limited because the labour market is still characterised by stark differences on grounds of gender, race and access to occupational categories, amongst others. For instance, there are still occupations in the labour that are under-

represented by Africans and women in general and are over-represented by men especially white men (Moleke, 2003-2004; Stats SA 2016 & 2017).

Despite these changes, the South African labour market remains segmented on the bases of skills (qualification), race and gender (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2004). According to Van der berge (2007: 85) the legacy of the apartheid education, with racially segregated schools and under- resourcing of schools for blacks, is still evident in large educational differentials between whites and blacks. Race remains the main correlate of both education quality and quantity (Moleke, 2005; Van der berge, 2007). Furthermore, Moleke (2003-2004) submits that the labour market access to jobs is limited and unequally distributed across different groups. For instance, whites still dominate high level occupations; white males predominate in management. While African and women are still relegated into secondary sectors and occupations with the characteristics secondary sectors (Bhorat, 2004; Moleke, 2003-2004). Notwithstanding the improved economic growth performance in South Africa since the end of apartheid, unemployment remains high and poses a significant social and economic policy challenge.

According to Arora & Ricci (2005) unemployment is particularly concentrated among the historically under-privileged groups and is higher among the rural, female, uneducated and young segments of the population. This view is supported by the observation noted by the Statistical SA (2017: 13) report, which highlights that most vulnerable groups to unemployment are females than males, the uneducated and the youth. In particular, the report provides that persons with higher level of education participate more in the labour force compared to those with lower levels of education, however, the labour participation rate for males is higher than that of their female counterparts for all educational levels. Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2005:37) remind us that Africans have by far the highest unemployment rates and this is confirmed in the Stats SA report of 2016. The Stats SA report of 2016 highlights that Africans and coloured graduates have lower prospects for unemployment when compared with their white and Indian counterparts. This shows that the contemporary South African labour market is still characterised by differences on grounds of gender and race and level of education. And this indicates that while the educated get jobs, what determines their entry into the labour market has to do with their gender, their race and their level of education amongst other things.

According to Bhorat and McChord (2003:128) the segmentation of the labour market in South Africa is also reflected in wage distribution patterns. For instance, coloured and African workers experience greater wage homogeneity than Indians and whites, due to their concentration in a restricted number of occupations (McCord & Bhorat, 2003; Bhorat & Goga, 2012; Naidoo et al, 2014). Whereas wage inequality favours men than women among all races, being most extreme amongst white and Indian men and lowest amongst African and coloured women (McCord & Bhorat, 2003; Bhorat & Goga, 2012; Naidoo et al, 2014). If inequality is considered in relation to education, the highest wage inequality is found amongst the employed with matric or tertiary education. According to McCord and Bhorat (2003), wage differentials are informed by race, gender, education, and public/private sector employment, with race being significantly stronger than other determinants (McCord & Bhorat, 2003; Bhorat & Goga, 2012; Naidoo et al, 2014). Occupation wage analysis exposes a stark difference between Africans and whites supposedly in the same skilled/semi-skilled occupations. Which according to McCord and Bhorat (2003:133) 'may be explained in terms of differential accumulation of capital, as well as actual perceived quality differentials in education and possibly unofficial racial discrimination.' This not only highlights the inequalities and differences that exists between race and gender, but it exposes the weakness of the HCT to realize these inequalities. Especially given that even though different races and genders acquire same levels of education, there are still subject to wage and occupational differences.

These are some of the key trends of the contemporary labour market of South Africa, which −as it has been reported in the Labour force survey and as maintained by the above referenced authors− are a reflection of the both the apartheid legacies and the structural and technological changes in the South African economy (McCord & Bhorat, 2003). This state of the South African labour market has inspired this thesis to investigate if students−who are preparing to enter the labour market− are aware of these trends and how their views of the labour market inform their beliefs of being employable and how do they prepare for their employment in the labour market.

2.4. UNEMPLOYMNT

In the post-apartheid era, South Africa emerged with a legacy of low economic growth, a high poverty rate, extreme income inequality by international standards and chronically high unemployment (Burger & Woolard, 2005; Burger & Fintel, 2009). Bhorat et al (2013) asserts that South African is a middle-income developing country that has experienced profound changes in the 1990s as it advanced from a system of governance characterised by racial

segregation and unequal opportunities prior to 1994 to democracy in 1994. Notwithstanding the important milestones made in the post-apartheid, the South African economy has mostly been incapable to deal with its pressing unemployment and poverty problems (Moleke, 2003-2004; Arora & Ricci, 2005; Burger & Fintel, 2009; Bhorat et al, 2013). These are some of the issues the new democratic government ventured to dismantle to date.

Considering that, unemployment is one of the major economic and social challenges in South Africa. Patel, Hassen & Paton (2011: 31) assert that unemployment is the major concern in the labour market to both the policy makers and the labour market participants. Burger & Fintel (2009) posits that South Africa currently has one of the highest unemployment rates internationally. This is the culmination of a long term, yet steady rise in unemployment that started as early as the 1970s. But which has speedily accelerated in the post-apartheid period (Arora & Ricci, 2005; Burger & Woolard, 2005; Festus, et al, 2015). However, other things such as the increase in the size of the labour force, the relatively slow post-transition growth in employment opportunities contributed to the increase in unemployment (Burger & Fintel, 2009). Burger and Fintel (2009) further explain that educational levels and the reversal of discriminatory policies all created the expectations that labour market prospects would improve over this period for the majority of the population. Instead, as they claim, the rates of the unemployed have grown, which has prompted allegations that the economic has entered a period jobless growth (Burger & Fintel, 2009). As a matter of fact, the Stats SA announced the unemployment figures for the second quarter of 2017, which showed that the unemployment rate remained stagnant and is at its highest as it has come up to a worrying 27.7%.

According to Bhorat (2005) and Bhorat, Goga and Stanwix (2013) ‘one conceptual view of what has shaped South Africa’s unemployment challenge is the notion that the economy has increasingly demanded higher-skilled workers while the labour force consists of a large contingent of less educated lower-skilled workers. A classic mismatch between labour demand and labour supply.’ Burger and Fintel (2009:9) concur, as they explain that the situation of unemployment has been attributed to changes in the structure of production and skills-biased technological change consequently. Therefore, demand for unskilled or semi-skilled workers (who are in abundant supply) decreased, whilst demand for highly skilled workers (Bhorat and Hodge 1999; Banerjee et al, 2017). Owing to this demand for skilled workers, as has been maintained by existing research, is that factors such as technology, the changing structure of the economy and trade flows have all engendered a skills-biased labour demand trajectory (Bhorat & Hodge 1998; Thurlow 2006; Dunne & Edwards 2006).

On that account, it is generally accepted that the primary cause for South Africa's widespread unemployment today is a structural mismatch between the skills the modern South African economy demands, and the skills it supplies (Pauw, Oosthuizen & Westhuizen, 2008; Burger & Fintel, 2009; National Planning Commission, 2011:15; Bhorat et al, 2013; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017).

Another major contributor to high unemployment in SA is the current state of labour market institutions and the regulatory environment (Arora & Ricci, 2005; Dias & Posel, 2007; Patel, Hassen & Paton, 2011; Festus et al, 2015; Labour market dynamics in South Africa, 2015). They argued that South African labour laws impose rigidities in the labour market that contribute to unemployment. The general idea is that labour laws lead to higher wages than would otherwise prevail. Thus, discouraging employers to absorb more labour market entrants (IMF, 2009: 14, cited in Burger & Fintel, 2009). This then renders some people unemployed. Furthermore, according to Patel, Hassen & Paton (2011: 31) when viewed from a gender perspective, unemployment in South Africa is most acute amongst black Africans, and amongst those with less than a matric, the youth and women. This indicate that despite of the improved economic growth performance in South Africa since the end of apartheid. Unemployment remains high and poses a significant social and economic policy challenge. The labour laws enacted could be doing more harm than good. Especially considering that some of the unemployment causes are imputed to the labour laws rigidities, which are aimed to create equal opportunity.

2.4.1. Graduate Unemployment

In contrast to the above-mentioned assertion that graduate unemployment is increasing, Rogan *et al* (2015) show that recent research (by Altbeker & Storme, 2013; Van Broekhuizen, 2013; Ntikinca, 2015) indicates that the issue of graduate unemployment in South Africa has been greatly exaggerated. This is in light of the fact that the unemployment rate for graduates has constantly been below six per cent (broadly defined). Notwithstanding the abovementioned assertion that graduate unemployment is increasing, Rogan et al (2015), citing van der Berg and van Broekhuizen (2012) submits 'much like the county's overall unemployment, the graduate unemployment, was highest in about 2001, at which point about 8.45 of university graduates were unemployed as well as just over 18% of diploma holders'. Conversely, the rates have been reduced, owing to the economic expansion between 2002 and 2007. And although for people with tertiary qualifications the unemployment rate has increased since 2008; it is not

as bad as that of people who only have a secondary education (van der Berg and van Broekhuizen, 2012).

According to Altbeker and Storme (2013), Van Broekhuizen (2013), Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) much of the problem of graduate unemployment, thus, appears to plague students who have attended Further Education Training (FET) colleges while unemployment rates for university graduates remain low. In support of this observation, is the study conducted by Ntincika (2014) which sought out to show that graduates from a historically White university (Rhodes University) experience varying and unequal outcomes in the South African labour market on account of (among other factors) their chosen fields of study, race and sex. One of the key findings of the study is that graduates do get jobs even though their outcomes in the labour market is to some extent determined by their chosen fields of study, race and sex (Ntikinca, 2014).

This indicates that while graduate unemployment is not much of a big problem as compared to the overall country's unemployment rate. The problem is that just as the labour market is characterized with differences on ground of gender and race, this also reflects on how graduates enter the labour market. According to Rogan et al (2015) studies on graduate unemployment in the post-apartheid period (i.e. Moleke, 2005a; Pauw, Oosthuizen et al, 2006; Branson et al, 2009; Bhorat et al, 2010; Letseka et al, 2010; Ntikinca, 2014) advocate that race, gender and type of institution are still significant determinants of the labour market outcomes. Again, this view is supported by the observation noted by the Stats SA (2017: 13) report, which highlights that most vulnerable groups to unemployment are females than males, the uneducated and the youth. In particular, the report provides that persons with higher level of education participate more in the labour force compared to those with lower levels of education. However, the labour participation rate for males is higher than that of their female counterparts for all educational levels (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2017: 13). This shows that the contemporary South African labour market is still characterized by the apartheid system disparities on grounds of gender and race. It is on this account that my research wants to find out what final year students (who are planning to enter the labour market) perceive to be their chances in the labour market as informed by their views of the labour market.

Notwithstanding, there is research that also finds that despite that the graduate unemployment is not as bad as the general employment of the country. There are still graduates who remain jobless **(**Pauw et al, 2008; Bhorat et al, 2013**).** According to Moleke (2009:88; Altman, 2007:4)

the growing joblessness among people with university qualifications has become a disturbing trend in post-apartheid South Africa. On this account, Arora & Ricci (2005), Bhorat, Goga, Ncube and Pauw (2006). Dias & Posel (2007); Pauw *et al* (2008: 23), Patel, Hassen & Paton (2011) suggest that the phenomenon of rising graduate unemployment has to be viewed within the context of skills shortages. Which is the idea that people do not have the skills that are mostly demanded by the labour market. Which Moleke (2005) refers to as professional degrees (i.e. health sciences, commerce, engineering). He shows that different degrees afford different employment prospects. With professional degrees having good employment prospects because there are the most in demand than general degrees like Humanities and Arts (Moleke, 2005; Bhorat et, 2006). Pauw et al (2008) assert emphatically that skills mismatch is an integral part of the graduate unemployment issue.

This suggests that graduate unemployment relates to an oversupply of graduates in general or perhaps more likely so, an oversupply of inappropriate qualified or poor-quality graduates (Moleke, 2005; Pauw et al, 2008). Just as mentioned by some authors, Bhorat et al (2006, 15) finds that employers are of the opinion that many graduates lack soft skills and are not workplace ready when they start their careers in the corporate sector. Another problem frequently raised by employers was the fact that students often graduates with inappropriate degrees. Firms frequently demand people with financial background or more technical qualifications such as science and engineering (Bhorat *et al*, 2006). According to Graham and De Lannoy (2016) the youth unemployment challenge may be largely explained by the evolving nature of the labour market and mismatches within the labour market system. They submit that research findings indicate that a key difficulty facing young

Another challenge facing graduates is lack of experience and it is one of the other reasons why some graduates are not employed. For instance, Bhorat et al, 2006, Pauw et el (2008), National Treasury, 2011 and Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) submit that employers look for skills and experience. Thus, they regard unskilled, inexperienced jobseekers as a risky investment. Instead quite a number of firms feel that experienced workers are more attractive than recent graduates from a recruitment point of view (Pauw et al, 2008). Therefore, graduates need to invest in training before they become assets to the companies that value experience more (Pauw, et al, 2008; Mlatsheni and Ranchhod, 2017). As mentioned by other authors, Pauw et al (2008) and National Treasure (2011) finds that employers are of the opinion that many graduates lack soft skills and are not workplace ready when they start their careers in the

corporate sector. These are among the other causes of graduate unemployment that were discovered by research.

Furthermore, it appears that another challenge facing graduates is that they have high expectations. Bhorat et al (2006) and Pauw et al (2008) submit that most firms think that the expectations of graduates (university graduates) are too high. However, employers feel that the return to employing a graduate is low, given that graduates require substantial on-job-training before they provide optimal return Bhorat, et, 2006; Pauw et al, 2008). Furthermore, some firms also expressed that graduates expect their qualifications to open doors at middle management level and are often unwilling or unhappy to start at entry level. With that in mind, firms feel that it is necessary for graduates to have a more realistic view of what they can offer and what to expect from their first jobs Bhorat *et al* 2006; Pauw *et al*, 2008).

Contrary to this, Graham and De Lannoy (2016) submit that qualitative evidence contradicts these assumptions that students have high expectations. Instead explain that the youth are often perceived to have high reservation wages, refusing to work for less money than they should receive (Rankins & Roberts, 2011). Graham and De Lannoy (2016) find in their study that youth (graduates) are willing to work for very low-wages-lower than typical minimum wages in various sectors. And while they had big dreams of being lawyers, doctors, they were also willing to take any job that could give them experience or help them pay for university or college fees (Patel et al,2015 cited in Graham). With this, Graham and De Lannoy (2016) submit that the society at large should recognize the youth's willingness to work and key role-players engaged with them in ways that made job searchers easier and less expensive.

Therefore, it appears that though unemployment does not affect the graduates as it does people with less education attainment. Graduates are also confronted by other factors that impact their employment outcomes despite their higher education attainment which is deemed to be a security for good employment. This view is explained by Moleke (2005) who held that even amongst people with similar educational attainment, there are differences in economic prospects as a result of differences in acquired skills. Given that qualification differences translate into different types of skills acquired. Some of these differences are a result inequality on grounds of race and gender (Moleke, 2005),

2.4.2. Strategies proposed or enacted to curb unemployment

Unemployment has long received the attention around the globe by governments, researchers, policy makers and the civil society amongst others. Since the political transition in 1994, South

Africa has witnessed the accelerated of its already high unemployment rate. Burge and Fintel, (2009) explain that rising unemployment is a service of considerable concern to both policy makers and labour market participants. As a result of the pressing issue that unemployment is around globally and locally, strategies have been created in the spirit of combating issue of the unemployment either through preventative or curative strategies (Budget Speech, 2014). For instance, in South Africa there is a National Development Plan (NDP) that was launched in addition to the long-standing strategies aimed at ameliorating the country's unemployment issue (by actually creating more jobs) amongst other social and economic ills of the nations (National Planning Commission, 2015).

It has been stressed that there has to be an employment creation acceleration if growth is to be inclusive (National Treasury, 2011; National Planning Commission, 2015; Budget Speech, 2016). Therefore, government, trade unions, business and civil society need to work together to alleviate (Budget Speech, 2014, 2016). National treasury submits that considering this, the new growth path calls for the state to provide bold, imaginative and effective strategies to create the millions of new jobs that SA's need National Treasury, 2011; National Planning Commission, 2015; Budget Speech, 2016). This requires a combination of initiatives that require direct state involvement private sector partnership, as well as the mobilization of civil society to take a proactive interest in addressing the problems presented by unemployment National Treasury, 2011; National Planning Commission, 2015; Budget Speech, 2016).

With regards to youth unemployment, Pravin Gordhan explains that job creation is a central priority of the National Development Plan, thus the government has devised strategies for youth employment for the next 5-20 years. These strategies include ramping up of skills development and further education and training programmes (Budget Speech, 2016). Furthermore, addressing youth unemployment requires both short and long-term measures that encompass increasing demand for labour, improving education and skills and labour market interventions that improve the employability of young people. National Treasury (2011:7) deduces that the youth employment subsidy is a mechanism to ameliorate the issue. It is a useful measure that will assist young, inexperienced workers gain work experience, access decent jobs in the general formal sector and improve their employment prospects in the long run (National Treasury, 2011).

In this regard, a possible solution is to have government managed and funded job centres which provide practical of theoretical training such as at vocational institutions (National Treasury,

2011). Skills should focus on what industry wants and the services. This will allow students to either work for a business or have required skills to start their own business (National Treasurey,2011). Budget Speech (2013, 2014, 2016) submits that reform of technical and vocational education and training programmes is vital, so that they effectively meet occupational and industrial need. We must strengthen collaboration between employers and TVET. Training programmes are intended to alleviate skills shortages in the economy (National Treasury, 2011). They are aimed at enhancing productivity and employability of participants and enhancing human capital through improving skills in this case for young job-seekers while simultaneously fulfilling the needs of the labour demand National Treasury, 2011).

One of the other mediums of solving the youth unemployment particularly is the entrepreneurship development. According to National Treasury (2011) entrepreneurship must be prioritized from as early as possible in order to create awareness regarding, self-employment opportunities. According to the National Treasury (2011) Entrepreneurial involvement is relatively low in South Africa if compared to other African countries. Therefore, entrepreneurship development must be accelerated and schools, universities, business chambers and government should be involved. The National Treasury (2011) finds that entrepreneurial schemes promote skills in young people with the objective of creating and managing sustainable and efficient business capable of providing permanent jobs and employment growth. For instance, in SA National Youth Development (NYDA) runs a number of entrepreneurship programmes for the country's youth. These include entrepreneurship education to young people both in and out of school, business development support in the form of business planning, marketing and branding, linkages to procurement opportunities for young entrepreneurs to act distributing agents and large enterprises (National Treasury, 2011).

Rankins, Roberts and Schoer (2014) submit that though the skills mismatch is the chief challenge faced by the youth in accessing wage employment. What is more, is that the way in which firms and job seekers find each other could impose an additional hurdle. Therefore, one of the mediums that can fight against joblessness amongst the youth could be social networks that the youth have (Burns, Godlonton & Kesneil, 2008; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). This refers to the connection between the employer and the job seeker. Another solution they submit is that students should be assisted with information and social networks. As they are increasingly being recognized as having an important influence on LM outcomes, since they facilitate the exchange of job related information (Burns, Godlonton& Kesneil, 2008; Graham

& De Lannoy, 2016). However, because this is conditional on the "quality" of one's network. When an individual's contacts are unemployed, the likelihood of getting information about jobs through contacts is reduced, thereby impeding such network benefits, reducing active search behavior (Burns et al, 2008; Rankins et al, 2014; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). This call for intervention from the government is needed as it can confer such opportunities to the previously disadvantaged population that may be missing out on opportunities of finding employment because of lack of connection and networking.

Notwithstanding these proposed solutions, −some of which are already implemented− the Budget speech 2013 and the National Planning Commission have cautioned that our development objectives will take time and hard work to achieve measured year by year, district by district and hard work, the will be advances and there will be set backs. However, it is important to realize that there is no single policy that offers the solution, what is needed is a sustainable period of accelerated and inclusive economic growth and a comprehensive set of short and long-term police reforms and initiatives.

2.5. EMPLOYABILITY

There is considerable debate as to what is meant by the term employability, with most definitions recognizing that employability is as a set of skills and attributes that will facilitate employment (Wharton & Horrocks, 2015). According to Mcquid, Green and Danson (2004) employability remains a contested concept in terms of its use in both theory and policy. As a result, of this there is a considerable number of definitions. Bernston (2008:1) refers to employability as 'our chances of getting employment'. He asserts that most people at some point have to consider their possibilities of finding a new job- whether it is when they first enter the labour market or later in life when changing jobs or transitioning from non-work activity, i.e unemployment or studies. In essence, to feel employable is to believe that one's chances of finding employment are good (Bernston, 2012; Moreau & Leathwood, 2007). Rothwell and Arnold (2005:23) submit that employability concerns the extent to which people possess the skills and other attributes to find and stay in work of the kind they want.

Furthermore, employability relates to both unemployed people seeking work and those in employment seeking better jobs with their current or different employer (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2005; Wye & Lim, 2009; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). The broad view focusses upon individuals' employability in terms of their capability to move into new employment within the labour

market (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2005; Wye & Lim, 2009; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). Hence, the broad approach incorporates factors such as job search and labour demand conditions, which affect whether a person can actually find or change employment, as well as the set of employability skills and attributes that are the focus of the narrow supply-side concepts of employability (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2005; Moreau & Leathwood, 2007; Wye & Lim, 2009; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). Symington (2012) and Brown, Hesketh and Wiliam (2003) assert that despite the lack of agreement on the meaning and contributing factors of employability. Nilsson (2010:545) asserts that a central aspect of employability relates to an individual becoming employed.

Moreover, according to Symington (2012:18), the most widely used definition of employability concerning graduate students is that of York and Knight (2006), who define employability as a 'set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.' Despite these definitions, Brown, Hesketh and Wiliams (2003:110) begs to differ; he argues that the manner in which employability is defined is problematic. According to Brown et al (2003) emphasis on employability rests on the assumption that the economic welfare of individuals and the competitive advantage of nations have come to depend on the knowledge, skills and enterprise of the workforce. Those with degree-level qualifications are seen to play a particularly important role in managing the knowledge-driven economy of the future.

However, they argue that the way employability is defined in official statements is seriously flawed because it ignores what will be called the duality of employability. They argue that the idea that employment is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. It is flawed because it ignores the fact that employability is primarily determined by the labour market than the capabilities of individuals. This view is compatible with the arguments advocated for by the SLM theory, which also considers factors that influence one employment exogenously. What confirms this is the example made by Brown et al, with which they explain that 'if 30 suitably trained brain surgeons applied for ten vacancies it is inevitable that 20 surgeons would not get the job'. They submit that the idea that employability is about one's capability to gain employment which is fashioned by the HCT would suggest that their failure to acquire employment is not that they are employable.

But this, according to Brown et al (2003) reflects the example of victim blaming (those who cannnot find a job). They explain that this is why this Human capital theory influenced definition is flawed. This is because employability varies according to economic conditions. For instance, at times of labour shortages the long-term employed became employable. However, when jobs are in short supply they become unemployable because there is a ready supply of better qualified job seekers. It is for this reason, that Brown et al (2003) argues that employability cannot be defined solely in terms of individual characteristics. As one's employability is also subject to the conditions of the labour market. further, they argue that one's employability not only depends on fulfilling the requirements of a specific job. But also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers.

Therefore, employability can be defined as the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment. Their (Brown et al) definition of employability reasonably recognizes that it is possible to be employable but not be in employment. This is intended to highlight that graduate employability is primarily about the relative chances of finding and maintaining employment.

2.5.1. History of employability

Employability as a construct has enjoyed much international attention over the past decade, yet the topic made its appearance in the scientific arena as early as 1909 (Gazier,2001; Lindsay & McQuaid, 2005; Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012; Tymon, 2013). Employability has changed considerably over the years; this change is largely ascribed to the ever changing labour market conditions and government policies throughout the years. These changes have been set out by Gazier (2001) ─amongst others─ who proposes that employability has moved through the seven operational versions/stages set out (Symington, 2012: Ntikinca, 2014). According to Ntikinca (2014:38), Gazier (1998) distinguished between seven versions of the concept of employability, which will be discussed below. In addition, while the concept has been emphasized more intensely during the last decade, there have been other items in history when its presence in the literature has been prominent. The concept has had three periods of more intense focus according to Gazier (1999).

According to Bernston (2008:5), the initial record of the concept is from the beginning of 20th century, at this time the concept was introduced with the purpose of identifying those persons that were able to work. Because many industries were short of labour, the focus of employability was directed towards the unemployed and getting those among them who could

work into the labour market. The workers were considered suitable for work if they were of the right age (15-64), sufficiently healthy, and had no family constraints (such as a children) (Gazier, 1999 cited in Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012; Ntikinca, 2014). Thus, the first concept of employability had been called *"dichotomic'* due to its classification of individuals into either employable or unemployable (Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012 and Ntikinca, 2014). Which according to Symington (2012:19) included the elderly and the physically fit individuals searching for employment (de Grip *et al*, 2004 cited in Symington, 2012). The reasoning behind this approach was to differentiate between those individuals in need of relief and those who could be employed. However, this approach is criticized for merely classifying individuals as either employable or unemployable, with no other variations on the labour market context (Symington, 2012:19).

Throughout the years, the concept became more expanded and diversified. And the main trend in defining the concept primarily involved including more people and groups in the definition, thus defining it on a continuous scale and taking on a macroeconomic approach (Bernston, 2008:5). In the USA the concept of employability was expanded to include disabled and disadvantaged people and groups, while the focus of their employability was on the individual. The individual was deemed as having the individual skills and capacities that fit into the labour market (Glaizier, 1998: Ntikinca, 2014:38). This employability was defined as the probability and time for a given group to find a job, thus including labour market conditions in the conception (Bernston, 2008:6). Moreover, 'with the focus of the labour market shifting toward the underprivileged with reference to medical and social conditions, much attention was placed on these underprivileged or handicapped individuals because of the post-war lack of skilled workers' (Symington, 2012:19). The outcome of this brought with it a measure whereby individuals were classified as more or less employable, with the outcome resulting in steps being taken to improve overall employability or compensate the individual who is seen as less employable (Bernston, 2008; Symington, 2012; Ntikinca, 2014).

The next version of employability emerged during the 1950s and 60s and was relevant mainly in the USA (McGrath, 2009 cited in Symington, 2012:20). The focus of this approach shifted to the potential of an individual to become employed, given that employment was one of the main priorities of the government of the day. *The man-power policy* (at is was then referred as) is however an extension of the socio-medical approach. Infact, Bernston (2008) combined the two and explains them as being one. Here the focus was on the gap between employment needs and employee characteristics such as individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and skills pertaining to

a broader group of disadvantaged people (Symington, 2012. The aim was to assist people in their search for employment and placement by means of improving their attitude toward employment and their self-confidence (Gazier, 1998; Symington, 2012). This approach was the most widely accepted and implemented until the 1970s, when the concept of *flow employability* emerged. Ntikinca (2014:38) submits 'that this concept emphasized the distance between the existing work abilities of the disadvantaged and the work requirements of employment'. Symington (2012:20) refers to Gazier (2001) to describe such disadvantages as 'social, physical, mobility (i.e, does one have a driver's license/ criminal record) and presentation (i,e. whether one can be visibly identifies as a drug user)'.

The flow employability was developed in France and was extremely different from former approaches (Gazier, 1998; Symington, 2012:20). Here awareness of the individual was increased in this view, emphasising mainly occupation – related knowledge and skills. The approach was extended to include knowledge of one's potential, knowledge of one's position within the labour market and an increased awareness of the state of the employment market in general (Mansfield, 2001 cited in Symington, 2012:20). The approach was so different in that it focussed on the demand aspect of employability and consequently the ease of access to employment within local and national economies. Furthermore, it became more evident to both employers and researchers toward the end of the 1970s that more than just occupational skills were required to remain relevant or marketable in the general labour market (de Grip et al., 2004 cited in Symington, 2012). Consequently, the term 'transferable skills' was coined by Hoyt in 1978 to include the importance of acquiring skills that can be transferred to various work contexts, making employees less vulnerable in a recession or economic downturn. These transferable skills include social and relational skills and aid the individual not only in securing employment, but also in maintaining a position or obtaining future employment' (de Grip *et al* cited in Symington, 2012).

Symington (2012:21) submits that the 1970s were afflicted by a global recession, resulting in the international advent of *labour market performance employability*. It was now much harder to find, let alone to keep employment. This approach, the *labour market performance employability*, 'was based on measurable labour market results founded on individuals human capital and generally included the probability of securing employment, the amount of hours worked, and probable wages' (Gazier, 2001; McGrath, 2009; de Grip et al, 2004). Additionally, Ntikinca (2014:38) maintains that this 'concept emphases on the measurable labour market

outcomes that result from specific policy interventions and these measures usually include the period employed, hours worked and wage rates'.

Symington (2012:22) further explains that the late 1980s marked the dawn of a new era of employability. At this time, employability has become a Meta characteristic of workers required by employers to cope with rapid changes in products services and processes (de Grip et al 2004:214 cited in Symington, 2012). It became evident that the concept of a job for life was rapidly disappearing, with employers increasingly hiring individuals on a temporary flexible, part time contract basis. The emphasis shifted toward career development of skills and attitude that would ensure career success and motivation to search for alternative/better employment with other organizations Symington, 2012). Gazier (2001:9) views this version of employability as 'the marketability of cumulative individual skills' thus, the employable person is viewed as an entrepreneur, able to create employment as depicted by Arther in de Grip et al (2004) (Symington, 2012). It is clear from this view that employability gradually changed to an influential concept, relevant to every stage of the individual career. Ntikinca (2014:38) this account argued that successful career development required the development of skills and attitudes that could make workers both succeed in their current jobs and be able and motivated to get a better job in another organization. The focus here is on the individual's initiative and agency.

Symington (2012:22) posits that the *Interactive employability* is as the name suggests an approach that incorporates policy makers and employers along with individual as mutual stakeholders in employability (de Grip *et al*, 2004). This approach emerged in the early 1990s, claiming that the employability of an individual is somewhat relative to the employability of other individuals within the labour market. In de Grip et al (cited in Symington, 2012) Outin argues that employability consists of four elements, namely individual characteristics, occupation-related skills, the labour market environment and government and organizational training policies. These elements influence the probability of becoming and remaining active in the labour market. Ntinciza (2014;38) quotes 'this concept argued that the employability of the individual is partly relative to the employability of others in the labour market'. The state of demand locally and nationally is also considered, as are the rules and institutions that govern the labour market, reflecting the rise of institutional economics at this point (Ntinciza ,2014). Furthermore, Bernston (2008:6) states that the newer approach concentrates on the capacities and abilities of the individual whereby being employable is based on how well an individual fits into the labour market based on i.e. their human and social skills. 'Employability from this

point of view is has been determined by a combination of one's individual assets and structural constraints/opportunities' (Bernston, 2008:6).

Ntikinca (2012:390) observes that the interaction between each component is important, for instance employers may be willing to accept someone under one set of circumstances but may not consider the same individual to have the minimum necessary skills under different circumstances. In this case, the individual has not changed but the external employment conditions have. Macroeconomic factors also play a role in shaping the employability of graduates in the labour market; finally, there are also the enabling support factors, which include employment policy factors, accessibility of public services and job-matching technology, incentives within tax benefits system, accessibility and limitations on training, extent of local/regional development policies.

This discussion proves that there is widespread controversy in the literature with regards to the conceptual meaning of employability. However, it is clear that by the late 20th century the concept has been central to the ever- changing labour market. This really shows that one's employability is determined by the labour market state and performance amongst other things (Bernston, 2008:6).

2.5.2. Employability and the Labour Market

The 21st century world of work can be described as unpredictable and ever-changing environment that places great levels of pressure on those functioning within this context (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Symington, 2012:3). It is generally accepted that this area poses difficulties to both employer and employee that have not previously been present, or has intensified those pressures already experienced. The employer, or organization, now seek individuals that are adaptable, creative, innovative, flexible and keen problem solvers, to mention but a few attributes (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2004; Moreau & Leathwood, 2007; Bernston, 2008, Wye & Lim, 2009). Therefore, employability brings a shift in responsibility for career development, making the employee ultimately responsible for the investment and continuous development of his/her career (Symington, 2012; Bernston, 2008, O' Leary, 2016 McQuiad, Green and Danson, 2004; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2004; Moreau & Leathwood, 2007; Wye & Lim, 2009; Bezuidenhout, 2011. In essence, with the labour market having moved away from life-long employment, whereby job security is no longer a given. This means that employees must consider alternative ways to manage their careers and ensure on going employment (Symington, 2012; Bernston, 2008, O' Leary, 2016.

Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that employers today no longer hire employees on the basis of education status only (Yorke; Rothwell & Arnold, 2005; Bernston, 2008; Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009; Wye & Lim, 2009; Nilsson, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Symington, 2012). Although a desired aspect for any potential employee, given today's world of work that is characterized by fast paced change, technological advancement and globalization (Coetzee & Bergh, 2009 cited in Symington, 2012), the employer seeks much more than a degree to ensure the organizations competitive edge. However, general employability of students and moreover, the availability of job-ready graduates have been the focus of the labour market and government and government policy-makers for the last decade (Brown et al, 2003). The question, however, remains as to what specifically these newly defined requirements and expectations are, and how a student would ensure that he/she possesses such qualities (Symington, 2012).

With that said, employability is generally portrayed as the ability to gain meaningful employment. And though this is rather one-dimensional view, it is also core to the concept (Brown, 2003). Yorke and knight (2006) indicate in their research that having the relevant degree is merely a means by which to compete for a job, but that employers choose between graduates based on something more complex. The individual can no longer depend only on the relevance of a degree when it comes to securing employment (Yorke & Knight, 2006). If education is enough to get one a job− which is what most students have, as most would not have working experience because they went to varsity just after high school. It is befitting to know how they prepare for the labour market and the other way to find out is to investigate their views about their beliefs of getting employment, which will mostly likely be shaped by their views of the labour market. This is because, according to Saunders and Zuzel (2010:1) one of the key reasons why students invest in university education is to improve their employment prospects. However, whilst achievement of good academic qualification is highly valued, it no longer appears sufficient to secure employment (York,2006 cited in Saunders and Zuzel, 2010). Additionally, according to Saunders and Zuzel (2010:1) employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited.

Furthermore, Brown *et al* (2003) Rothwell and Arnold (2005:25); Ntikinca (2014) assert that employability is not only about individual attributes, within organization factors such as the current and predicted states of internal labour markets also likely to affect employability as defined above. There are also external factors including the state of the contemporary external

labour market (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Kirschenbaum and Mano-Negrin, 1999; Lane et al, 2000 cited in Rothwell and Arnold). This may be also incorporate factors related to the demand for one's occupation. It is for this reason that this research is interested in finding out what how these factors affect what students think of their employability,

According to Bernston (2008:3) several authors have argued for the dissolution of traditional society and traditional labour, where society is, to put it generally, seen as having been, for a long time, collectively organized with clearly defined institutions and rules which should be followed. These include the written and unwritten rules of religion, family and the welfare system. Similarly, the labour market has been fairly well regulated with clear boundaries and rules that the individual must follow (Allvin, 2004; Beck & Beck- Gernsheim, 2002; Wiklund, 2007). Recent developments in society have led us away from this, as individuals are now to take more responsibility for their own situations- Labour is being deregulation and the individual is increasingly expected to initiate, plan, control and take responsibility for their own career (Allvin, 2004: 23). (Bernston: 2008) When the individuals become responsible for their own careers, the need to be proactive, by seeking opportunities and initiating situations, increases. A career that is driven by the individual rather than by the organisation is known as the protean career, where individuals not only set up their own career plans, goals and ambitions, but must also find their own ways in which to realise them. This is much the case for individuals facing the flexible working life, it is argued, have to take their own initiate and actively direct the course of their own careers (Anorld, 1997; Hall, 1996; Hall and Moases, 1998). This being the case, it is important to know what students who aspire to be in the labour market see their employability and manage it.

Graduates are in the early stages of career planning and development, where securing any relevant position is at the top of the priority list. As such, both graduate students and the unemployed population must take note of the critically important employability skills that have become the differentiator in the semi-skilled and skilled labour market (Wye & Lim, 2009; Yorke; Nilsson, 2010; Rothwell & Arnold, 2005; Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009, Bezuidenhout, 2011. Pursuant to the abovementioned, it is clear that employability is intrinsically linked to the labour market– one influences the other– to know the one, you have to know the other. Hence the study wants to explore both the students' views of the labour market and their perceptions about their employability.

2.5.3. Employability Studies

Nilsson (2010:540) who defined employability as including the ability to find employment and remain employed. He believes that employability includes both hard and soft skills, including formal and actual competence, interpersonal skills, and personal characteristics. He conducted a research that focused on illuminating perceptions engineering graduates have on employability. The aim of his was to explore how engineering graduates perceive, invest, manage and develop their employability Nilsson (2010). The research drew from qualitative study and empirical data, which included 20 current graduates from master's level engineering programs in information technology. To this end, the results of the research showed that the meaning of employability is not only concerned with aspects associated with the individual. It is a relational concept, and contextual aspects are also central in the understanding of the concept Nilsson (2010:545). Thus, when studying employability, it is important to consider soft and hard skills, actual and formal competence, personal characteristics, attributes and talents of an individual, social networks, as well as structural factors, the implicit and explicit requirements of the job, the characteristics of the organization and the relations between them. This is why my research wants to look at what factors such as gender, field of research and race shape how students see their employability Nilsson (2010).

Reeskens and Oorschot (2012) conducted one such study in Europe, they assert that in cross-national perspective, research on youth employment has thus far paid attention to transition from school to work, but underemphasized the importance of the social psychology of labour markets entrance. To this end, they analyse the European young adult's perceptions of the first job opportunities in their country. The results were three fold; (i) first they acknowledge that the result of a multilevel regression analysis on the 2008 wave of the European social survey (ESS) shows that differences across countries can mainly be explained by the public's perception of levels of unemployment and public spending on education (Reeskens & Oorschot, 2012). (ii) at the individual level, youth in precarious socioeconomic situation have rather pessimistic view on these opportunities. Moreover, women perceive the opportunities as less positive than men while young people of foreign origin have, contrary to the expectations, a more positive outlook on the chances for young people (Reeskens & Oorschot, 2012). Moreover, young people base their perceptions of labour market opportunities not on the situation their peers are in, as youth unemployment figures have a significant but not overwhelming effect, but rather on subjective interpretation of the labour market condition by the general population Reeskens & Oorschot, 2012).

Tomlinson (2007) conducted another research on the same subject matter but with different goals for the study. In this particular study, he examined the way students, making their transitions from higher education into the labour market understand and begin to manage their employability. Just like the abovementioned study, it draws data from a qualitative study of 53 final year students in a university in UK. The first thus, explores student's perceptions of the current labour market for graduates and they understand future career progression (Tomlinson, 2007). It examines their different orientations and attitudes to work and career through the development of an ideal-type model. Subsequently, it considers how these orientations influence the way students approach future work and careers and manage their employability. It is from this aforementioned state of the labour market and these studies that my research interest precedes (Tomlinson, 2007).

These studies have all the more inspired the interest of this dissertation to investigate students' perceptions of their employability. Therefore, this dissertation builds on the ideas of these researches but differs in two key aspects. The first aspect is that it focuses on final-year students' perceptions as revealed by their views of the labour market. Secondly, the research in questions seeks to find out what bearing that factors like field of study, race and gender have on the student's perceptions of the labour market.

2.6. CONCLUSION

The literature on employability indicates that due to the shifting world of work, the pressure lies solely on an individual who wants to be employed in the labour market to develop his/ her own chances of being employed. In essence, employability means that employers are seeking individuals that are flexible and innovative. This means that there is increased competitiveness in the labour market which in turn means that an individual is responsible for developing the relevant skills and qualities, to not only be employable in the labour market but to stay employed. For this reason, the research wants to investigate what students (who hope to enter the labour market) perceive their employability and how they prepare themselves for a very segmented and yet competitive labour market. The research concurrently seeks to investigate students understanding of the labour market. These views will be contrasted based on the students (participants) race, gender and field of study, as these are amongst the factors that affect how any one views their chances of being employed in the labour market.

While the research is largely inspired by the discourse of employability, it is also motivated by the state of the South African labour market. Which is plagued by high levels of unemployment

and skills mismatch, discrimination on grounds of gender and race. There have been studies already conducted on graduates that are already in the labour market (see Ntinciza, 2014). However, as Bernston (2003) maintains it is just as important to understand what students think of the labour market and how these views shape their beliefs of getting employed and how they prepare for employment thereof. In essence, the research is concerned with the meanings that the university students attribute to the South African labour market and thus their employability. What do they know about the labour market and what do they think about their employability in the labour market.

The core contention of this chapter is that unlike arguments of the neoclassical theory which advocate for a homogenous labour market. Which is characterised by the law of supply and demand. Instead labour markets are an amalgamation of the social structures that constitute segmentations in turn these segmentations foster the inequalities and discriminations in the labour market based on numerous factors such as race, gender. This means that not only are people's entry in the labour market are affected by these inherent segmentations, but also that the labour market affects different people differently. It be the challenge to enter the labour market or to succeed in it.

Which means that how one views their chances of employment is based on their perceptions of the labour market. Therefore, this study wants to investigate what student's perceptions are as revealed by their views of the labour market they soon want to enter. Taking this into account the labour market is analysed from the segmented labour market theory perspective. Which confirms that labour markets are fractured into different segments and that there are unequal experiences for graduates in the labour markets as a result of social, economic, and political forces (see Peck, 1996). The SLM theory opposes and goes beyond what the orthodox approach by recognizing other factors that affect labour market outcomes. It is for this reason that the dissertation elects the SML theory over the orthodox approach.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines and discusses the research methods and techniques that were adopted to facilitate and carry out this research. The research was conducted in Eastern Cape and undertook to obtain data from (South African) Rhodes University students, who are studying final-year subjects and are expected to complete their degrees at the end of 2017. Since the study is interested in the students' perceptions of their employment prospects. It was essential to have the informants of this study as final-year students. This is because they are most likely to be concerned about their employability as they prepare for the transition from varsity to the labour market (Sibanyoni et al, 2015). Therefore, this chapter discusses all the methodology and techniques that went into initiating and facilitating this study as well as the challenges faced during the entire process. All of these methods and techniques were integral for the ultimate goal of the dissertation, which is to find out what final year students' perceptions are about their employability as revealed by their understanding of the labour market.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research is concerned with the perceptions and views that the students have about the labour market and their employability. On top of that the study is interested in exploring the bearing that factors such as field of study, race and gender have on how students perceive their employment prospects (employability). To this end, the study espoused the critical realism paradigm. 'Realists assume the existence of a reality that is independent of our senses, making reality not only a socially constructed product' (Edgley, Stickley, Timmons and Meal, 2016). Whereas positivists, on one hand assume that facts speak for themselves, and relativists, on another hand, maintain people see what they want to see. Realists sit between these two positions' as they are interested in the underlying possibilities that generate actual reality (Pawson 2006, 20 cited in Edgley *et al*, 2016).

It is against this background that realists make compelling distinctions between the empirical, the actual and the real. The *empirical* include observable experiences. Whereas the *actual* includes actual events which have been generated by mechanisms. Finally, the *real* includes the underlying mechanisms that have generated the actual events (Blaskar, 1978; Edgley et al, 2016; Fletcher, 2017). For this reason, critical realists believe that there are unobservable

events which cause the observable ones. With this they take the view that the social world can be understood only if people understand the structures that generate such unobservable events (Fletcher, 2017). Through this paradigm a researcher can understand how underlying mechanisms (which in this case are the field of study, race and gender) factor into the students views and perceptions (Bhaskar, 1978; Fletcher, 2017). These factors are among others that determines one's entry in the labour market and that account for the inequalities in the labour market as maintained by the SLM theory. In addition, Moleke (2005:6) also explains that 'in a labour market marked by disparities and inequalities, factors such as race and gender can be expected to play a significant role in employability'. Considering that, this paradigm is especially appropriate because −unlike other paradigms− it recognizes that there are underlying factors that engender peoples' perceptions. With this being the case, the critical realist helps uncover the bearing that these factors (race, gender, field of study) have on how students understand the labour market and how they perceive their employability.

To this end, the research was conducted using a mixed research approach (which comprises of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods). The mixed research approach focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Neuman, 2011). This approach was integral as it allowed the researcher to concurrently gain a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon and to be able to get a descriptive understanding of the number of respondents (by their race, gender and field of study) so as to document the differences that emerged from the different respondents.

Therefore, this research design was elected on the ground that it allows the research to yield data that will help identify and explain the views and perceptions that the research seeks to investigate (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Neuman, 2011). Which is final-year students' knowledge of the labour market and perceptions of their employability. And how their field of study, race and gender influence how they understand the labour market and perceive their employability. While the data would be analysed the quantitative methods. While it also allows for a descriptive analysis of the number of responses based on their race, field of research. The use of both the qualitative and quantitative methods will allow the researcher to achieve this outcome. This approach was suitable as it helped gain in-depth data from final-year students (i.e. third, fourth or fifth year, depending on the degree pursued) about their views of the labour

market and their perceptions of their employability. Unlike surveys, a qualitative approach allows the sampled informants to explain in detail their thoughts than simply ticking a box. The qualitative research enabled students to explain their responses about the labour market and their employability.

3.3. SAMPLING

This research employed a probabilistic sampling technique, which refers to (inter alia), the fact that each member of the sample frame has a fixed opportunity to be chosen for the sample as they are randomly selected (Babbie & Mouton, (2001). In particular, the probabilistic sampling method that was applied is stratified sampling. Which, according to Babbie and Mouton (2001:166), is representative and gives everyone an equal chance of being sampled. Neuman (2011:676) explains that stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata. Then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. The aim of this research was to have a representative sample of all final -year students, from all six faculties at Rhodes university and of all races and genders. Therefore, the stratified sample helped sample students according to these factors (faculty, race and gender). These differences will in turn help see how students' perceptions vary based on their degree, race and gender. As that is one of the goals of the study. This sampling was chosen because it enables for the representability of the different strata. Which in turn is essential for achieving the goals of the dissertation.

Table 3.1. ***The initial list reflecting the different strata***

		INDIAN		AFRICAN		COLOURED		WHITE		
FACULTY	PG	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	**TOTAL**
COMMERCE	UG	14	10	113	184	1	7	59	29	417
EDUCATION	UG	0	0	38	135	1	5	0	0	179
HUMANITIES	UG	9	15	154	334	15	28	96	139	790
LAW	UG	1	0	11	28	0	0	20	14	74
PHARMACY	UG	9	38	27	61	0	1	0	17	153
SCIENCE	UG	2	6	61	70	0	4	56	46	245
TOTAL		35	69	404	812	17	45	231	245	1858

(Source: *Rhodes University, Support staff*).

This means that the sample had to be divided in respect of the field of study, race and gender. The list of students (see Table 1 above) was obtained from Natalie, Director of information and Technology services at Rhodes University upon the approval of the Registrar. This list provides a breakdown of the University's final-year students from each faculty according to gender and race. Since this list reflected the strata that the research needed for the research question and due to time constraints and availability considerations of students. The total number of students interviewed was scaled down from 1858 to 57. These 57 students were distributed proportionally in the entire table to maintain the original ratios of different groups of students. The sample drawn from the list consisted of 57 respondents (final-year students) as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 3.2*: Distribution of number of students out of 57 students*

Indian	Indian		African		Coloured		White		Total
Faculty	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Commerce	0	0	4	6	0	0	2	1	13
Education	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	6
Humanities	1	0	5	11	0	0	3	3	23
Law	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Pharmacy	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
Science	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	8
Total	1	0	13	26	0	0	8	9	57

(Source: *Rhodes University, support staff*).

As can be seen on Table 2, the only population of students that was missing is the coloured population, which could not be accessed. Notwithstanding, students were approached to partake in the study. This was done by going to the lecture venues of the respective faculties.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

After determining the sample, some interviews were conducted upon approaching students. whereas in some instances, appointments were made with the selected students who agreed to be respondents for this research. But were unable to take part in an interview when first approached. The semi-structured questions posed to final-year students consisted of a section on perceptions of the labour market and a section on perceptions on employability. This

research assumes that the former influences the latter. In other words, the way students perceive their employability is based on their views of the labour market. Therefore, it was necessary to first ask about the labour market and consequently ask questions about employability. Doing this helped understand how views on the labour market inform the perceptions on employability.

In particular, questions were asked to 57 final-year undergraduate students who are completing their degrees in 2017. The questions explored the students' understanding of the labour market for graduates and the bearing that their perceived sense of the labour market had on the way they understand and manage their own employability. The research further explored the ways in which degree, race and gender shaped the perceptions of the students. Using semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up questions to be asked to seek clarity and/or elaboration on some viewpoints. Interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes per respondent.

Data was collected by using a digital recorder and a note pad. The latter was used to write notes for the purposes of asking follow-up questions where it was necessary. The research instrument was designed to elicit the respondents' views and understandings of the notion of 'employability'. Equally, this research was concerned with the meanings the participants themselves gave to the labour market and how these differed given the race, gender and field of study. Students were able to give their own explanations and detailed views of what they understood about the labour market and their employability. Therefore, they engaged with questions in more detail.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), data analysis consists of three specific activities, which guided the analysis of the data generated for this research. The first entails scrutinizing the data for themes, concepts and propositions. After transcribing the data collected, the dissertation repeatedly went through the data to pick up on the similar ideas that emerged from student's responses. The second activity, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), involves coding the data and refining one's understanding of the subject matter. Upon highlighting similar ideas, themes were created within which student's responses could be discussed and disaggregated according to student's field of study, race and gender. The final activity involves understanding the data in the context it was collected. This was ensured by revisiting the research questions to foreground the purpose for which the data was sought. To this end, the data was organized and divided into manageable units (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). This was

done by continually classifying and categorizing the data according to similarities and dissimilarities found in the responses. When this was done, the next step was to compile the data to make sense of the views and perceptions that the respondents shared during the interviewing process. These responses are first tabulated for the purposes of illustrating the different responses based on race, gender and field of study. Then all this was later interpreted in a manner that will specifically answer the research question. The manner in which data was analysed also reflects the mixed method research approach that was employed by this dissertation.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), ethical concerns are based on the 'proper' way to execute research, especially not to cause harm to the respondents during the research process. When I commenced my field work I was mindful of the great responsibility to be sensitive and respectful of the research respondents throughout the research process. In this regard, throughout my field work and study I would first introduce myself and explain to the respondents what the research is about and what would happen with the information they share. In particular, I (a) spelled out the aim and objectives of the study as well as the procedures to be followed up front to everybody taking part in the research (such as recording their responses); (b) respondents were advised that partaking in the study was absolutely voluntary, and that should there be a need or a reason to withdraw from the study, they have the right to do so at any given time. Similarly, I disclosed (c) that every candidate of the study should give an informed consent, this is for the purposes of only having keen participants to partake in the study. Lastly, I respected their privacy at all times and treated all they shared with confidentiality (see Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In fact, the need for anonymity was stressed by some of the students, who expressed that they want to remain anonymous. In that regard pseudonyms will be used in place of students who requested to be anonymous.

3.7. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Most of the limitations experienced were manifest in the stage of collecting data. Firstly, it was the initial intention of the thesis to divide the sample roughly between two genders and between the four races (as illustrated on the tables above). So that there could be an equal distribution of both genders and races. However, upon obtaining the initial list of final-year students, it became apparent that there could be equal distribution of students among the different categories as outlined in (Table 1). Therefore, that was the first limitation of the study.

Moreover, the breakdown from the list according to faculty was broad in a sense that students from each faculty may have varying majors that channel them into varying career streams. Therefore, this difference on its own caused a different layer of perceptions. For instance, though students were from the same faculty, like commerce, they had varying career streams that influenced their perceptions differently. However, the scope of the research dissertation fell short of considering the different departments as one of the factors influencing students' perceptions.

Another challenge that was faced was that some students who were approached seemed to be reluctant. Some students showed interest but never showed up for the scheduled interviews. This made the research process delay and thus also affected the total number of students interviewed.

3.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the methods and techniques adopted to conduct the essential part of research, which is to gain information that speaks to the research question. All these methods speak to the research objectives and have, for the most part, enabled the success of the process of the data collection. Notwithstanding, the methods were not without their shortcomings as already discussed. The next chapter looks at the demographics breakdown of the students based on their race, gender and field of study, in order to have a picture of the respondents as well as to understand the influence (if any) that these factors have on their views and perceptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE STUDENTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the demographics of the students. These are the same demographics that helped achieve one of the goals of the research which is to differentiate students views of the labour market and perceptions of their employability based on their race, gender and field of study. Therefore, these demographics were also important as they formed a criteria for the sample selection and thus reducing the sample to the needed informants of the research and not just any student. These demographics reveal who the students are and it aides the understanding of the bearing that these factors have on the students views and perceptions.

These demographics were initially considered to identify different strata of informants to answer the research questions as they are amongst others that shape one's labour market outcomes and shape one's employability (Moleke, 2005). This is recognized by the SLM theory as well as the literature on the state of South African labour market which confirms that different races and genders factor into one's labour market outcomes and the type of occupation they fall into (Cassim, 1979; Moleke, 2005). Therefore, this information is important to first know the informants that are being studied, to help understand the role that these factors paly in their perceptions and thus enable the research to compare between students based on these factors. Therefore, the chapter outlines the race, gender and faculty cohort of the sampled final-year students from Rhodes University in below tables respectively.

4.2. FACULTY COMPOSITION OF FINAL YEAR STUDENTS

Table 4.1. Distribution of students per faculty

Faculty	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Humanities	23	40.35
Commerce	13	22.01
Science	8	14.04
Education	6	10.53

Pharmacy	5	8.77
Law	2	3.51

Table 4.1**.** illustrates the total number of informants (final-year students) from each faculty. The composition indicates that the Humanities faculty has the largest number of final-year undergraduate students (informants) with 40.35%. Following this is the Commerce faculty which make up the 22.01% of the entire sample. This denotes that the humanities faculty has about double of the number of the commerce students. The table also shows that the third largest faculty is the Science faculty which has 14.04%. The three faculties that had a small number of students are the Education faculty, with 10.53%, followed by the pharmacy faculty, with 8.77%, the very least of these was the law faculty with only 3.51% students representing the final-year students sampled in that faculty.

4.3. RACE COMPOSITION OF THE FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS FROM EACH OF THE SIX FACULTIES

Table 4.2. Distribution of students by race

Racial Groups	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Black	39	68.41
White	17	29.82
Indian	1	1.75
Total	57	100

Table 4.2. Indicates the different races that were sampled. As has been explained in the research design chapter, the only race that did not make the study was the coloured population group. Therefore, the table shows that the black group was the highest, with 68.41%, followed by the white racial group, with 29.82% and the least of these was the Indian population group which only had 1.75% student sampled. This also stands to reason that the black population group have the most recorded responses than any other race.

4.4. COMPOSITION BY GENDER FROM EACH FACULTY

Table 4.3. Total number of students by both genders

Sex	**frequency**	**percentage**

Female	35	61.40
Male	22	38.57
Total	57	100

Table 4.3 shows the total number of the two genders that took part in the study. The female gender, with 61.40% makes up the highest total of students followed by the males, with only 38.57%.

4.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the demographics of the study as they were necessary in answering the research question as well as owing to the fact that these factors are amongst the others that determines one's entry in the labour market. Knowing this information will aid the understanding of students' perception in relation to these factors and it will also enable the comparison of the perceptions as different demographics lead people to experience and perceive things differently. The following chapters (five and six) both tabulate the gathered perceptions/responses. Results will be shown on tables then described accordingly. Therefore, the student responses will be categorised for the purposes of showing the differences and similarities on basis of faculty, race and gender. This was another reason that the quantitative methods were adopted in conjunction with the qualitative methods. In essence, the table will be disaggregating responses into these factors: gender, race and degree. This disaggregation is better done in tables as will presented in chapter five and six respectively. As it may not be as clearly presented in Chapter 7, which provides a discussion of these perceptions in relation to the literature review specifically. Therefore, the very core feature of these chapters (5 and 6) is to explore what the views are of students and thus show how they vary based on these factors.

CHAPTER FIVE

PERECEPTIONS OF THE STATE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research findings of the study of final-year students conducted at Rhodes University. The findings will be presented by way of tables and brief descriptions will be provided to explain the findings further. This chapter reports and describes the opinions that students have about the state of the South African labour market from all the 57 sampled informants. This data is reported generally and comparatively on the basis of the respondents' field of study, gender and race. In other words, the chapter will mainly look at the differences and similarities between these three factors. It is important to note that because students raised similar ideas in their response to the research question. The dissertation will use these repeated views as a set of responses for each question and thus report on the data based on these responses.

5.2. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET

In the attempt to find out what the respondents know about the labour market and all that pertains to it. The dissertation deployed a set of preliminary questions that were geared to inform the research if respondents know what some trends of the South African labour market are. However, owing to the limited scope of the dissertation, not all labour market trends and factors were exhausted, only a few (i.e. unemployment, inequality in the labour market, and employers requirements for labour market entry). Therefore, in investigating students' views of the labour market, respondents were asked questions on these issues of unemployment, inequality in the labour market and what they thought were the labour market requirements. It was necessary to ask these questions to see how students view and understand these issues and to investigate if and/or how their views and understanding of the labour market informs what they think of their employability. As a result, a few common ideas emerged in their responses. These responses will be tabulated under the themes below.

These themes look (i) at what students understand to be the causes of unemployment, and what they think are the strategies that can be implemented to curb unemployment causes. (ii) the second theme looks at what students think it takes to enter the labour market as well as what they think employers are looking for based on qualities, skills and expertise. (iii) The third theme explores if students are aware of the inequalities and differences in the labour market, and what they think the consequences of these differences are for them.

Indeed, data from these questions helped establish what students understand to be the labour market and this is explained throughout the data analysis and discussion (Chapter 7). This current chapter only gives the descriptive analysis of the data.

5.2.1. Perception of Unemployment

The research sought amongst other things to find out from students what they attribute the causes of the eminent issue of unemployment to, as well as what they think the solutions to unemployment could be. Unemployment, is not only a significant trend of the South African labour market (as well as internationally) it is the issue that informed my research (however, the thesis only focuses on graduate unemployment especially). Since the research wants to investigate students' views of the labour market, it was necessary to find out what their thoughts on unemployment are as an issue that applies to them as well.

While Burger and Fintel (2009:1) maintain that, the issue of unemployment is of concern to policy makers and labour market participants. Data has also shown that students, as they prepare to enter the labour market are also concerned by this issue. All students that were sampled (57 in total) had something to say about the causes of unemployment and in their responses, though not always explicitly expressed it was implied that they are concerned about it. Although students did not give exhaustive lists to what causes unemployment/ or what could be regarded as causes of unemployment. It is important to note at this point that each student saw the unemployment issue as a real and big problem in South Africa that can potentially negatively affect them the future workforce. The three tables below present the frequent responses of the participants by faculty, race and gender.

The dissertation (taking from the overall responses) identified the five frequently perceived causes of unemployment which is *(i) lack of experience, (ii) skills mismatch/ skills shortages, (iii)abundant supply of graduates, (iv) corruption and (v) others* (this category refers to the causes that were only mentioned by a few students who attributed unemployment to the effects

of capital system, the junk status of the economy and the political and economic history of the country). Therefore, data under this theme will be reported in respect of these responses.

Table 5.1. Perceived causes of unemployment by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities%	**Commerce%**	**Science%**	**Education%**	**Pharmacy%**	**Law%**	**Total%**
Lack of experience	39.13	3.51			1.75		21.05
Skills mismatch/ Skills shortage	1.75		8.77				10.53
Abundant supply of same degrees	3.51	7.02	3.51	1.75	1.75	1.75	19.30
Corruption	8.77	5.26		3.51		1.75	19.30
Lack of entrepreneurship	10.53		1.75	5.26	5.26		22.81
Other (i.e. junk status, capitalist system)		7.02					7.01
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 5.1 compares final-year students' opinions on the perceived causes of the South African unemployment by faculty. The results thus indicate that the Humanities faculty with 39.13% constitute the highest percentage of students that attribute unemployment to *lack of experience.* This is followed by the Pharmacy faculty with 11.75%. The commerce faculty had the least percentage with only 3.51% students attributing unemployment to lack of experience. *Skills mismatch/shortage* was identified as a cause of unemployment by students from two faculties, the Science faculty with 8.77% constituting the highest percentage. Followed by the Humanities faculty with just only 1.75%. The table also indicates that the *abundant supply of degrees* was the most agreed upon cause of unemployment. The commerce faculty with 7.02 % constitutes the highest percentage of students who perceive the abundant supply of degrees as the cause of unemployment. They were followed by the Humanities and Education faculty with the same number of students who constituted 3.51% respectively. The lowest percentage was constituted by the Pharmacy and Law students with 1.75% respectively.

The table also illustrates that *corruption* was perceived as a cause of unemployment by students from four faculties, the highest being the Humanities faculty with 8.77%, followed by the Commerce students with 5.26% and education faculty with 3.51%. *Lack of entrepreneurship programmes* was identified by four faculties as another cause of unemployment. The table shows that, once again the Humanities faculty made up the highest percentage with 10.53%. Followed by the Education and Pharmacy faculty with 5.26% respectively. The Science faculty constitutes the lowest percentage with only 1.75%. The table also shows that only 7.02% students from the Commerce faculty attribute other factors to the issue of unemployment. Overall the table indicates that the is common agreement from all faculties on the abundance of supply as the cause of unemployment.

Table 5.2. Perceived cause of unemployment by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	Total (%)
Lack of experience	14.04	5.26	1.75	21.05
Skills mismatch/ Skills shortage	7.02	3.51		10.53
Abundant supply of same degrees	12.28	7.02		19.30
Corruption	15.79	3.51		19.30
Lack of entrepreneurship	12.28	10.53		22.81
Others	7.02			7.01
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	57

Table 5.2. Indicates, based on race, that black students are the largest group of students that attribute unemployment to lack of experience with 14.04%. Followed by whites who make up 8.77% and Indian/s only make up 1.75 per cent. This also show that all sampled races agreed on the lack of experience as the cause of unemployment. On skills mismatch, the table expresses that black students, with 7.02% are the most who thought unemployment is caused by skills mismatch while whites constituted the lowest percentage with 3.51%. The table also indicates that the abundant supply was attributed to unemployment predominately by black students with 12.28%, the white population constituted the lowest population making up only 7.02%. Furthermore, the table shows that blacks, with 15.79% constituted the highest number

of students that thought corruption was the cause of unemployment and whites being the lowest population group with 3.51%.

This also indicates the significant gap between the figures of the black and white population. On the lack of entrepreneurship programmes, the table shows also that black students made up 12.28% which makes them the highest group and thus making white students the lowest group that think lack on entrepreneurship adds to the already existing unemployment trend. Additionally, the table indicates that the small group of students who attributed the causes of unemployment to other factors constituted only of black students with only 7.03%. Overall, again, the black population constitutes the highest percentage on all identified causes of unemployment, this could also be that the black population constitute the highest number as illustrated on the table (total number of black population) in perceiving the lack of experience as the cause of unemployment, followed by whites and the only Indian also shared this sentiment.

Table 5.3. Perceptions of unemployment by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	
Lack of experience	7.02	14.04	21.05
Skills mismatch/ Skills shortage	1.75	8.77	10.53
Abundant supply of same degree	8.77	10.53	19.30
Corruption	7.02	12.28	19.30
Lack of entrepreneurship programmes/ entrepreneurs	12.28	10.53	22.81
Other	1.75	5.26	7.01
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.3 illustrates that the female cohort constituted the highest percentage in all perceived responses, with the male cohort making up the lowest percentage of all students. Again, the table shows that the most perceived cause of unemployment is the *lack of experience*, with females constituting the highest percentage of 14.04% and the males only 7.02%. Followed by the lack of *entrepreneurial programmes* with males making up the highest percentage of 12.28% while females, with 10.53%, constituted the lowest percentage. Furthermore, the table indicates that *abundant supply of degrees/ shortages of degrees* was the second highest cause

identified by students and the figures show that females, with 10.53% had the highest percentage followed by males who had 8.77% as the lowest. Following this was *corruption* which was identified mostly by 12.28% of females and less so by males. The *other* factors were attributed to by mostly females with 5.26% and males constituting 1.75%.

5.2.2. Proposed Strategies against Unemployment

Now that we know that unemployment is a problem that has enjoyed a lot of attention from the government and policy makers. A lot of strategies have been put in place as an attempt to alleviate the unemployment issue, some of which their effectiveness is questioned and debated to date (Burger & Fintel, 2009; National Treasury). Again, in pursuit of investigating the students' perceptions of the labour market, the research also attempted to find out what students had to say about unemployment as a social and economic ill. Therefore, in addition to what the causes of unemployment are, students were asked to suggest ways that they think can help mitigate the unemployment issue. This question concurrently seeks to find out if students know the existing strategies put in place to combat the issue of unemployment.

Therefore, on the question of what could be done to minimise the unemployment issue, data reveals that there are five most frequently expressed ideas by the 57 students. These are: (i) that there should be training that replaces the requirement for experience, (ii) Universities should offer practical skills to students who do not already have them in their curriculum (i.e Humanities). (iii) Dissemination of information in terms of what to study and what not to (i.e. career centres). (iv) Government should create jobs; (v) Government should invest in entrepreneurial programmes for the youth, so that when they do not get employment they can venture in entrepreneurial careers. Conversely, some students were of the view that fixing unemployment may be an impossible task. These students will be categorized under (*others*) for the purposes of this table.

Table 5.4. Proposed strategies according to faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities	**Commerce**	**Science**	**Education**	**Pharmacy**	**Law**	
Employers should provide training	12.28	5.26	7.02				24.56
Universities should include	7.02						7.02

practical skills to courses							
Dissemination of information/ career centers etc.	8.77		1.75	7.02		1.75	19.30
Government and the private sector must create more jobs	3.51		5.26	1.75	1.75		12.28
Government must invest in entrepreneurial programmes	7.02	14.04			5.26		26.32
other	1.75	3.51		1.75	1.75	1.75	10.53
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	57

Table 5.4 presents the proposed solutions for the issue of unemployment in South Africa. The figures indicate that the Humanities faculty had the highest percentage of 12.28% students who maintained that employers should provide training instead of turning students away for lack of experience. This view was shared by 7.02% students from the Science faculty, followed by the Commerce faculty with 5.26% who had the lowest percentage. These are the only three faculties that had students share this view. The table also shows that Humanities students with 7.02% was the only faculty who thought that Universities should offer practical skills, no other faculty proposed this as a strategy against unemployment. However, as is displayed on the table, there seem to be considerable agreement on the dissemination of information as one of the strategies against unemployment. The highest percentage is constituted by the Humanities faculty with 8.77% students, followed by Education with 7.02% and the lowest percentage being the Science and Law faculty with 1.75% respectively.

Another proposed solution that received considerable agreement is that *the government and the private sector should create jobs.* The science constituted the highest percentage with 5.26% of students, followed by the humanities faculty with 3.51% of students. The Education and Pharmacy faculties constituted the lowest students with 1.75% students respectively. The table further indicates that some students proposed that the government must invest in entrepreneurship programmes which can empower graduates to create their own businesses in case one does not get employment. The figures thus show that the Science faculty having 14.04% of students made up the highest percentage, followed by the Humanities faculty with 7.02% and the Pharmacy faculty constituting the lowest percentage with 5.26% students

sharing the same sentiment. Finally, the results show that students who not see any hope of curbing the unemployment issue came from five faculties. The highest percentage is from the Commerce faculty, followed by the Humanities, Education, Pharmacy and Law faculty with only 1.75% students respectively.

Table 5.5. Proposed strategies by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Employers must provide training	15.79	8.77		24.56
Universities should provide Practical skills	8.77			7.02
Dissemination of information/ career centres etc	10.53	5.26		19.30
Government and/or the private sector must create jobs	10.53		1.75	12.28
Government must promote entrepreneurial programmes	14.04	12.28		26.32
Other	7.02	3.51		10.53
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 5.5 compares the students proposed strategies by on race. Thus, the figures express that the black population have the highest percentage of students who maintain that employers should provide training and the white population made up the lowest percentage with 8.77% students. Looking at the table one can observe that it is only the black population, with 8.77% that maintained that universities should include practical skills to the curriculums offered. The table also shows that the dissemination of information was one of the proposed strategies with 12.28% students constituting the highest percentage and the white population, with 5.26% constituting the lowest percentage. Another proposed strategy was that the government and/or the private sector must create jobs. The black population being the highest with 10.53% and the Indian population with only 1.75%. Additionally, the results show that the black population, with 14.04% made up the largest group of students who maintained that the government must promote entrepreneurial programmes. While the white population constituted the lowest

percentage with only 12.28%. Finally, the results express that students who thought there are no strategies against unemployment comprised largely of the black population with 7.02% thus making the white population, with 3.51% the lowest group. Overall, one can observe that the black population constituted the highest percentage on all proposed strategies.

Table 5.6. Proposed strategies by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Employers should provide training	10.53	14.04	24.56
University should offer Practical skills for all courses	1.75	5.26	7.02
Dissemination of information/ career centres etc.	12.28	7.02	19.30
Government must create jobs	3.51	8.77	12.28
Government must promote entrepreneurial programmes	14.04	12.28	26.32
other	3.51	7.02	10.53
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.6. Compares the responses by gender. The figures show that on the females with 14.04% are the most students who uphold that employers should provide training. Therefore, the male cohort with 10.53% constitute the lowest percentage. Similarly, 5.26% females constitute the highest percentage of students who think that universities should include practical skills to the curricular, followed by the lowest percentage of 1.75% males. Conversely, data shows that most males, with 12.28% proposed the dissemination of information as the strategy against unemployment. While the female group, with 7.02% constituted the lowest percentage on this proposed strategy. Looking at the table, one can observe that again the female group constituted the highest group of students who maintain that the government and/or private sector should create more jobs, while males only made up 3.51% of the students. Conversely, the males made up the largest group of students who upheld that the government should invest and promote entrepreneurial programmes. Whereas the students

who were cynical about unemployment being mitigated made up 7.02% of the female category and only 3.51% of the male cohort.

5.3. STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS REQUIREMENTS FROM GRADUATES.

Another question that was asked pertaining to the labour market was about employers, as they form a big part of the labour market. They are the ones who create the demand for employment, for there to be employees there should be employers (Atfield & Purcell, 2010; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010). So, employers play a big role in how the labour market functions. It is because of this reason that it was befitting to investigate what students think of employers and what their perceptions are about what employers want. This question was undergirded by the assumption that students may not exactly know what employers want because they are not practically in the labour market. But that they would have an idea of what is required of them by the employers. It was surprising to find out that students had a lot to say about employers and what they thought was mostly sought after by employers in terms of qualifications, skills and qualities.

Therefore, data reveals that students were of the opinion that employers require (i) experience (ii) professional degrees/ graduates who specialize (iii) well-rounded candidates (most students explained that a degree is not enough, a graduate must have other qualities, i.e. adaptable, reliable, flexible etc). Furthermore, (iv) Diverse skills (e.g. people skills etc), however some students were of the mind that what employers want depends with one's career path. They expressed that not every career path requires that same skills set or qualities. For instance, in my opinion a teacher will be required to possess qualification/s, skills and possibly qualities different from those that would be required from a Scientist. Thus, data will be tabulated to disaggregate these responses by student's faculty, gender and race.

Table 5.7. Students perceptions by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Experience	17.54	5.26					22.81
Professional degrees/ specializing candidates	8.77	3.51	5.26		1.75		19.30

Well-rounded candidates	5.26	3.51	1.75	1.75	3.51	3.51	19.30
Diverse skills (i.e people skills)	8.77	7.02	7.02	7.02	1.75		31.58
Depends on career path		3.51		1.75	1.75		7.02
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 5.7 shows that the Humanities faculty with 17.57% constitutes of the highest percentage of students who perceived experience as being required by employers, this was followed by the Commerce students which constitutes 5.26% of the students who were of the same view. Another requirement identified by students is that of professional degrees or particularly graduates who have obtained specializing qualifications. The results indicate that four faculties shared the same sentiment with the Humanities faculty having 8.77 per cent students, followed by the Science faculty with 5.26 per cent students and the Commerce faculty with 3.51%. The Pharmacy with 1.75% constituted the lowest percentage. Furthermore, looking at the table one can observe that students seemed to agree on the idea that employers require well-rounded candidates. The highest percentage of such students is from the Humanities faculty with 5.26%, they were followed by Commerce, Pharmacy and Law faculties with 3.51% respectively. While Science and Education students, with 1.75% respectively constituted the lowest percentage of all the students that maintained the same view. *Diverse skills* were also deemed as the requirement of employers with five faculties sharing this view. The table shows again that Humanities faculty had the highest percentage with 8.77% students, followed by the Commerce, Science and Education with 7.02% respectively and the Pharmacy students constituted the lowest percentage. The students who claimed that employer's requirements differ with each career path where only from three faculties, the Commerce faculty making up the highest percentage with 3.51 students, followed by the Education and Pharmacy students constituting the lowest percentage with only 1.75% students

Table 5.8. Perceptions by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Experience	17.54	5.26		22.81
professional degrees/	14.04	3.51	1.75	19.30

specializing graduates				
Well-rounded candidates	10.53	8.77		19.30
Diverse skills (i.e people skills)	21.05	10.53		31.58
Depends on career path	5.26	1.75		7.02
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 5.8 shows a comparative illustration of students' responses by race. The results of the data express that the black population group constituted the highest percent of students who thought employers required experience. This view was shared by the White population group who constituted the lowest percentage on the same view. Students also agreed on the idea that employers require professional degrees and/or candidates with specializing degrees. All population groups agreed on this notion, with the black population group making up 14.04% percent of students. Followed by the white population with 5.26%. The Indian group constituted the lowest percentage. The table also shows that the black population group, with 10.53% was the highest in perceiving that employers require a well-rounded candidate. Whereas white students constituted a slightly lower percentage with 8.77% students. Again, most students who were of the opinion that employers require one to have diverse skills are from the black population, which constituted the highest number with 21.05 and the white population only constituting 1.75%. Therefore, looking at the table one can also see that a significant number of black students were of the view that employers look for an amalgamation of skills, as this perception constitutes the highest number and was shared by most of the white population with the 10.53% as the highest percentage than the rest. Moreover, the 5.26%, students who claimed that what employers require depends on the career path one pursues, were from the black population group with only 1.75% students from the white population.

Table 5.9. Perceptions by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Experience	8.77%	14.04%	22.81%
Professional degrees/ specializing candidates	10.53%	8.77%	19.30%
Well-rounded candidates	7.02%	12.28%	19.30%
Diverse skills (i.e people skills)	8.77%	22.81%	31.58%
Depends on career path	3.51%	3.51%	7.02%

Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.9 presents the data based on the student's race. The results indicate that a large number of females, with 14.04% regarded experience as being sought after by employers, while only 8.77% of males maintained the same view. Conversely, the male cohort, with 10.53% constituted the highest percentage of students who thought that employers look for professional degrees and specializing candidates whereas only 8.77% of the female cohort shared the same sentiment. Again, one can see that the female cohort made up a large number of students with 12.28% students thinking that employers require well rounded people. This view was also raised by 7.02% of male students. One can observe that the idea that employers look for diverse skills was alluded to the most by 22.81% of the female cohort while the male cohort constituted the lowest with 8.77%. Finally, as presented in the table there is an equal percentage of students from both genders who claimed that employers have different requirements for different career paths, these students constituted 3.51% respectively.

5.3.1. Perceptions on what students think it takes to enter the Labour Market

The above discussed theme was coupled with the question of what students thought it took to enter the labour market. This question sought to investigate what student attributed the success of obtaining employment to in the labour market that is infested with inequalities. The SLM theory (Cassim, 1982; White, 2010) and some existing literature (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017) claim that there are various factors that impact the employment prospects and outcomes in the labour market apart from just having a degree (as predicted out by the HCT). These include, but are not limited to, social structures, differences on grounds of gender (as pointed out by the SLM theory) and connections, networking, social media and many others (as pointed out by some existing research). Indeed, data reveals that students were opinionated on what they thought it took to enter the labour market, with others confirming the existing research that it takes (i) connections and/or networking. (ii) some thought that it simply took having experience, (iii) others were of the view that obtaining further higher qualifications such as a Masters/PhD degree is what it takes to succeed in the labour market. (iv) Another group of students claimed that what it takes to enter the labour market is simply how well one sells him/herself. These perceptions are compared in the tables below based on faculty, gender and race.

Table 5.10. Perception on what it takes to enter the labour market, by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Experience	12.28	10.53	3.51	1.75	1.75		29.82
Connections/ nepotism	8.77	3.51	1.75	5.26	3.51	1.75	24.56
Further/ higher qualification (MA & PhD)	14.04		7.02				21.05
How well you sell yourself	5.26	8.77	1.75	3.51	3.51	1.75	24.56
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 5.10 presents the students opinions by faculty. The results show that the Humanities faculty, having 12.28% constituted the highest group of students who thought that it takes having experience to enter the labour market. Followed by the Commerce faculty with 10.53% and the Science faculty had 3.51% students maintaining the same opinion. Whereas, the Education and Pharmacy faculties constituted the lowest faculty with only 1.75% students respectively. Again, one can see that the Humanities faculty, with 8.77% had more students who thought that it takes nepotism and connections to enter the LM. They were followed by the Education faculty with 5.26%. This view was shared by the Commerce and Pharmacy with 3.51% respectively. Whereas the Science faculty constituted the lowest percentage with only 1.75%.

Furthermore, the figures show that some students thought it took higher qualifications to enter the labour market, with the Humanities faculty constituting the highest percentage with 14.04% students while the Science faculty only had 7.02%. The table also shows that the Commerce faculty, with 8.77%, had most students who associated the labour market entry to how one sells him/herself. Followed by the Humanities faculty with 5.26%. which was in turn followed by the Education and Pharmacy faculties with 3.51% respectively. Whereas the Science and Law faculties constituted the lowest percentages with only 1.75% Overall the table indicates that there was common agreement across all faculties on two ideas maintained by students. That is, the idea that it takes connections/nepotism to enter the labour market and the idea that how well one sells him/herself is what it takes to enter the LM.

Table 5.11. Perception on what it takes to enter the labour market by race

Response categories	Groups by Race	

	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	Total (%)
Experience	21.05	8.77		29.82
Connections/ nepotism	15.79	7.02	1.75	24.56%
Further qualification (MA & Phd)	14.04	7.02		21.05%
How well you sell yourself	17.54	7.02		24.56%
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	57

Table 5.11 illustrates data by race. The table indicates that the black population constituted the most number of students who identified experience, with 21.05% whereas the white population only had 8.77%. The group that identified connections and /nepotism constituted of 15.79% the black population and only 7.02% of the white population followed by the Indian population with only 1.75%. Again, the black population, 14.04% constituted the highest number of students who identified further qualifications, the lowest group was the white population with 7.02%. Finally, according to the table, most students who identified that it takes how one sell themselves to enter the labour market are black students with 17.54% and the white population made up the lowest population with 7.02% is the Overall, the results show that on all views that students raised, the black population constituted the highest percentage.

Table 5.12. *Perception on what it takes to enter the labour market by gender.*

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Experience	14.04%	15.79%	29.82
Connections/ nepotism	7.02%	17.54%	24.56%
Further qualification (MA & Phd)	8.77%	12.28%	21.05%
How well you sell yourself	8.77%	15.79%	24.56%
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.12 compares students' responses by gender. The table indicates that females, with 19.79% are the most group of students who identified that it takes having experience to enter the labour market. While the male cohort only made up 14.04%. Again, females, with 17.74% were the most students who described connections and nepotism as followed by males with 7.02%. Moreover, the highest percentage of students who identified higher qualification was that of females while males where slightly lower with 8.77%. Finally, the figures indicate that females were the highest to claim that it takes how you sell yourself to enter the labour market with 19.79% while the male cohort, with 8.77% made up the lowest percentage once again.

These results reveal that the female cohort constituted the highest number of students on all responses provided by students on this question.

5.4. AWARENESS & THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITIES

Existing research (see Moleke, 20003-2004 etc) and the SLM theory (Reich et al, 1973; Cassim, 1987; Leontaridi, 1998) maintain that the labour market is characterised with differences and inequalities amongst different segments. These inequalities and discriminations are attributed, by the SLM theory and the existing literature to the exisitng differences in gender, race and other social forces. It is against this background that the dissertation sought to also find out if students are aware of this discrimination and inequalities and thus explore what students think of the consequences that these inequalities and differences have on their employment outcomes. The research sought to find this out by posing two questions: (i) whether students are aware of the labour market changes? (i) and what they think are the consequences of these inequalities on their employment outcomes.

Data also reveals that all students are aware of the inequalities and differences in the labour market but the opinions of how these would affect them were varied on many levels. There are students who were of the opinion that they would be negatively affected by the labour market inequalities (whether on the basis of gender, race or qualification). While some students did not think they would be affected by the inequalities, even though they were aware of the inequalities in the labour market. However, some students, while they did not think they will be totally affected by the inequalities, they questioned the reliability and effectiveness of the laws put in place to offset the labour market inequalities. The last group of students submitted that they were totally indifferent about the inequalities, in other words, they did not think much about how the inequalities would affect them even though they were aware of them. These views are illustrated on the tables below and will be presented in comparison on the basis of the faculty, race and gender.

Table 5.13. Perceptions of the impact of the labour market discrimination by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Affected by inequalities	19.30	7.02	3.51	3.51			33.33

Not affected by inequalities	10.53	8.77	3.51	5.26	7.02	3.51	38.60
Question reliability and effectiveness of new democratic dispensation	8.77	3.51	5.26		1.75		19.30
Indifferent about the impact of inequalities	1.75	3.51	1.75	1.75			8.77
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 5.13 presents data by faculty. The table indicates that the Humanities faculty, with 19.30% faculty constituted the highest number of students who thought they will be affected by the labour market inequalities. This was followed by the Commerce faculty, with 7.02%. The table also shows that the Science and the Education faculty constituted the lowest percentage of students on the same view. The table shows that there are students who did not think they will be affected by the labour market inequalities. This sentiment was shared by students across all six faculties. and the faculty that constituted the highest percentage was the Humanities faculty with 10.53%. Followed by the Commerce faculty with 8.77% of students, followed by the Pharmacy faculty with 7.02%. The Education faculty constituted the second lowest percentage with 5.26% students. The lowest percentage of 3.51% was made up by the Science and Law faculty.

Furthermore, the table indicates that there are students who questioned the effectiveness of the labour laws in remedying discrimination. This highest percentage of students was from the Humanities faculty with 8.77%, followed by the Science faculty with 5.26% students, then the Science faculty with only 3.51%. The lowest of these faculties was the Pharmacy faculty with only 1.75%. The last group of students as presented in the table expressed that they were indifferent about the labour market inequalities with only four faculties sharing this sentiment. The highest percentage was from the Commerce faculty and the Education faculty, with 1.75% respectively constituted the lowest percentage.

Table 5.14. Perceptions of the impact of the labour market discrimination by race.

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**

Affected by inequalities	22.81%	8.77%	1.75%	33.33%
Not affected by inequalities	26.31%	12.28%		38.60%
Question reliability and effectiveness of labour laws	15.79%	3.51%		19.30%
Indifferent about the impact of inequalities	3.51%	5.26%		8.77%
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 5.14 compares data based on the population groups. The table illustrates that the Black population, with 22.81% constituted the highest percentage of students who thought they would be affected by labour market inequalities., followed by the white population with 8.77% and the Indian population group constituted the lowest percentage with 1.75%. the table indicates that this sentiment was agreed upon by all three sampled racial populations. The table also indicate that the Black population has the highest percentage of students who did not think they could be negatively affected by the LM inequalities. While the white population constituted only 12.28%. Furthermore, the black population, with 15.79% made up the highest percentage of students who doubted the purpose for which the labour laws were enacted. The white population had only 3.51%. Conversely, the white population, with 5.26% constituted the highest percentage of students who were indifferent about the LM inequalities, with the black population only constituting only 3.51%.

Table 5.15. Perceptions of the impact of the labour market discrimination by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Affected by inequalities	14.04	19.30	33.33
Not affected by inequalities	12.28	26.31	38.60
Question reliability and effectiveness of new democratic dispensation	7.02	12.28	19.30
Indifferent about inequalities	5.26	3.51	8.77
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.15 compares the student's data based on their gender. Looking at the table one can observe that the female students had the highest percentage with 19.30%, while the male cohort

was significantly low with only 14.04%. Again, the black population had the highest group of students with 26.31% and the male cohort only constituted 12.28%. The table also expressed that most of the students who were sceptical of the LM laws constituted 12.28% of the female cohort while the male cohort constituted a lower percentage of 7.02%. However, the table indicates that male students constituted 5.26% with the female group being the lowest with only 3.51%.

5.4.1. Perceived changes from the pre-1994 to the post 1994 labour market

Given that some of the existing literature on the state of the labour market claims that the contemporary labour market is still plagued by inequalities despite the efforts of the democratic government to devise some legislation aimed at reversing the injustices and inequalities created by the apartheid system. This research is also interested in finding out what students' views are about the changes of the South African labour market from the pre-1994 to the post 194 labour market. This was to investigate whether students know the history and the events that led to the contemporary labour market. Therefore, students were divided in their opinions, (i) some students seemed convinced that there have been some changes, (ii) some of them claim that there are no significant changes. There was a group of students that thought that the changes from the apartheid era have been made to a limited extent. However, a small number of students where simply of the mind that there is more work needed. These sentiments will be tabulated below to show the differences between faculty, gender and race.

Table 5.16. Perceptions by faculty, on whether there have been changes from pre-to post 1994 labour market

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Yes	10.53	7.02	3.51	1.75		1.75	24.56
To a limited extent	19.30	10.53	5.26	7.02	5.26	1.75	49.12
More work needed	3.51	5.26	1.75	1.75	3.51		15.79
No significant change	7.02		3.51				10.53
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 5.16 presents the views of students on the changes of the labour market by faculty. The table thus shows that the faculty that constituted the highest percentage of students who thought that there has be some significant changes, is the Humanities faculty, with 10.53%. This was followed by the Commerce faculty with 7.02%. The Science faculty had 3.51% while students from the Education and Law faculty constituted the lowest percentage with 1.75% respectively. The table indicates that there was considerable agreement from all faculties by students who thought that the changes of the LM were limited. On this view, the Humanities faculty had a significantly high percentage, followed by the Education faculty with 7.02%. The Commerce faculty had 10.53% followed by the Science and Pharmacy with 5.26%, while Law constituted the lowest percentage with 1.75%. On the view that more work needs to be done, the table shows that the highest group of students with, 5.26% study in the Commerce faculty. Followed by the Humanities and Pharmacy faculties with 3.51% students separately. However, the Science and the Education constituted the lowest percentage with only 1.75%. Furthermore, the table indicates that only two faculties had students who perceived no changes at all, claiming that things were still the same. The highest percentage of students was from the humanities students with 7.02% and the lowest was the Science faculty with only 3.51% students of the same view.

Table 5.17. Perceptions by race, on whether there have been changes from pre to post 1994 labour market

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Yes	8.77	14.04	1.75	24.56%
To a limited extent	36.84	12.28		49.12%
More work needed	14.04	3.51		15.79
No significant change	8.77			10.53
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 5.17 reports on the students' views by race. The first observable thing is that there was considerable agreement amongst all population groups by students who were convinced that there are some changes in the contemporary labour market. Most of the students who maintained this view are from white population with 14.04%, followed by the black population with 8.77% while the Indian population only constituted 1.75%. Conversely, the black population constituted the highest percentage, with 36.84% students who thought that the

changes were only limited, while the white population had 12.28%. Again, one can observe from the table that the black population, with 14.04% had the most number of students who were of the view that more work was needed to change the state of the contemporary LM while the white population constituted a significantly low percentage with only 3.51%. Additionally, the table expressed that only black students claimed that there were no significant changes in the contemporary LM.

Table 5.18. Perceptions by gender, on whether there have been changes from pre-to post 1994 labour market

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Yes	10.53	14.04	24.56
To a limited extent	19.30	29.83	49.12
More work needed	5.26	10.53	15.79
No significant change	3.51	7.02	10.53
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 5.18 compares the students' views by their gender. It thus illustrates that the female cohort, with 14.04% had the highest percentage of students who thought that there has been changes, while only 10.53% of the male cohort shared the same view. Again, one can observe that the female cohort, with 29.83% was the highest in maintaining that there are changes to a limited extent, whereas the male cohort was slightly lower with only 19.30%. Moreover, the table shows that more female students, with 10.53% claimed that more work was needed with only 5.26% of males upholding the same view. Lastly, one can observe yet again from the table that 7.02% of female students did not perceive any significant changes in the labour market, followed by a lower percentage of the male students expressing the same view.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the descriptive analysis of the data of students' views on the state of the South African labour market. Doing this has helped establish what students understand of the labour market they aspire to be a part of in the near future. Indeed, the data reveals that students have concrete perceptions of the state of the South African labour market. They understand the severity of unemployment and that it is a pressing issue that not only concerns them, but they also think there are strategies needed to mitigate it. Data also reveals that students have a concrete mind-set of what they think employers are looking for and the

common agreement across the faculty is that employers look for specific degrees and they want an adaptable and flexible candidate. Another significant outcome of this data is that students are not only aware of the inequalities, but they are also concerned about how these labour market differences and inequalities will affect them. Over and above, obtaining this information has helped gain a general idea of what final-year students understand of the labour market and thus will help understand how these views shape or influence the students' perceptions of their employability. Which put differently is to understand what students think of their chances of being employed. Consequently, the following chapter describes the data of the student's perceptions of their employability.

CHAPTER SIX

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EMPLOYABILITY

6.1. INTRODUCTION

We have so far explored --on the part of students-- some common understandings and viewpoints they have about the state of the labour market in South Africa. Data on the labour market subject matter has established a few things, firstly that students believe that there are degrees/qualifications that are demanded than others. (ii) Students have identified some factors such as lack of experience to potentially render people unemployed. (iii) that employers are looking for well-rounded, flexible and adaptable people because of the competitive nature of the job market. (iv) Additionally, it has also established that inequalities in the labour market play a role in whether one gets employed or not and as far as determining what occupational category they fall into. These findings have helped gain a picture of what students perceive of the LM, as we now understand the perception that students have about certain trends of the labour market.

We now turn to the findings of employability, which put crudely, is how students view their chances of obtaining employment. This is the main subject that my research undertook to address; it is the very heart of the research, as it sought to investigate what students think of their chances of getting employment. Therefore, the research sought to find this out by posing numerous questions ranging from, among others: (i) what students expect of/from the labour market? (ii) why they chose the degrees they are pursuing? By and large, the questions on employability explored how students perceive their chances of entering the labour market. The questions also investigated if factors such as the students' race, gender and field of study influences their beliefs of getting employment, and how exactly these factors shape their beliefs.

These question, though they are not exhaustive helped determine and gage what students think about their labour market outcomes and whether their views of the labour market have influenced their perceptions. Therefore, these questions revealed what students think of their employability in general and also how the labour market actually influences student's

employability. Data has also revealed that students' perceptions vary mostly based on their field of study, however, there were very minor variations of opinions based on race and gender. In fact, in most occasions students from all races and genders often shared same sentiment. These responses/perceptions will be presented in tables below and the figures will be illustrated in percentages.

6.2. WHY STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR DEGREES?

It is a popular saying that higher education is key to success, and that people with higher education enjoy better employment outcomes than those without it (Dias & Possel, 2007; Altbeker & Johnston, 2013; Branson & Leibbrandt, 2013; Stats SA, 2016). Stats SA has reported on numerous occasions that in the labour market, people with higher education have higher job outcomes than people with limited or no education. The HCT also proposes that education is a good investment in the labour market (Machlup, 1982; Tan, 2014). Yet there is an issue of skills mismatch in the South African LM, which is basically the idea that some people study subjects that are not marketable in the labour market (Bhorat et al, 2006). Despite these issues, surely, there is a reason why students choose to obtain tertiary education and why they study what they study. I am of the opinion that no one person wants to do something that will not guarantee her/him anything valuable in the long run.

Therefore, in finding out what students' perceptions are about their employability, I think it necessary to find out from the students themselves why they choose their careers. As that is one of the factors that shape their employability (Moleke, 2005). As a consequence, data reveals that there are quite a number of reasons students attribute to their choice of careers and degrees. These include that they are (i) *passionate or interested in the degree,* (ii) *the demand of the degree/qualification motivated them to choose it*. (iii) Some students explained that they were *rejected from their first choice* of degree and thus had to take the second available alternative. However, (iv) some students simply expressed that they made their choice upon realizing that that some degrees *offer good skills*. (v) Whereas, others unapologetically said they simply went for degrees with less stringent requirement. (vi) Another group of students, explained that they chose their degrees because they believe those particular degrees have *good employment prospects and good money*. These views will be presented in tables in order to compare them on the basis of the students' qualification, gender and race.

Table 6.1 Perceptions on choice of degree by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Passionate/ interested in degree	10.53	8.77	7.02	3.51	5.26	3.51	38.60
Highly demanded degree/ influenced by labour market demand		3.51	5.26	7.01	1.75		17.54
Rejected on first choice and took second available alternative	15.79						15.79
Realized some degrees offer good skills	12.28						12.28
Degree has less strick requirements	3.51	1.75					5.26
Good employment prospects and good money		7.02	1.75		1.75		10.53
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 6.1 compares students' views by faculty. The table illustrates that the Humanities faculty, with 10.53%, had the most students who chose their degrees because they were passionate about them. This was followed by the Commerce faculty with 8.77%, then the Science faculty with 7.02%, the Pharmacy faculty had 3.51% students. the Education and Law faculties, with 3.51% constituted the lowest number of students who raised the same view. However, some students submitted that they chose their degrees simply because they were in high demand in the labour market. Only four faculties shared the same sentiment, with the Education faculty constituting the highest percentage with 7.02%. Followed by the Commerce, Pharmacy and Law faculties with only 3.51% respectively and thus constituting the lowest percentage. Furthermore, one can observe that the Humanities faculty, with 15.79% constituted the only and highest percentage of students who claimed that because they were rejected on their first choice they had to choose other available alternatives.

Again, the table shows that students who submitted that they chose a degree that they realised offered good skills even though it was not necessarily demanded, were only from the

Humanities faculty with 12.28%. Furthermore, the Humanities faculty constituted the highest percentage with 3.51% students who attributed their chose of degree to the fact that the degree requirements were less strict, followed by the Commerce faculty with only 1.75%. However, some students stated that they considered whether the degree would secure good employment and good money when making their choice. Only three faculties maintained this view with the Commerce faculty having 7.02% followed by the Science and the Pharmacy with 1.75% respectively.

Table 6.2. Perceptions on choice of degree by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (&)**	**Total (%)**
Passionate/ interested in	24.56 %	14.04%		38.60
Highly demanded degree/ influenced by Labour market demand	12.28%	5.26%		17.54
Rejected on first choice and took second available alternative	10.53%	3.51%	1.75%	15.79
Realized some degrees offer good skills	8.77%	3.51%		12.28
Less strict requirements	5.26%			5.26
Good employment prospects and good money	7.02%	3.51%		10.53
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 6.2 compares the students' responses by race. The figures illustrate that the black population constituted the highest number with 24.56 students expressing this view while the white population only constituted 14.04%. Again, we see the black population, with 12.28% making up the highest percentage of student whose choice of degree was inspired by the demand of those particular degrees, followed by the white population with 5.26%. One can observe that all races agreed on the view that students chose their degrees upon being rejected for the first choice, with the black population, with 10.53% constituting the highest percentage. Followed the white group of students, with 3.51% while the Indian group, with 1.75%

constituted the lowest percentage. Moreover, the table shows that the black population, with 8.77% constituted the highest percentage of student who stated that they realised that other degrees offer good skills and the white population constituted 3.51%. The table shows that only the black population, with 5.26% chose their degrees based on the requirements. Lastly, one can observe that black population, with 7.02% had the highest percentage of students who chose their degrees based good employment prospects of the degree, this was followed by the white population with 3.51%.

Table 6.3. Perceptions on choice of degree by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Passionate/ interested in	12.28	26.31	38.60
Highly demanded degree/ influenced by Labour market demand	7.02	10.53	17.54
Rejected on first choice and took second available alternative	10.53	22.81	15.79
Realized some degrees offer good skills	3.51	8.77	12.28
Degree has less stringent requirements	1.75	3.51	5.26
Good employment prospects and good money	3.51	7.02	10.53
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 6.3 compares data by gender and the figures show that most female cohort, with 26.31% attributed their choice to their passion and interest of the degree. The male cohort only had 12.28%. The table also shows that the female cohort, with 10.53% constituted a higher percentage with 10.53% while males only made up 7.02% on the view that their choice was influenced by the demand of some degrees. Again, the female cohort constituted the highest percentage, with 22.81% students claiming that they were rejected for their first choice and had to take an available alternative. This was followed by the male cohort with only 10.53% students sharing this view. The table shows that 8.77% students from the female cohort chose their degrees upon realizing that some degrees offer good skills while 3.51% was from the male cohort. Furthermore, there is a significantly low percentage of students who made their choice based on the degree requirement, with only 3.51% females and 1.75% males. Yet again, the table reflects that the female cohort, with 7.02% constituted the largest percentage and the male

cohort, with 3.51% constituted the lowest percentage of students who sated that their choice was influenced by the employment success of the degree.

6.3. PERCEIVED CHANCES OF OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT

Given that students were opinionated on what it is they think employers are looking for from them as future labour market participants. It was necessary to also find out what students thought of their chances to obtain employment based on their views about employers' requirements, the state of the labour market and also considering their degrees, their gender and race. Therefore, this theme revealed the general perception that students have about their chances of finding employment in a highly competitive labour market. Data also reveals how students' perceptions differ based on their degrees, gender and race. It is important to note that students used the skills and qualities they assumed were required by employers to measure their chances of obtaining employment. Therefore, students' responses varied from others thinking they had good chances, others thought they only had limited chances while others stated that there was more work they needed to do to increase their chances. Conversely, some students did not have to worry about their chances anymore as they were already employed and due to commence employment soon after they complete their degrees. These perceptions are tabulated below by faculty, gender and race.

Table 6.4. Perceived chances by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Good	12.28	15.79	7.02	8.77	3.51	3.51	50.88
More work needed	19.30	5.26	5.26				29.84
Limited/fair	8.77						8.77
Already employed		1.75	1.75	1.75	5.26		10.53
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	57

Table 6.4 presents data by faculty thus the table shows that there was significant agreement from all faculties by students who thought they had good chances. The Commerce faculty, with 15.79% constituted the highest percentage followed by the Humanities faculty with 12.28% students. They were followed by the Education faculty with 8.77%, then the Science faculty with only 7.02%. the lowest percentage was made up by both the Pharmacy and Law faculty

with 3.51% respectively. Only students from three faculties stated that they needed to put in more work, with the Humanities faculty constituting the highest percentage, having 19.30% students. followed by the Commerce and Science faculty with 5.26% separately. The table shows that only humanities students, with 8.77% felt that they had limited chances. Furthermore, the table illustrates that some students had already secured employment, with the Pharmacy faculty constituting the highest percentage of such students followed by the Commerce, Science and Education faculty with 1.75% respectively.

Table 6.5. Perceived chances by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Good	33.33	15.79	1.75	50.88
Fair/limited	22.81	7.02		29.84
More work needed	5.26	3.51		8.77
Already employed	7.02	3.51		10.53
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 6.5 presents data by race. The table shows that there was agreement from all three population groups by students who thought they had good chances in the labour market. The highest group was the black population with 33.33%. Followed by the white population with 15.79% while the Indian group constituted the lowest percentage with only 1.75%. Again, the black population group, with 22.81% constituted the highest percentage of students who thought they had limited chances while the white population, with 7.02% constituted the lowest percentage. Furthermore, the table illustrates that 5.26% white students thought they needed to do more work with only 3.51% whites. Looking one can see that the black population, with 7.02% was the highest group that had already secured employment while the white population, with 3.51% was the lowest group.

Table 6.6. Perceived chances by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Good	21.05	29.83	50.88
Fair/limited	10.53	19.30	29.84
More work needed	3.51	5.26	8.77
Already employed	3.51	7.02	10.53
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 6.6 shows that female students, with 29.83% make up the highest percentage of students who thought they had good chances while the male cohort, with 21.05% only constitutes the lowest percentage. Students who thought they had limited chances were mostly females, with 19.30%, whereas the male cohort sharing the same sentiment only had 10.53%. Moreover, 5.26% of female students thought that they had more to work on, with only 3.511% of students sharing the same perception. While 7.02% of female students stated that they have secured employment already. Only 3.51% male students stated the same. Overall, the table shows that a significant number of students from both males and females thought they had good chances.

6.4. WHAT ARE STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS?

This question is raised in light of the fact that the labour market is highly competitive, there is stark unemployment and the issue of skills mismatch. Therefore, this question seeks to discover what students' expectations are in terms of the simplicity of getting employment, earnings and occupation positions. It appears that students think they have a lot to penetrate through to get into the labour market: the competition with other students, the fact that the unemployment is undeniably high and that there are inherent inequalities on grounds of their race and gender and preferences of certain degrees over the others, amongst a host of other factors. It is against this background that the research wants to find out what students' expectations are pertaining to the labour market.

Responses to this question ranged from some students having positive but not necessarily high expectations (these students acknowledged that though they might not occupy high level jobs from the beginning, they expect the labour market to reward them for their investment) hence the dissertation refers to their expectations as 'positive' as opposed to high expectations. Conversely, others had low expectations (these are the students who did expect anything from the labour market, as some thought they were not yet marketable). Whilst others were of the mind that employers must consider some of the needs that students/graduates have after leaving tertiary school. Data also reveals that students' expectations of the labour market was based on their choice of degree and gender differences as well as race. These responses will be reflected in the tables below.

Table 6.7. Illustrates students' perception (by faculty) about their expectations in the labour market

Response categories	Groups by faculty	

	Humanities (%)	Commerce (%)	Science (%)	Education (%)	Pharmacy (%)	Law (%)	Total (%)
Positibe	1.75	15.79	5.26	7.02	8.77	1.75	40.35
Low	26.31	7.02	1.75	1.75		1.75	38.60
Labour market must be considerate of student needs	12.28		7.02	1.75			21.05
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 6.7 compares students' views by their faculty. The table shows that the Commerce faculty, with 15.79% constituted the highest percent of students who had positive expectation of the labour market. Followed by the Pharmacy faculty with only 8.77%, then the Education faculty which had 7.02%. The Science faculty had 5.26%, while the Humanities and Law students constituted the lowest percentage with only 1.75% respectively. The table also indicates that some students had low expectations of the labour market. With the Humanities faculty constituting a significantly high percentage of students who formed 26.31%. This was followed by the Commerce faculty with 7.02% students. Whereas the Science, Education and Law faculty constituted the lowest percentage, with 1.75% respectively. Furthermore, one can notice that most students who were of the opinion that employers should consider student's needs are from the Humanities faculty, with 12.28%, followed by the Science faculty with 7.02%. The Education faculty had the lowest percentage of students, with 1.75%.

Table 6.8. Illustrates students' perception (by race) about their expectations in the labour market

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Positive	31.58	7.02	1.75	40.35
Low/	21.05	17.54		38.60
Labour market must be considerate of student needs	15.79	5.26		21.05
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	

Table 6.8 indicates the responses of students by their population group. One can observe that there is considerable agreement among the three population groups who expressed that they have positive expectations. The black population constitutes the highest percentage that

admitted to having positive expectations. Followed by the white population with 7.02%. the Indian population constituted the lowest percentage with 1.75%. Again, the figures illustrate that the black population constituted much of the percentage with 21.05%, while the white population only had 17.54%. Finally, the table shows that 15.79% of the black population submitted instead that the labour market should be considerate of students/graduates needs.

Table 6.9. Illustrates student perception (by gender) about their expectations of the labour market

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
High	17.54	22.81	40.35
Low	15.79	22.81	38.60
Labour market must be considerate of student needs	5.26	15.79	21.05
Total	**22**	**35**	**57**

Table 6.9 presents the data by race. Thus, it indicates that 22.81% of the female cohort had high expectation, while the male cohort, with 17.54% constituted the lowest percentage of students who had the same perception. Again, the female cohort, with 22.81% constituted the highest percentage but their male counterparts only had 15.79%. The table further indicates that most females were of the view that the labour market must consider their needs/ this was agreed to by only 5.26% males.

6.5. PREPARATION FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

In the interest of finding out what students' perceptions are about their employability, students were also asked how else they prepare for the labour market as a competitive platform. This question applies to students who are planning to work the following year, students who want to further their studies and students who had said they are interested in being entrepreneurs. This question was posed as a follow up question. Because most of them when asked (amongst other questions) about what they thought employers are looking for and what it takes to enter and success in the labour markets. Responses varied in how important students thought it was to do other things outside of just studying, with some students saying it is important to do extra-curricular activities because they enable one to be a well-rounded person. Another group of students stated that they were planning to gain more experience through vacation work. While some students just saw a need to solely focus on their studies. Some of them admitted to not doing anything as yet. While some students stated that they were preparing for labour market

by studying further, going into post graduate studies. The tables below present these responses by the student's faculty, race and gender.

Table 6.10. How students prepare for the labour market by faculty

Response categories	Groups by faculty						
	Humanities (%)	**Commerce (%)**	**Science (%)**	**Education (%)**	**Pharmacy (%)**	**Law (%)**	**Total (%)**
Extra-Curricular activities/ Community engagement	8.77	5.26	3.51	7.02	3.51	1.75	29.82
Focusing on studies	1.75	12.28	1.75	3.51	5.26	1.75	26.32
Considering post-graduate studied	10.53	1.75	1.75				14.04
Doing nothing	3.51	3.51					7.02
Acquiring more working experience	15.79		7.02				22.81
Total	**23**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**5**	**2**	**57**

Table 6.10. reflects the data of students according to their faculty. The table indicates that there was considerable agreement across faculties, by students who stated that they were partaking in in extracurricular activities. The Humanities faculty had the most students, followed by the Education faculty with 7.02%. They were followed by the Commerce students with 5.26%. Both the Science and Pharmacy faculty had 3.51% respectively. The lowest of these groups of students was the Law faculty with only 1.75%. The table indicates that students from all faculties agreed that they were focussing on their studies, with the Commerce faculty having 12.28%, followed by the Pharmacy faculty, with 5.26%. The education faculty only constitutes 3.51% while the Humanities, Science and Law faculties only had 1.75% students respectively. The students who were considering post-graduate studies are from three faculties, the Humanities faculty, which had 10.53% and the Commerce and Science faculty with only 1.75% respectively.

Furthermore, some students admitted to not doing anything, despite their desire to prepare themselves outside of their academics. These students are from the Humanities and Commerce faculty with 3.51% respectively. Finally, the figures show that most of the Humanities students,

with 15.79% sought to acquire more experience as a way of preparing themselves for the labour market. Science students, with 7.02% shared the same sentiment.

Table 6.11. How students prepare for the labour market by race

Response categories	Groups by Race			
	Black (%)	**White (%)**	**Indian (%)**	**Total (%)**
Extra-Curricular activities/ Community engagement	15.79	14.04		29.82
Focusing on studies	10.53	15.79		26.32
Considering post-graduate studied	10.53	3.51		14.04
Doing nothing	5.26	1.75		7.02
Acquiring more experience	15.79	5.26	1.75%	22.81
Total	**39**	**17**	**1**	**57**

Table 6.11 presents students data by race. The table shows that most of the black population, with 15.79% were engaged in extracurricular activities with only 14.04% of the white population. Conversely, the white population with 15.79% constituted the highest percentage of students who stated that they were solely focussing on their studies, but only 10.53% of the black population felt the same way. Most of the black population, with 10.53% considered post graduate studies while only 3.51% also considered this. The table also indicates that the percentage of students who said that they were doing nothing was significantly low with the black population having only 5.26% and the white population had only 1.75%. Finally, the table shows that there was common agreement between all three population groups by students who want to acquire experience. The black population, with 15.79% constituted the highest percentage, followed by the white population with 5.26% and the lowest is the Indian population.

Table 6.12. How students prepare for the labour market by gender

Response categories	Groups by Gender		
	Male (%)	**Female (%)**	**Total (%)**
Extra-Curricular activities/ Community engagement	8.77	21.05	29.82
Focusing on studies	12.28	14.04	26.32
Considering post-graduate studied	5.26	8.77	14.04

Doing nothing	1.75	5.26	7.02
Acquiring more experience	10.53	12.28	22.81
Total	**38.59**	**61.40**	**100**

Table 6.12 compares the student's responses by gender. The table indicates that the female cohort, with 21.05% constituted the highest percentage of students who were taking extracurricular activities, and their male counterparts only had 8.77%. The table also that the female cohort, with 14.04% constituted the highest the group percentage of students who were focussing on their studies. While the male population only had 12.28% of students who shared the same sentiment. Of the students who wanted to pursue post-graduate studies, 8.77% were females and 5.26% were males. Students who were doing nothing were mostly females, with 5.26% while their male counterparts only had 1.75%. Furthermore, the table indicates that the female cohort, with 12.28% constituted the highest percentage of students who set out to gain experience concomitant to their studies, while their male counterparts, with 10.53% constituted the lowest percentage.

6.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the perceptions of students in general, furthermore, it has highlighted the differences of these perceptions on the grounds of the students' field of study, their race and their gender. But essentially, this chapter has shown that students have different views about their employability. Thus, data reveals that for the most part the students' perceptions about their employability is shaped by how they understand the labour market. Taking this into account, chapter 7 will look at how the students views about the labour market shape their perceptions of their employability. This will be done to answer the main question of this dissertation, which is concerned with students' perceptions as revealed by their understanding of the labour market. To this end, the data will be fused with the literature to show how one speaks to the other. Fundamentally, chapter seven is going to provide an analysis and discussion of the data from chapter five and six in order to speak to the official research question.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY AS REVEALED BY THE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters provided a report of the data collected in respect of the research questions that this dissertation seeks to answer. Therefore, this chapter reflects on the data collected in relation to the literature review (discussed in chapter two). To this end, reference to the literature review will be made were necessary throughout the discussion and analysis of the data. Therefore, the discussion will be presented in themes derived from the literature and from the data discussed in the two previous chapters (five and six). Fundamentally, the data will be analysed generally and comparatively on the basis of the respondents' field of study, race and gender and will also be discussed in relation to chapter two (the literature chapter).

This chapter unpacks what students' perceptions are in general as the primary goal and how they vary based on the three factors (field of study, gender and race) as a secondary goal. It was interesting to observe that, while it was one of the goals of the research to compare and contrast views of students based on their degrees, race and gender. It was not in all situations that there were major differences based on race, gender and field of study. As will be highlighted throughout the chapter, in most cases students shared views across faculties, race and gender. Therefore, while differences between perceptions was evident, it was only to a limited extent.

The dissertation adopts the SLM theory to analyse the data gleaned from students, though the Human Capital theory will be mentioned in comparison were necessary. Therefore, while Fleetwood (2006) argues that there are two conceptualizations of the labour market: (i) the Orthodox approach and (ii) the Heterodox approach -represented by the SLM theory. Cassim (1989) argues that the SLM theory provides a better explanatory theory and generates greater insight into the issue including but not limited to unemployment, poverty and discrimination confronting the South African labour market. The crux of the SLM theories is that- unlike the orthodox approach- SLM theorists takes cognisance of the exogenous factors (i.e. institutional, geographical, social forces, rules) that impede on labour mobility in labour market. According to Cassim (1989), Leontaridi (1998), Fleetwood (2006), Tan (2014) and White (2010) the

orthodox models fail to take heed of these factors. These authors, are amongst others, who argue that neoclassical and the HCT approach tend to overlook the variables that are not within the control of the individual as well as the social barriers and inequalities that exist within the LM (Bowles & Gintis, 1975, 78; Cassim, 1989; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017).

It is for this reason that Cassim (1989) argues that until an effort is made to integrate both economic and extra-economic or exogenous variables, the neoclassical explanations will be subject to limited explanatory power. Hence, the SLM theory is a better alternative to the neoclassical analysis and thus provides a useful basis to analyse the South African labour market (Cassim, 1989; White, 2010). It is against this background that the dissertation adopts the SLM approach, which enables the investigation of the inequalities of the labour market and how factors like race and gender affect how students perceive the labour market and their employability.

Therefore, it is worth noting that this analysis is integral to this dissertation because it integrates what literature upholds with perceptions of the respondents. From this, an answer to research question is formed and the dissertation will potentially fill the gap within literature concerning student perceptions of the labour market and their perception of their employability. Accordingly, a number of observations have been made about the students' views of the South Africa LM, and their perceptions of their employability and will be discussed below by way of themes.

7.2. STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF LABOUR MARKET

The main goal of the dissertation is to find out what students' perceptions of their employability are as revealed by their knowledge of the labour market. Accordingly, the dissertation first explored what students know about the state of the South African labour market. Consequently, perceptions on their employability where investigated in respect to their understanding of the labour market. Doing this helped understand the idea/s that students have of the labour market and ultimately how their understanding of the labour market factors into how they perceive their employability.

Indeed, as has been presented in chapter five, data from these questions helped establish what students understand about the labour market and this is explained throughout the data analysis. Overall, there was good agreement between students that there are degrees that are perpetually demanded than others. Data on the knowledge of labour market indicates that students understand the important role that employers play in the employment of an individual. On the

same token there was also considerable consensus that employers look for individuals with a diverse set of skills and that a degree on its own is not enough to obtain employment. The study also finds that students are aware of the inequalities in labour market and are concerned with the consequences of these inequalities for their future employment. These are some of the ideas that students have of the South African labour as according to the findings of this research. Over and above the research finds that the responses were also given based on the students the qualification, race and gender.

Therefore, this section consists of three themes, which will be discussing the data and how it relates to the literature. These themes look at (i) what students understand to be the causes of unemployment, and what they suggest the strategies/solutions to these causes can be. (ii) what students think it takes to enter the labour market as well as what they think employers are looking for based on qualities, skills and expertise. (iii) The third theme explores if students are aware of the inequalities (gender, racial differences) in the labour market, and what they think the consequences of these differences are for them.

7.2.1. PERCEPTIONS ON CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

As has been encapsulated in chapter two, there exits numerous bodies of literature on the subject of unemployment. With some accounting for the general unemployment which includes all members of the population as also captured in Labour Force survey reports. As well as the literature only specific to the youth/graduate unemployment. For the purposes of this dissertation and owing to the limited scope of the dissertation, only literature pertaining to graduate unemployment will be adopted to analyse the gathered data. Therefore, the literature that accounts for the general public will be referenced were necessary. However, only literature on graduate unemployment is of most importance. Given that the research is concerned with graduate un/employment and not necessarily the general un/employment.

While some authors, Pauw, et al, (2008), Burger and Fintel (2009:1), Banerjee et al (2008) maintain that, the issue of unemployment is of concern to policy makers, and labour market participants. Data has also revealed that students, as they prepare to enter the labour market are also concerned by the issue of unemployment. All students that were sampled (57 in total) had something to say about the causes of unemployment and in their responses −though not always explicitly expressed− it was implied that they are concerned about the effects of that the eminent unemployment in South Africa may have on their labour market outcomes. Although

students did not give exhaustive lists of what they perceived as the causes of unemployment. It is important to note at this point that each student saw the unemployment issue as a real and big problem in South Africa that can potentially negatively affect their employment prospects.

Reviewing the literature on the issue of unemployment has revealed that this subject matter is imputed to a myriad causes and is regarded both as an economic and social ill. Notwithstanding, several authors agree that unemployment in South Africa is structural (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999; Bhorat, 2004; Banerjee et al, 2008; Pauw *et al*, 2008; Bhorat *et al*, 2013). Banerjee *et al* (2008) and Bhorat *et al* (2013) among others, find that the high level of unemployment is caused by structural changes to the economy, including an increase in the size of labour force, changes in production technology and the shift from agricultural production to less labour-intensive sectors. For this reason, Pauw et al (2008) explains that unemployment is structural in a sense that the unemployed generally possess lower skills than what is required by the economy.

Furthermore, Bhorat (2004) and Bhorat *et al* (2013) give a more extensive explanation of the structural changes and submits that 'what shaped South Africans unemployment challenge is the notion that the economy has increasingly demanded high skilled workers while the labour force consists of a large contingent of less educated lower-skilled workers.' This is what they refer to as an issue of mismatch between labour market and labour supply (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999; Bhorat, 2004; Horn, 2006; Dias & Possel, 2007; Bhorat *et al*, 2013). They further explain that the shift away from low skilled work such as agriculture and the increase in demand for skills to support the financial and other service industries means highly skilled workers are mostly in demand (Bhorat, 2005; Bhorat et al, 2013). Thus, it can be said that this shift marked the intensification of skills biased labour demand trajectory (Bhorat & Hodge, 1999; Bhorat, 2004; Horn, 2006; Dias & Possel, 2007; Bhorat et al, 2013). Which they claim was already established in the pre-1994 period and thus causing the demand for low skilled labour to decline (Bhorat. 2005; Bhorat et al, 2013). This is widely accepted as the structural challenges underlying the high levels of unemployment (Bhorat *et al*, 2013).

With that being said, Horn (2006) and Arora and Ricci (2005) assert that closely associated to the unemployment problem is the matter of skills shortages experiences in South Africa. This view is shared by Bhorat et al (2013, 23) who advises that the phenomena of rising graduate unemployment has to be viewed within the context of skills shortage. Crudely speaking, skills mismatch according to Arora and Ricci (2005), Pauw et al (2008), Moleke (2009) is the idea that graduates obtain qualifications that are not necessarily needed in the labour market or

qualifications that are already in abundant supply thus creating unemployable graduates. Despite the cause/s claimed by existing literature, it was interesting to note that these sentiments were shared by students when providing their views on the causes of graduate unemployment. However, students who maintained this view, seemed to separate the issue of skills mismatch and that of the abundant supply. Data reveals as presented in Table 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 that only students from two faculties (Humanities and Science), particularly 7.02% whites and 3.51% blacks, with only 1.7% male students and 8.77% female students supporting this view. The general idea expressed by these students was that people obtain degrees that do not match the skills demand by the labour market.

Whereas, some students stated that unemployment is caused by the abundant supply of same degrees, thus producing a gap on some scarce degrees that people are not studying. This sentiment was shared by students across all faculties, particularly, 12.28% of black students and 7.02% were whites. From these two population groups 10.53% were female students while the male cohort constituted a slightly lower percentage of 8.77% students. A female student from the Humanities faculty expressing this view stated that: *'Available jobs require high skills and knowledge, of which most people do not have, especially in the science and technology field'*.' This view is supported by Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) as they submit that the significant difficulty facing young job seekers particularly is that South Africa's labour market favours skilled employees. Another male student from the Commerce students expressed a similar view and stated that:

> *I think it depends on the particular field that you follow, there are fields where it is not difficult or challenging to get a job because the skills are probably scarce than there is in other fields were it is very difficult because of the big pool of labour available but not enough jobs. (*Sethu Gomto, 2017-10)

These are some of the perceptions provided by some of the students who support the assertion made by the existing literature that because the labour market demands certain skills, this demand renders people who do not have such skills (whether they do not have skills at all or they have skills that are not necessarily demanded by the labour market) unemployable. This suggests that people who are employed have the skills demanded by the labour market as eloquently expressed by Sethu Gomto. Which in turn means that people who are not employed do not have the demanded skills. However, unlike seeing lack of skills as a cause of unemployment as expressed by the views above. Some students think that what causes

unemployment is that many people have same degrees and thus making it impossible for the labour market to absorb all of them. It is hard to predict why students view these two issues in isolation from one another. When it appears that skills mismatch is not only concerned with skills shortages but is also related to the abundant supply of certain degrees. This implies that when most people are studying the same thing, there are degrees that are not being studied and if the degrees that the labour market demand are not being studied this means people are not being employed.

This view is confirmed by National Planning Commission (2011:15) as it maintains that 'it is generally accepted that the primary cause for South Africa's widespread unemployment today is a structural mismatch between the skills and the modern South African economy demands, and the skills it supplies.' The commission further asserts that South African youth are low-skilled, and the skills mismatch that applies to the broader South African economy applies particularly to them. It should be recognized that these perceptions assume the notion advocated by the Human capital theory, which would also attribute the cause of poverty/unemployment to the fact that some people (those without employment) do not have the skills or education needed to find employment. This conception, according to the critiques of the Human capital theory (Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Cassim, 1982; Tan, 2014), is flawed as it totally ignores some of the factors that can also contribute to the issue of unemployment.

Despite that, the data reveals that there is some alignment between the students' perception of the cause of unemployment and existing literature on this viewpoint. These views also support the idea that is asserted by Dias and Possel (2007, 26) who explain that the most commonly cited cause of unemployment in South Africa is that following skilled-biased economic growth. However, the support of this understanding of unemployment is quite limited as only a total of 29.82% students shared this perception. While the rest of the students attributed the issue of unemployment to other factors. One may assume that only having a few students identify this as the cause of unemployment implies that the majority of the sampled students are not knowledgeable about skills mismatch as the major cause unemployment issue. Which in turn, may indicate that the lack of this knowledge might be what causes the problem of skills mismatch in the first place. As one may think, in light of this evidence that perhaps students pursue degrees that are not sought after in the LM because they simply do not know that these degrees are not sought after.

What is more, is that table 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 reveal that the rest of the students had different views of what they perceived to be the causes of unemployment in South Africa. One such cause perceived by students is the 'lack of experience'. There was good agreement on the opinion that 'lack of experience' is the cause of unemployment for many graduates. This sentiment was shared by most students across the six faculties, genders and the three population groups all which constituted a total of 21.05%. A comment that encapsulates the general idea of these students was given by a black, male student from the Science faculty who upheld that:

> *I think what causes graduate unemployment is lack of experience, most graduates attain their first degree and are turned down because of lack of experience. Then they are left with no choice but to study further because otherwise they stay unemployed in most cases* (Ntsikelelo, 2017-10).

This viewpoint is confirmed by the literature review with numerous authors (Pauw, et al, 2008; National Treasury, 2011, Bhorat et al, 2011; Rankins & Roberts, 2014; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017) maintaining that experience is one of the causative factors to youth unemployment. They maintain that employers are perhaps risk averse and prefer to employ older and more experienced workers. This on the other hand makes young people who come straight from varsity less attractive because of lack of experience. This view was also articulated by National Treasury (2011) explaining that unemployed young people tend to be less skilled and inexperienced. For that reason, according to the National Treasury (2011) one of the explanations for unemployment is that employers look for skills and experience when employing an individual. Hence, they deem unskilled, inexperienced job seekers as a risky investment. These views indicate the seriousness and effect of having working experience or lack of it thereof.

It is against this background that Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) submits that inexperience frustrates students/youth employment prospects and can explain some of the implicit age discrimination in the labour market. Given that some employers prefer to employ older people because they are more experienced than students coming straight form varsity. Likewise, Pauw *et al* (2008, 5) states that from a recruitment point of view, firms feel that experienced employees are more attractive than recent graduates, as a person with no experience needs substantial investment in training before they become an assert. Considering that, data indicates

that the existing literature and students alike share the same view on lack of experience being instrumental to the graduate unemployment.

Another cause of unemployment perceived by a considerable number of students was the 'lack of entrepreneurial programmes.' This sentiment was raised across four faculties (Humanities, Science, Education and Pharmacy). With particularly, 12.28% of blacks and a slightly lower percentage of 10.53% of white students. The general idea relayed by students who shared this sentiment was that people who are unemployed stay unemployed because they do not know of other alternatives of creating employment. One such alternative is starting a business and being an entrepreneur. This view was well articulated by a black, female student from the Pharmacy faculty who stated that:

> *I think this has been said time and time again, that our generation is normally trained to be an employee rather than being trained to be an employer, how to create jobs. How to use the skills you have to do something on the side, you never know where it can end up. The problem is we are being trained that you can only be successful if you go to university of which it's not true, we have people who never had the opportunity to go to university and they are very successful. Their circumstances have forced them to kind of find other ways, they do not have another choice but to make their own living (* Debra, 2017-10)

Much of the existing literature engages this notion of entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment and not necessarily a cause for graduate unemployment. However, the argument that Debra makes is quite compelling as she shows how unemployment can be fuelled by the fact that people only wait to be employed other than using the skills that they have to start their own businesses --to start small. Though, this point may be subject to a lot of debate, it does show how lack of entrepreneurial education exacerbates the already existing unemployment amongst the youth. Given that the view was raised by a total of 20.81% of students, with 12.28% whites and 7.02% males (see Table 5.1 and 5.2).

On the other hand, evidence from the study denotes that views varied based on race. This is evident in how the students saw their skin colour as having a bearing on their employment outcome. In particular, 15.79% black students attributed unemployment to nepotism, connections and corruption and whites, with 3.51% constituting a much lower group who raised the same view. A female student from the Humanities faculty stated:

> *I think there is a lot of nepotism, so I think that people who are currently unemployed and have the qualifications do not get jobs because people who are already in the labour market preserve the jobs for their family members* (Lerato, 2017-10)

The same sentiment was maintained by another female student who stated that:

> *I think nepotism, and race preferences are the causes of unemployment.eg you find companies or organisations with employees from the same family, such that the rest are unemployed. Other companies privilege colour* (Patience, 2017-10)

In support of these perceptions, was one provided by a white male student studying humanities, who claimed that he used to work before he came to university. So he was talking from experience when he supported the abovementioned sentiment, stating that the cause of unemployment is*: 'a lot of connections that is how I got my first job. And maybe someone had better a qualification than me then.'* (Craig, 2017-10)

These opinions tend to contradict the view that is maintained by several authors that unemployment is structural as discussed above. Instead it tends to imply that some people find employment because of their connections. Which in other words it means that the people already in the labour market create opportunities for new labour market entrants. However, this kind of connection according to students tends to disadvantage other students while it benefits those who get employment from this medium. One student referred to this as corruption. She stated:

> *I feel like there is a lot of corruption in a sense that in order to get a job you need to know someone. So it's like an inside job kind of relationship. So basically, if you do not know a lot of connections it is so difficult to get a job, you can apply for so many things, but you end up being rejected or they do not get back to you* (Violet, 2017-10)

This view of corruption was also expressed by 3.51% of white students. One of which stated that: *I really think it's that the government misappropriates money, if money could be sent to were its needed then unemployment wouldn't be such a huge problem that it sadly is* (Courtney, 2017-10)

In respect of these abovementioned responses, it is evident that some students perceive that some people do not get the opportunity to work because they do not have connections. At this time, it is hard to predict what makes students think of unemployment in this way. But Craig speaks out of experience as he expressed that he once got employed because of a connection

from a friend. He also admits that while the connection he received benefitted him, it might have put someone, perhaps more deserving of the job at a disadvantage. This shows that students have different understandings of the unemployment phenomena, which might well be shaped by their different experiences with the labour market. For instance, Craig attributed unemployment to connections based on his experience. Perhaps the rest of the students, like Violet expressed, also feel connections are instrumental to unemployment in South Africa because of their direct or indirect experience.

However, in the same vain, the dissertation finds there is a contradiction between the students' perception and the existing literature. For instance, unlike the view expressed by some students about connections, existing research refers to these connections as social networking (Burns, Godlonton & Kesnel, 2008; Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). These authors project this type of connecting with others in a positive light. For instance, Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) explain that a study that confirms the importance of networking as a form of securing employment is that which was conducted in Cape Town. This study revealed that more than half of the respondents obtained their current jobs through friends and relatives. Therefore, it appears that what literature deems to be social networking, students perceive it as corruption and/ nepotism. This finding then suggests that there needs to be more research that will clarify what each means and thus educate people on the difference. Because at this point both views given by students and that provided by existing literature seem to make compelling points of view.

On top of that, the dissertation finds that the data reflects the contradiction between ideas advocated by the SLM theory and the Human capital theory. Whereby there are some views that reflected the perspective advocated by the human capital theory and some who echo views advanced by the SLM theory. Having that in mind, Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) explains that while the human capital theory would argue that unemployment is a result of lack of human capital which is for the most part acquired from education. Therefore, the idea that unemployment is caused by skills mismatch is compatible with the human capital theory. Conversely, the SLM theory argues that entry in labour market is influenced by many factors such as one's race, gender geographical, institutional factors etc (Mlathseni and Ranchhod, 2017) as has been expressed by some students whose general idea is that some people do not get jobs because they do not have the right connections or rather that nepotism advantages other people at the expense of others. Thereby rendering other people jobless. Therefore, this suggest that there are students who see the issue of unemployment through the HCT perspective and those that see it through the perspective advocated by the SLM theory. The views that are

compatible to the SLM theory cast light on the other factors that are perceived by students as the cause of unemployment. Unlike the views that only focus on education or lack of it thereof as the only cause of unemployment

However, having the perceptions differ in this manner indicates that unemployment is a complex issue and peoples understanding of it is subjective. Though some people share the same sentiments of the causes of unemployment, it appears that there is no one cause. It is all based on what people have experienced, what they have heard or read or what they have observed from other people's experiences. I conclude like Yu (2012:13) who stated that 'there is a myriad of reasons as to why unemployment is a negative phenomenon, from welfare effects, to output effects and other social consequences'. Therefore, it can be argued that the reasons that students give for unemployment is tied to how they understand the labour market for themselves, which is also connected to their individual experiences.

Generally, the data reveals that student understand the gravitas of unemployment. All students were able to see it as the problem that it is. Not only are they aware of the unemployment issue but they are concerned about how this problem will impact their employment prospects. With that said, there seem to be no significant differences on how the students race factor into how they see the issue of unemployment affecting them, even though students raised their viewpoints based on their race and gender. This is because just like some black students thought the cause of unemployment was nepotism and corruption. These perceptions were also shared by their white counterparts. Overall, this research was interested in how students understand unemployment as a trend of the South African labour market. From these different viewpoints it can be noticed that the factors that students impute to unemployment are tied to how they perceive or understand the labour market themselves.

7.2.2. Proposed solutions for Unemployment

Unemployment has long received the attention around the globe by governments, researchers, policy makers and the civil society amongst others. As a result of the pressing issue that unemployment is around globally and locally, platforms have been created in the spirit of combating unemployment either through preventative or curative strategies. For instance, in South Africa there is a National Development Plan (NDP) that was launched in addition to the long-standing strategies aimed at ameliorating the country's' unemployment issue (by actually creating more jobs) amongst other social and economic ills of the nations (National Commission Planning, 2012).

On the other hand, the National Treasury (2011) submits that addressing youth unemployment necessitates both short and long-term measures that encompass increasing demand for labour, improving education and skills that improve the employability of young people. According to the National Development Plan (2012) 'young people deserve better educational and economic opportunities and focussed efforts are needed to eliminate gender inequality'. On this account, promoting gender equality and greater opportunities for young people are integrated themes that run throughout the NDP (National Development Plan, 2012). For this reason, the National Development Plan warns that the country must 'find ways to reduce alarming levels of youth unemployment and to provide young people with broader opportunities…failure to act will threaten democratic gains' (National Commission Planning Commission 2012:16 cited in Graham).

Given the seriousness of the problem of unemployment and equally, of combating it. It was befitting to investigate the students views on what they think could be done to curb or lessen unemployment. Finding this out will also help understand the source/s that the students hold liable for fighting this issue. Indeed, as can be observed from table 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 the students did not hesitate to share their views on what they thought should be done to try to curtail the unemployment issue. In this theme we will see some convergence between the students proposed strategies against unemployment that are also accounted for by the existing literature. There seem to be agreement between what students' perceptions and what existing literature either proposes or what it maintains as already been put to place to serve that purpose.

Graham and De Lannoy (2016) argue that while the youth unemployment challenge is a structural issue requiring immense policy investments that may perhaps take long to implement and carryout. There are short term solutions that can mitigate some of the issues in the interim in order to meet the needs of young people who are already seeking work (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). One of the strategies proposed by the final-year students is that employers should provide training for prospective students who qualify for the job but would otherwise be turned down due to lack of experience (see table 5.4). This perception was shared by students from three faculties (Humanities, Commerce and Science). In particular, 15.79% of the black population and only 8.77% of the white population. Of which 14.04% were female students and only 10.53% were male students.

The general idea shared by these students is that given that graduate unemployment is also caused by lack of experience. The one way to address this issue is to provide the students with

the training that they need and that is tantamount to the experience required by employers. Doing this will enable the students to enter the labour market straight after varsity and thus gain the experience while already in employment. Therefore, a comment that summarised the sentiment shared amongst these students is the one provided by a black, male student from the Humanities faculty. he expressed that:

> *People should be trained; there should be additional specific training for a job. like for example if I graduate with an Org Psychology degree. Then I apply for a job, that company should train me so that I know the specifics of the job and not tell me that I do not qualify, because I do not have experience. They should invest in training people* (Licebo, 2017-10)

This sentiment that training should be offered is also maintained by Meyers (2014:11-13). He submits that the government, trade unions, business and civil society must to work together, especially to assist youth in entering the job market. He explains that there should be government funded job centres that need to provide practical and theoretical training such as at vocational institution (Meyers, 2014). Therefore, skills should focus on what industry wants and the services required (Meyers, 2014). This will allow students to either work for a business or have the required skills to start their own business. This may especially be necessary given that, Pauw *et al* (2008) posits that graduates lack of soft skills and work place experience has also been identified as one of the key contributors of graduate unemployment. Indeed, it should be recognized that it is not always possible for students to acquire experience while studying, especially those whose course do not already include the practical work. Therefore, the idea that employers must provide training is compelling. Especially because the training offered by employers would do a better job in imparting skills that employers are in need of and are willing to employ people for. Whereas, making students find their own ways of attaining demanded skills may well result in students obtaining skills that are not necessarily attractive to employers as has always been the case. Skills mismatch might be a good example of letting people study whatever is available to study.

It is for this reason that employers may need to invest in training prospective workers (which in this case is graduates), as done by other companies through learnerships and graduate programmes. However, the problem with these initiatives especially with graduate programmes is that they usually have a small batch of intakes which is outweighed by the massive numbers of graduates released each year. So perhaps employers who already have these initiatives

should increase their intake numbers, while companies who do not have such initiatives venture in implementing them. Though this strategy may be subject to a lot of debate it does seem to be a promising strategy, especially given that there is no better source to develop skills than the one who is willing to pay for such skills. And this such source is the employer who can provide skills that he/she is willing to pay for. Again this is just an opinion which may need further research to explore the possibilities and perhaps the challenges of such a strategy.

Notwithstanding, it is for this reason that this dissertation submits the opinion that employers should instead aid students with the necessary experience that will help them gain the relevant skills. Simply turning students away for lack of experience only makes the problem worse as these students are likely to stay unemployed. The dissertation makes this argument in light of the point maintained by the National Treasury (2011) that training programmes are intended to alleviate skills shortage in the economy. They are aimed at enhancing productivity and employability of job seekers and enhancing human capital through improving skills which in this case for young job seekers while simultaneously fulfilling the needs of labour demand (National Treasury, 2011). It is for this reason that, such initiatives help decrease unemployment that one may suggest that they be implemented. However, Pauw et al (2008) seems to be more concerned about who should assume the responsibility of providing this training. Thus, he advises that policy makers will have to consider where to locate the responsibility for the provision of soft skills training.

Conversely, while not suggesting that there should be training, Graham & De Lannoy (2016) suggest that the solution for graduate unemployment would entail the shift of the employment criteria that employers use. They argue that South African employers' doubt of the quality of education obtained by the youth has since made them to make the requirements for entry into low level jobs even more stringent (Bhorat et al, 2013 cited in Graham & De Lannoy, 2016:4). They argue that unfortunately, employers that escalate the educational requirements for entry level jobs may thus shut out a large pool of potentially good young employees, thus creating more unemployment. It is for this reason that they suggest that the labour market must be adjusted in a way that should be more 'youth friendly' (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016:4). This also indicates that just as the employers play an important role in creating employment they equally have the power to alleviate the problem of graduate unemployment. This is just another alternative which is tied to the proposed solution mentioned above.

Furthermore, data reveals that some students raised the promotion and/or encouragement of entrepreneurship as one of the strategies to curb graduate unemployment. Table 5.4 shows that this proposed strategy, though only raised by students from three faculties (Humanities, Commerce and Pharmacy) is the most identified strategy believed to alleviate the unemployment issue. There is no significant difference between the white population with 12.28% students and the black population with only 14.04% of the black population raising this as the proposed strategy. For instance, black, female students from the Humanities faculty expressed that *'Government can have more entrepreneurial funding for graduates specifically. Thus, graduates can be employers themselves while providing employment for others'* (Sinekhaya, 2017-10). Another black, male student from the Commerce faculty also stated that: *'People should be educated about how to make a living while waiting on being employed or even without relying on being employed'* (Sethu, 2017-10)

One can assume that the underscoring perception of this proposed solution is that some students thought that the issue of unemployment is caused by the fact that people do not know they can start their businesses and create employment. This sentiment was expressed by a black, female student from the Pharmacy faculty who had also expressed that unemployment is a result of lack of entrepreneurship. In her words:

> *I think what the government can do is to invest in entrepreneurial programmes for students, so that they do not only rely on being employed. They already have the skills they can use to open up businesses, but they of course need the capital for it. So maybe the government can help with financing promising business ideas* (Debra, 2017-10)

Therefore, this suggests that educating people on how they start their businesses will help ameliorate this problem. As a matter of fact, and in confirming this point of view, the National Treasury (2011) submits 'that entrepreneurship development must be prioritized from as early as possible in order to create awareness regarding, self-employment opportunities. It raises this point in light of the fact that entrepreneurial involvement is relatively low in South Africa if compared to other African countries'. It is against this background that the National Treasury (2011) advises that entrepreneurship development must be accelerated. However, it also urges the involvement of schools, universities, business chambers and government for this success (National Treasury, 2011).

One such programmes in SA is the NYDA which runs a number of entrepreneurship programmes for the country's youth (National Treasury, 2011). 'These include

entrepreneurship education to young people both in and out of school business development support in the form of business planning, marketing and branding amongst the many other things it does' (National Treasury, 2011, 24). Such entrepreneurship schemes, according to National Treasury (2011:24) and Meyers (2014) promote skills in young people with the objective of creating and managing sustainable and efficient business capable of providing permanent jobs and employment growth. In light of this, one may assert that this also seems to be a promising strategy against unemployment given the outcomes it can produce. Thus, it is for this reason that students would suggest this as a strategy that can curb the unemployment that potentially threatens their employment outcomes. However, existing literature expresses that these two abovementioned perceived solutions have already been initiated in SA. Yet, one may find it interesting that these students see a need to raise and highlight these sentiments as proposed solutions. This stands to reason that they either do not know of these initiatives, or they have not heard of them at all. Or perhaps it is for the reason that, even though these strategies are available they hardly ever reach everyone who needs them.

This explains why some students feel that what one of the ways to solve unemployment might be something as necessary as getting the dissemination of information right. This strategy was proposed by the students from four faculties (Humanities, Science, Education and Law). This sentiment was commonly shared by 12.28% of the black population and only 7.02% of their white counterparts. Of these students, 10.53% are females and only 8.77%. The common perception amongst these students is that people need to be educated on what careers have good employment outcomes. Thus, data reveals that this perception is underscored by the idea that some people, perhaps most of them pursue degrees that are not marketable in the job market because of lack of information guiding them on what qualifications are marketable. Moleke (2005) confirms that there are such degrees, which do not have good employment prospects. It is on this account that students deduce that if students are educated on what is relevant or not, it would help solve especially the issue of skills mismatch which is generally accepted as the most contributor of unemployment. As expressed by a black, male student from the Commerce faculty:

> *I think knowledge is always key, I think just from leaving high school you must make sure that you know what you want to do in varsity. Because people take causes they do not want to take and end up doing things they do not want to do. So I think we need knowledge on what sectors need the most jobs and stuff like that. I just think educating people on what to do and how to go about getting employment after we done studying.*

> *Because even here at Rhodes sometimes they do not come to your class and tell you this company is looking for people, you have to go find out yourself but were to find out is the issue* (Enkosi, 2017-10)

A male student from the Humanities faculty was of the view that thek dissemination of information should start from an early age, submitted that:

> *A lot of people get to university and they have been doing the studying, but half of the things they have been doing they are not even passionate about. So in primary school, creating an environment for students to be able to engage with different extramural activates besides sport but something else they might want to get into. Like they are a lot of jobs that people can get into, lets say I want to be a graphic designer, but I only realise that when I am in my second year. There is probably not gonna be a job for me but if I notice that when I am younger then I can get in some sort of self-employed entrepreneurship. So people should have some early exposure, as they do with the other subjects (like science and business) which influences what we want to be. But still not many people get a job on those fields either* (Nyiko, 2017-10)

This view that people (in this case, students) should be guided and exposed at a young age on what it good to study in terms of employment prospects. Was also maintained by Pauw et al (2008) stating that the quality and scope of career guidance at secondary schools should be improved in order to guide and encourage learners to choose fields of study with high employment probabilities. They explain that doing this would help steer future participants of the labour market in the right path early on as it may more difficult to influence graduates' expectations when they eventually enter the labour market. Moreover, given that skills mismatch means that students are not studying what is most needed in the labour market, educating people on what is needed as Enkosi has pointed out seems like a necessary strategy that will prevent people from falling into the trap of studying degrees that as Moleke (2005) held, are not as relevant or have very low job prospects in the labour market today.

In confirming this sentiment shared by students, existing research goes further to point out that other challenges of employment are limited to social capital and limited access to information (Sibanyoni et al, 2015; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). They explain that many youth lack accesses to information as they are unable to afford the high costs of data for the use of mobile phones. Or the fees at the internet café that would allow them to search for jobs opportunities (Sibanyoni et al, 2015; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). This indicates that another problem that

leads to unemployed youth is that they do not have the means to access the information they need. Graham & De Lannoy, 2016) find that unlike their middle class-peers, poor young people lack productive social capital i.e. social networks than can be used for information about and access to the labour market (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016).

It is against this background that the dissemination of information also promises to be one of the strategies to curb for graduate unemployment. Especially in light of the point maintained by Sibanyoni et al (2015) that it is imperative that students are prepared to enter the workplace, having been given appropriate career-related assistance and guidance. The importance of the dissemination cannot be stressed enough. However, more research may need to investigate the different channels needed to enable the dissemination of information as different people, from different backgrounds and different geographical locations may need different channels and mediums.

More than that, some students suggested that Universities should have a role to play in trying to address the issue of graduate unemployment. This point of view was raised by students from the Humanities faculty only, with a total of 7.02%. As illustrated in Table 5.4. Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 indicate that 7.02 per cent of the students were of the black population, with only 1.75% males and 5.26% females, no other populations raised this point. The idea they conveyed was that the university should include in their curriculums, practical work or the like for students who do not already have this in their courses. The general idea was that because students cannot obtain experience while studying, then practical courses should be compulsory. As articulated by a female student:

> *I think the universities, like if you are at our level (final-year), they should give you a day off. That you would use to work at a firm, so that you get that experience. Because for me I have been focussing on school work, and now I am finding that it is hard to get employment in comparison to people who have done vac work. So, I think the university should create the opportunity for us to do that, it might bridge that gap slightly* (Nontendo, 2017-10).

These sentiments contradict the ones expressed above by the group of students who were of the mind that employers should offer training to graduates who do not have experience. Instead the perception that universities should provide practical work tend to shift the responsibility of providing graduates with training from the employers to the universities. This also indicates that though these two groups of students share the sentiment that students/graduates should be

provided with training/practical work. These students have varied perceptions about who bears the responsibility to provide such training. Notwithstanding, existing literature points out that employers assume graduates to be fully equipped with various skills upon obtaining their qualifications, and thus be able to apply them into the labour market.

This assumption according to Wye and Lim (2009) may probably be tied to the fact that employability skills enhancement has been viewed as a specific target to be achieved in tertiary education. This viewpoint indicates that employers expect that students leave tertiary institutions with the skills required for a successful labour market entry. Yet, another body of literature, as already discussed above, points out that graduates come out of university without the necessary skills that employers need (Pauw eta al, 2008; Bhorat et al, 2013, National Treasury, 2014). Both these perceptions that employers assume that students obtain skills from university as well as that they claim that students usually come out of these institutions without these skills. Tends to imply that employers have the idea that tertiary institutions have some responsibility to impart skills to students that are needed to enter the labour market.

Therefore, one may argue that perhaps it is in this light that students see the university as playing a role in curtailing unemployment. By offering practical work (included to the degrees they offer) that will give students the skills that are needed in the labour. Raising the same view is Saunders and Zuzel (2015) who also submit that employers expect students to have well developed employability skills when they live tertiary education institutions so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. Again, this sounds like employers have put the responsibility on tertiary education institutions to develop such skills. As suggested by Fallows and Steven (2000) cited in Wye and Lim (2009) an emphasis on employability skills in the curriculum of every discipline would be able to equip students with critical skills by the time they graduate.

However, while this assertion tends to support the solution proposed. It begs a few questions: (i) is it really the responsibility of tertiary students to develop the employability of students. secondly, how exactly are tertiary supposed to do this. Perhaps one may argue that given that some courses like Commerce and Law provide practical training concomitant to the course work which impart practical skills that students will need when they enter the labour. Then maybe all degrees should be offered with such practical work. So that students from faculties like the Humanities faculty can also have practical skills to take with when they enter the labour market. However, this leads to the next questions which concerns the necessity of such practical

work for certain degrees. Moleke (2005) and the National Treasury (2014) argues that faculties such as Humanities do not have a set career path than it is the case with Law, Pharmacy amongst others. In such a case, what would constitute as 'practical work' for such students pursuing degrees under the Humanities faculty, if they do not have any set profession or career path to follow. Is it necessary therefore to provide practical work for such a faculty one may ask.

In light of these issues then it also appears that there is no clear understanding of who is actually responsible for providing students with practical skills, is it the University or is that employers should provide training. Despite this uncertainty of responsibility, one thing is certain, that we cannot assume that students have this responsibility because off many reasons, some which include that students cannot possibly know what skills are needed and therefore what skills to obtain and how to obtain. Between the employers and the universities, one or both should be responsible. Considering this, further research on this matter may be necessary. However, inasmuch as training should be provided for students/graduates, I am of the opinion that if training is necessary then it is better to have training provided by employers as also suggested by students and has already been already been implemented by way of learnership and internships (National Treasury, 2014). In this way then employers provide the skills that they intend for students to have. Leaving this responsibility to universities may lead to students studying whatever is offered to study, thus creating the already existing issue of skills mismatch, which means people study even for qualifications that do not have good prospects because they do not encompass skills that are needed in the labour market. This is why employers need to step in and provide the skills they need and are willing to employ people for.

Over and above, some students were of the mind that the issue of unemployment should be offset by the creation of more jobs. There was good agreement on this sentiment by students from four faculties (Humanities, Science, Education and Pharmacy). However, the proposal of this solution was divided amongst students who asserted that this job should be initiated by the government only, or with the help of the private sectors. While some students submitted that both the government and the private sector should share the responsibility of creating more jobs like as expressed by black, male students from the pharmacy faculty, stating that:

> *The government and private sector should join forces to create more jobs. People have qualifications, we need more jobs. These jobs can only be created by the government and the private sector* (Standord, 2017-10)

Some students only placed this responsibility solely on the government. This perception was undergirded by the assumption that the government misappropriates money, but rather should allot this money to creating more jobs. As submitted by a white, male student from the Science faculty: *'I think it has to start from ground one when you look at the societies economic needs (such food, water, electricity). Then government should inject money in those places than were money actually goes which is corruption'* (Eric, 2017-10)

These sentiments expressed by students about the creation of more jobs are accounted for mostly in documents such as the NDP, The Budget Speech and even the National Treasury has undertaken to provide strategies that can help mitigate unemployment by job creation among a plethora of other strategies. For instance, the Budget Speech of 2017 delivered by Pravin Gordhan emphasised that employment creation has to be accelerated if growth is to be inclusive. Pravin Gordhan in his speech stated that: We know that job creation is a central priority of the NDP. This indicates that the officials of this country have taken up the task to fight unemployment with the strategy of job creation among others. However, in doing so all people should be involved, (the government, the private sector, civil society) to mention a few (National Treasury, 2011; Budget Speech, 2013,2014,2016,2017). Nevertheless, as explained by the Budget speech (2014) that the National Planning Commission has cautioned that our development objectives will take time and hard work to achieve this goal, measured year by year, district by district, there will be advances and there will be setbacks. This points to the fact that though strategies are set and implemented. Achieving the goal is not going to happen over-night. It will surely take time and unwavering effort along the way.

Despite the different views maintained by students, the data reveals that, there was no significant difference on the basis of the student's field of degree, race and gender. Students of different degrees, gender and race shared the sentiments except the one proposed strategy that the university should offer practical skills to students who do not already have them. This view was only raised by the Humanities faculty, who were only black students though both the female and male cohort shared these sentiments. Another observation of this data reveals that there is significant alignment between the perceived strategies against unemployment and the ones accounted for by existing literature. The only issue here is the clarity of the responsibility

of the sources that will initiate or implement such strategies. A matter one may argue needs further research in order to shine light on who assumes the responsibility.

7.3. PERCEPTIONS ON EMPLOYERS' REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Rothwell and Arnold (2005,53) posit that employability concerns the extent to which people possess the skills and other attributes to find employment and stay employed. This sentiment is shared by Wye and Lim (2009) who submit that graduate employability is largely referred to as the graduate's possession of certain level of skills and attitudes, as well as their capability to utilise them for job search and employment. They also explain that changes in organisational and employment structure has been widely recognised as the cause of increasing requirements for broader types of skills by employers (Wye & Lim, 2009). In the same vain, Saunders & Zuzel (2015) maintain that employers expect students to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. All these views about employability indicate that in order for people to be employed they need to have skills, qualities and attributes that make them attractive to the employers. This also indicates the important role that employers play in one's employment.

It is on this account that the research sought to investigate what final-year students perceive to be the skills and qualities that employers look for when considering an individual for employment. This is because, as maintained by Wye and Lim (2009), graduates whose skills and attitudes are highly valued by employers would succeed in paving their way into the labour. It is however, not the case for those whose skills possession is not up to the mark, thus driving up the unemployment rates drastically (Wye and Lim, 2009). Adding to that, students seems to have an idea of what is sought after by employers they seem to think that things like connections also play a role in one's entry in the LM.

Table 5.7 indicates that there was a common perception that employers look for a diverse skill set. Which according to students entails that individuals should have multiple skills (ranging from people's skills, to interpersonal skills, problem solving, creativity etc) in order to be attractive to employers. This view was raised by students from five faculties (Humanities, Commerce, Science, Education and Law). Particularly, 21.05% of the black population and 10.53% of the white population. Of these students 22.81% were females and 8.77% were male students who agreed that employers generally look for diverse skills. As state by a black, male student from the Humanities faculty:

> *People skills, a lot of companies now are based on face to face communication, right through the industry, even if you doing pharmacy you have to be able to communicate with someone. Even if you doing law, as an attorney, you need to sit with someone on a desk and be able to communicate with someone and hear what they say. Even with marketing, business economics. Somewhere down the line, you have to be able to work in a team also, and be able to communicate in that team. Leadership also needs to come to play because companies are looking for people who are gonna somehow work their ladders to be head of some positions. So people skills are very important I think* (Nyiko, 2017-10)

A black, female student from the Humanities faculty simply stated that: *Top achievers in the academic space, people with diverse skills, smart individuals who get the job done in less costly and in less time-consuming ways.* - Sinekhaya, 2017

This sentiment was confirmed by Pauw *et al* (2008;55) who explains that 'skills such as 'communication skills, presentation skills, financial management, time management skills and creative thinking skills play a very important role in the ability of young people to adapt to a professional working environment'. With this in mind, one may argue that the assertion by Pauw *et al* (2008) and views like the one submitted by Nyiko and Sinekhaya, and as was shared by a significant number of students indicate that students have an idea of what skills employers need. Atfield & Purcell (2010) maintain that research on employers' perceptions of the graduate labour market has consistently found that although employers generally have a positive impression of graduates overall, they also reported a lack of some capacities in job applicants and recruits, particularly a lack of business awareness and capacity for self-management (Bhorat *et a*l, 2006; Atfield & Purcell (2010)). This dissertation finds that students' perceptions reveal that students not only have an awareness of what employers are looking for but also that students see a need to acquire these skills in order to be considered for employment. They understand that not having these skills may disadvantage one from not getting employment.

This perception is similar to the one raised by students' perceptions that employers are looking for well-rounded individuals. This sentiment was expressed by students from all six faculties, data reveals that 10.53% of these students were blacks and only 8.77% were white students (see Table 5.8). As stated by a black, female student from the Commerce faculty: '*You need to*

be well spoken, you need to exceed academically, you need to have leadership skills, you need to be an all-rounder basically, which is impossible for some people' (Monde, 2017-10).

Another black, female student from the Science faculty expressed the same view:

> *I think they are looking for someone who is well developed and well-rounded, must be good at school must show some leadership skills. They want someone who will make their firms better, someone who will make them profit. I think that's what they are looking for. You need to be confident, you must be smart, hardworking, be able to tolerate hard conditions, you must be passionate* (Marina, 2017-10)

Continuing on this line, these perceptions on being well-rounded also indicate that students are knowledgeable about what employers are looking for. Additionally, perceptions of this kind also imply that employers not only look at a qualification, but they also need someone who has other skills and abilities, hence the term 'well-rounded'. These sentiments are supported by the existing research (especially pertaining to the concept of employability), which submits that for some employers, a degree may now not represent anything more than a 'threshold to a requirement' (Purcell and colleagues' 2002, 10 cited in Moreau and Leathwood, 2007). This means that, though a degree is required, it is not in and of itself enough to get one employed. This view is also highlighted by some of the authors of the discourse of employability (Yorke, Rothwell & Anorld, 2005; Rothwell, Jewell & Hardie, 2009; Wye & Lim, 2009; Nilsson, 2010; Bezuidenhout, 2011; Symington, 2012). They, explain that due to the changing nature of the labour market, employers no longer hire on the basis of education only. They now also seek individuals that are not only educated but are also adaptable, flexible and innovative, the list goes on. This point was also explained by a Commerce student who stated that:

> *Obviously, from what I understand. Right now in 2017 we have reached globalisation and so I think companies are looking for more multi-adaptive people now. Like a person who is not just an engineer, but we are now in a space where there is more need to work with other people so obviously people who can work with other people and people who are more flexible and who are understanding* (Nqobile, 2017-10)

This sentiment was also upheld by Moleke (2005) 'who emphasized that simply having a qualification is not good enough as various degrees impart different skills to graduates, thus sending different signals to potential employers'. Again, research shows that some final-year students are aware of these changes of the labour market and this shapes how they understand their employment prospects.

Yet, despite this rationale that a degree is not enough. Table 7.5 further shows that there are students who perceived that employers look for professional degrees, or candidates with a specific expertise. This view was only shared by four faculties (Humanities, Commerce, Science and Pharmacy). In particular, all three races and both gender expressed this view. In general, these students not only submitted that employers are attracted to specific degrees, which some students referred to as professional degrees/ or specializing degrees. An Indian, male student from the faculties, sounding sure of himself sustained that:

> *You have to specialize; you can't just get a general degree. You can't just get a BA, you can't get a Bcom, you can't get a single, like pharmacy degree. You need to go further than that, you need honours, you need masters you need the work experience. Things like that* (Jameish, 2017-10)

Supporting this statement was a view articulated by a white, male student from the Science faculty, he simply stated that: '*specialised degrees and a hard-working person'* – Eric, 2017

Data reveals that these perceptions are congruent to the literature review. With that said, Bhorat et al (2013) has found that there is frequent demand for people with financial background or more technical qualifications such as Science and Engineering. Moleke (2005) cited in Bhorat *et al* (2013) also found that university graduates with qualifications in fields with a more professional focus such as a medical science, engineering as well as economic and management sciences found employment faster than graduates with more general degrees in fields such as Humanities and Arts which do not directly prepare graduates for a profession. The point that these authors make does not only agree with students' perceptions, but it also highlights the fact that some degrees are more demanded than others. Which according to existing research are professional/specialised degrees. It also shows that, as posited by Moleke (2005) one's field of study plays a major role in securing employment.

More than that, data also finds that some students were of the mind that what employers look for is actually dependent on the career path. This sentiment as presented in Table 7.5. was shared by the least number of students from only three faculties. These students expressed that different jobs require different skills and qualities as well as qualifications thus making employers require different things accordingly. As expressed by a white male, studying Commerce, he simply just said: *'it depends what business they are running. Different employers running different businesses will obviously look for different qualification and skills.'*- Courtney, 2017. A black, male student from the Humanities faculty stated that: *'To*

enter the labour market, I think it takes skills that are related to whatever industry or sector a person wants to go into, knowledge about the industry, knowledge about their job specification and the ability to work with people (Thulani, 2017-10)

On that premise, data finds that though the lowest percentage (7.02%) of students maintained this view. Literature also shares this opinion. Atfield and Purcell (2010) also explains that according to Belt et al (2010) different types of employment have different 'employability' requirements. Likewise, Pauw *et a*l (2008) submits that depending on the nature of vacancies, firms often demand people with some work experience and the ability to some extent to work independently. Again, data reveals that what students perceive is supported by the literature, which may imply that some students are well informed about what employers are looking for.

This question, has went a long way to reveal that students are aware of the changing nature of employment and what employers consider as employable. There was considerable agreement on what it is employers are looking for. The only difference was apparent on what students thought was more crucial than others. Students varied in what they thought was mostly sought after. With some students putting more emphasis on other degrees and skills than others. This uncertainty about what exactly are the skills required by employers is rather explained by Atfield & Purcell (2010, 1). Who asserts that there is considerable debate on what employability skills are, particularly with reference to graduate employability skills. There is often a confusion between basic literacy and numeracy skills; organisational skills (such as team work); individual personality traits and capacities developed in families and communities (such as optimism, interpersonal skills, capacity and willingness to work hard); socialized and formally learned capacities (such as problem solving and communication skills) (Atfield & Purcell, 2010).

This shows that there is a myriad of skills that employers choose from. This then supports the idea that both the existing literature and students provided, which is that the skills that one needs to have depend on the career they want to venture in. No one person can have all skills, but skills should rather suit what an individual wants to focus in. But then again it helps to know what students perceive to be the requirements of employers. Furthermore, although one's field of study influenced students view of what employers are looking, the same cannot be said about race, gender as they were no variations of opinions on these grounds. Sentiments regarding this question were shared across the population groups and genders.

7.3.1. What does it takes to enter the Labour Market.

Data shows that just as some students thought 'lack of experience' was a cause of unemployment some students similarly thought that experience is what it takes to enter the labour market. Table 5.10 indicates that this opinion was raised by the highest percentage of students in comparisons to other opinions given by other students. It also shows that students from five faculties (Humanities, Commerce, Science, Education and Pharmacy) thought it took having experience to enter the labour market. A white, male student studying Commerce, expressed a somewhat advisory view stating:

> *I think experience is the main key thing that can get you a job, people should not be picky, I think there are a lot of jobs that can afford students experience. You must not think about the salary when you start to work, just look at the experience that you can get out of that job, because you need that experience. Once you get the experience then you can start looking for further jobs. This suggests that graduates do not have employment because they are picky, but as a fresh graduate you should be willing to do any job that will pay you experience if not anything* (David, 2017-10).

According to Sibanyoni *et al* (2015) a survey of 20 South Africa's top companies reveals that graduates are not always able to meet their company's skills requirements because graduates have the qualifications but not always the practical skills and experience. This idea is supported by National Treasury, 2009; Pauw (2008) that graduates are not always able to meet their company's skills requirements because graduates have the qualifications but not always the practical skills and experience.

However, results show that students not only were aware of the effects of lack of experience, but they also believed that gaining work experience was an advantage to their future work or in this case, to enter the LM. Considering that, these students would concur to a point highlighted by Mlatsheni (2005:1) cited in Pauw *et al* (2008:55) that 'work experience is an important factor that influences employability at all levels'. It is also important to note on this point that this explains why some students thought that lack of experience disadvantages them from getting employment.

Despite the considerable agreement that it takes experience to enter the labour market, with literature also upholding this idea. Some students were of the view that it takes connections to enter the labour market. Students are of the view that having connections means you have people who can connect you to good employment. One of the students who express this view was an Indian male from the Humanities faculty:

> *Good connections, you won't get anywhere without connections these days. It's unfortunate to say so but that's what's happening. I have been speaking to a lot of honours students and a lot of them say they have put in application for jobs but everyone is telling them no,no,no. It's really come down to. Even in their own perspectives, they need connections, which they do not have, which is unfortunate* (Jameish, 2017-10).

This view that is also supported by Burns, Gordlonton and Kesnel (2008) submit that social networks are increasingly being recognised as having an important influence on labour market outcomes, since they facilitate the exchange of job related information. He further submits that reliance on the social networks to find employment typically results in better matching between the job candidate and the available job reduces employer uncertainty about worker productivity and my even enhance satisfaction and employee loyalty (Burns, Gordlonton and Kesnel, 2008). Even with this positive explanation of having connections or social networks. There is another group of students who referred to other factors, such as one's race. A black, male student from the Science students expressed that:

> *It takes more than what it would take for other people like whites, I know of a guy who got a job because his sister works at that company, there is a lot of corruption going on*….(Mixondlebe, 2017-10)

This indicates that some students, saw these connections, which some students rather dubbed as 'nepotism', in a negative light in terms of their skin colour. It is implied here that whites have more connections, and because of this they usually get jobs at the expense of other people being disadvantaged. This sentiment was highlighted by Graham and De Lannoy (2016) who found that unlike their middle class-peers, poor young people lack productive social capital i.e. social networks than can be used for information about and access to the labour market. A white, male student from the Humanities, referring to his own personal experience confirmed this nothing by stating that: *'a lot of connections that is how I got my first job. And maybe someone had a better a qualification than me then'* (Craig, 2017-10)

Furthermore, while some student, whose perception was that what takes one to enter the labour market is how well they sell themselves. There was mutual agreement across all six faculties. For instance, a black, female student studying Commerce stated that:

> *I feel like these days you need to sell yourself out, as much as you will apply and all that, you need to go out and sell yourself. And I think networking is one of the ways you*

make yourself known and get to know people that can connect you to jobs (Rachel, 2017-10)

Again, data reveals that students had varying views about what they think it takes for people to enter the labour market. Additionally, it is difficult to predict whether participants field of study, race and gender had any bearing on their perception on this question. Or whether students just have a general idea what they think it takes to enter the labour market. Which could be informed by their experiences with the labour market. As has been illustrated on the tables in Chapter 5, students shared ideas across faculties, gender and population group therefore there is no telling of the differences between views. In a sense that students considered their degrees and race to gage as to what could possibly take them to enter the labour market. On top of that, the dissertation finds that students understand that employers are the ones who determine who gets employed and they do so by stipulating what is needed in the labour market. So much so that if you do not have these attributes you may not be employed. This shows that students realise the significant power that employers play in the labour market outcomes and thus they see a need to enhance their employability based on the requirements of the employers.

Data also indicates that there is some incongruity between what students perceive to be needed by the labour market and what they think it takes to enter the labour market. While most students expressed that employers are looking for things such as hard work, higher qualifications, experience, they had different views on what they thought it took to enter the labour market. With some students saying that corruption and connections really determine whether one gets employment or not. This indicates the notion advanced by the SLM theory that though the education is key to finding employment. There are usually other exogenous factors that influence whether one finds employment or not. This also shows what has been argued by critiques of HTC who argue that the theory ignores a number of variables that are outside of the individual control (Cassim, 1989). In this case, corruption and having connections can be argued to be such factors that some people would not have control over. Yet they will most likely determine the students' outcome in the labour market. This understanding, however, shapes how they manage their employability. What is implied here was found in research conducted by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) which found that some students suggested that employability is determined by the labour market than the capabilities of individuals (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). They also argue that patterns of employment can be explained not only by the characteristics of new entrants to the labour market but also the forms of organisation that predominate in the labour market (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

7.4. PERCEPTIONS OF THE LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Literature on the state of South African labour market highlights the inequalities that plauge the labour market. According to Cassim (1989) race is the most obvious means of differentiating workers. Hence racial dualism within the South African labour market is a structural phenomenon which has filtered blacks into low-paying occupations, as a result of inadequate and segregated housing and education that was carried out during the apartheid era Cassim (1989; (van der Berg, 2007; Mariotti, 2009). This, Cassim (1989) explains, has resulted in largely black occupations being characterised by low, skills little training and lower promotional opportunities. Than it is the case with jobs designated as white jobs. Moleke (2003-2004: 204) confirms these segmentations and inequalities of the apartheid labour market the legacies of which are still evident in the post-apartheid labour market. He, among others, explains that amongst other factors, race was the determining factor in the allocation of people to jobs, particularly to occupations that required a professional qualification (i.e. doctors, accountants, engineers).

As a result, Africans were excluded from professional jobs and this meant that Africans and especially African women were concentrated in low-skill work and unskilled labour (Cassim,1989; Moleke, 2003-2004). This segregation led to inequalities in the labour market whereby Africans were discriminated against in favour of whites (Dias & Posel, 2007:7). Correspondingly, racial segmentation in the post-apartheid labour market is evident largely because white and Asian graduates engage in different labour market processes compared to Africans and coloureds (Moleke, 2005; Pauw et al, 2008; Stats SA, 2016 &2017). This confirms the inequalities in the labour market as also explained by the SLM theory. As it advocates for the segmented labour market which is perpetuated by structural and social forces. Therefore, race is among the factors used to allocate workers within these different segments. As much as this was a case of the pre-1994 labour market. The current labour market operating under the democratic dispensation that has since overthrown the apartheid system, proves to be no different. Despite efforts of the labour laws enacted to not only redress the injustices of the past but are also aimed to move towards a more inclusive economy. A black student from the Commerce faculty also gave a response that was in support of the fact that the South African LM is a segmented LM, she stated that:

> *I think with commerce there is a huge thing that men have more chance of being successful, but I am aware that your race means a lot because I see that with a lot of big companies it's still white in higher positions like the CEO positions…I think that there is still a racial structure were white men occupy higher position and everybody is just working at the bottom and don't get promoted (*Nqobile, 2017-10)

Considering that, this dissertation finds that students are aware of the inequalities in the labour market. Both white and predominantly black students expressed their awareness and concern of these segmentations. Commerce, Science and Pharmacy faculty, predominantly black students from both genders claimed that continuing racial differences in employment outcome are evident. As stated by a Black, male student from the Humanities faculty: *I am aware that South Africa is an unequal place, where white males are put at the top of the power structure and money and resources trickle down to black woman I guess* (Thulane. 2017-10). This sentiment was also shared by another black male student from the Pharmacy faculty who submitted that: *'Yes, I am aware, of white privilege and that white men have better chances of finding jobs than females. It might have a negative effect if I happen to find a job in a white population or community.'* (Stanford, 2017-10)

A white male from the Science faculty also expressed the same perception, even though unlike the black students, he perceived the labour market inequalities as advantaging him more. In his words:

> *I am aware of the racial dynamics, I think everyone is aware. They do have consequences for me, I am a white guy, I would say I am more advantaged than I am disadvantaged in finding employment. So, the system favours me because of my race or at least that is the status quo* (Eric, 2017-10)

Furthermore, the dissertation finds that some students are not only aware of the inequalities of the labour market. But that they are also concerned about how these inequalities will affect/impact their job opportunities. Concerning this and as it is presented in Table 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15, data reveals that there is a division between students who thought the labour market would affect them. While some students thought they would not be affected by these inequalities, as expressed by Eric. Evidence pertaining to student who thought that the labour market inequalities would affect them, resonates with the finding by Moreau and Leathwood (2007:317). Who, though it was concerning graduates--also found that graduates

acknowledged the possibility of discrimination and the potential impact of gender and race on employment opportunities and success.

Likewise, this dissertation finds that students from four faculties (Humanities, Commerce, Science and Education) shared this perception. This view was also shared by some students from all three population groups. Black students, with 22.81% had highest percentage, followed by white students with 8.77%, and the only student from the Indian population (see table 5.14). Table 5.15 indicates that the were more females than males who shared the same view (see table 5.15). For instance, a black female student submitted that:

> *Yes, I am aware of racial and gender differences in the labour market and I know they will have consequences for me because the labour market is still ruled by men. To be specific white man, one finds that women earn less than their male counterparts even though they have the same qualifications* (Lerato Mosala, 2017-10)

A male student from the Science faculty also stated that:

> *…. for instance, commerce is male dominated industry and mainly dominated by white people so it poses a challenge to me as a black person entering the labour market. However, given the initiative that the government has put in place to redress the past and for gender balance. Then I think I am safe to the extent that I am black but obviously because of the EEA they will probably prefer a black female employee than a black male employee* (Sethu Gomto, 2017-10).

These sentiments were also shared by some significantly few white students, who unlike the black students claiming to be disadvantaged at the expense of white privilege. Expressed that they would also be disadvantaged by the labour market laws that aim to empower blacks. One white student studying Commerce stated contrarily that: *I think a lot of people are being disadvantaged, I am a white man, I am working so hard for this degree, so I will be affected immensely because of my skin colour. I will be negatively affected because of the BEE laws* (Courtney, 2017-10)

This evidence suggests that there were differences in students' perceptions, though they all thought they would be affected by the labour market inequalities and differences. While some students, especially black males, are threatened by the fact that the labour market. It also appears that some students feel threatened by their female counterparts. As they think that in

the spirit of Black empowerment the LM prefers women than it does men. For instance, a black male stated that: *'I feel like the labour makes is looking to recruit more black females, so that makes me wonder a bit about my own chances as a black man*' (Thabang, 2017-10). Conversely, a very few percentage of white students claimed that because the labour laws seek to redress the past injustice, they get to suffer because of that, as stated by Courtney. However, some white students expressed that though these laws may somehow potentially impact their job opportunities. They accepted that redressing inequalities was necessary and a good course. As articulated by a white male student from the Law faculty.

> *I very much think they do have consequences for me as a white male, but it is not without reason that I see those differences being made, I mean historically it has been a problem. So I do see it as a substantive realisation of fairness and equality. I personally am not too upset by it. I know a lot of other people are upset. But I think it is twofold, on one end of the spectrum we have a sort of exclusion of white males and now we looking at employing, black, females. But on the other hand ownership reduced to a few companies and at the top of them there is still a lot of white people, where they are just saying who do we know and who do we like. I think that has a lot of play in the white nepotism, which is still rife in this country. Its prejudicial for whites and for non-whites* (Leo, 2017-10).

Considering this, it is not surprising to find that students are aware of the inequalities in the labour market, and even more so, that they have a general perception that these inequalities will affect their employment outcomes (both white and male, female and male students). Especially, because this sentiment is also maintained by much of the existing literature. Which, though it appreciates some of the changes made by the democratic labour laws to redress the past. Also submits that the state of the labour market in South Africa still reflects the discrimination of the past and as a result it affects different people differently. As students have different perceptions of how the inequalities can potentially affect them.

However, in total contrary to the perceptions discussed above, a significant percentage of of 38.60 students expressed that although there were very aware of the inequalities. They did not feel that they would be affected by these inequalities. This expression was shared by students from all six faculties, and all three races, with the black population constituting the highest percentage (see Table 5.14). These responses also varied, with some students (white) claiming

that their white privilege would offset the labour market inequalities. For instance, a white female from the Humanities faculty stated that:

> *Yeah, well, I operate from a position of privilege automatically; opera also traditionally is quite a white art. But it has changed the has been a huge rise in interest in the African community for opera. So it is changing and in some. I know in Cape Town there has been big push as well to have all black casts for opera products. So it is definitely changing* (Emma, 2017-10).

A male student studying Commerce also gave credit to his skin colour, he stated that: *Absolutely, I think me as an individual while male, it won't affect me as much because I can still get what I want. I mean it still bothers me because these days it is women first, black women and then we are like somewhere at the bottom* (David, 2017-10).

Some students while sharing the same view, gave different reasons for why they thought they would not be affected by the labour market inequalities. These students gave credit to the labour market labour laws which they believe to have brought about change in the labour market by correcting the injustices and inequalities of the past. Moleke (2003-2004), Arora and Ricci (2005) and Festus et al (2015) - amongst other authors - identify one of these, and perhaps the major piece of law/legislation (amongst others) as the Employment Equity Act (EEA). They explain that this is the first piece which aimed to eliminate discrimination and establish specific measures to accelerate the advancement of designated groups (i.e. women, blacks and people with disabilities) by using the Affirmative action medium. This action is a yardstick aimed at ensuring that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and equitably represented at all levels in all occupational categories. For this reason, some black students, who felt were not affected referred to these labour market legislations. For instance, a female student from the Commerce faculty stated that:'*I am aware of them, but I think to me as a black female who is going to be an accountant, in this country you are in high demand. Companies need us to up their BEE score'* (Zama, 2017-10). This sentiment was mostly articulated by black female students as most men realised (as expressed above by Sethu and Thabang) that these same laws would disadvantage them because they seem to predominately empower women.

Despite that some students were giving credit to the labour legislations effort to correct the past injustices. On the other side of the fence, some students were sceptical of the efficiency of such

legislations. This sentiment was raised by students from four faculties (Humanities, Commerce, Science and Pharmacy). Data reveals that most of these students were black students and it was mostly expressed by female students than their male counterparts (see table 5.14 and 5.15). In essence, these students questioned whether these laws were fulfilling the purpose for which they are established. As articulated by a black, female student studying Education: *'Theoretically as black women I stand a good chance, but I am not sure if that's the reality in the actual labour market.'* (Pinky, 2017-10). A black male student also stated that: '*Yeah, I am very much aware. But I know women are being preferred, black women over males. But I do not know how true this BEE thing is* (Neville, 2017-10). On the same note, some students acknowledged the lingering privilege of whites despite the purpose of labour legislation to reverse discrimination and primarily to put the previously disadvantaged on par with the minority that was privileged by the apartheid system. For instance, a black, male student stated that:

> *I am aware of the current standing of how white makes specifically are occupying higher level positions. But I am also aware of the affirmative programmes the government has in place. So it is really hard for me to understand where this puts me as a student who is looking to find employment. How effective are they and how fairly regulated are they, I do not know what my chances are.* (Mishondlebe, 2017-10).

Considering this, the dissertation finds that this sentiment echoes the ones articulated by existing literature. Several authors (Moleke, 2003-2004; Arora and Ricci, 2005 and Festus et al, 2015) agree that labour market interventions have gone a long way towards addressing, the existing disparities. An understanding that is also articulated by a significantly few number of students mostly black students. However, both the students and the existing body of literature claim that notwithstanding the considerable progress made in achieving redress, inequalities are still stark.

Moreover, another question that was asked in relation to the inequalities of the labour, was whether students acknowledged the changes from the apartheid labour market to the post 1994 labour market. As has been presented in table 5.16- 5.17, the responses were varied between students who perceived some changes and those who did not. In this regard, 24.56% students maintained that there have been changes. This view was shared by both white and black students and both genders. For instance, a black, female stated that:

> *I think there is more things in place now to try regulate the people going into the labour market and how it functions in general. Yes, there is still major white dominance in the labour market but there are systems in place to try deregulate that and regulate black economic empowerment. Whereas pre-1994 the was no regulations in place to for black people to make it in the labour market, it was just every man for themselves* (Notendo, 2017-10).

On the other hand, most students, 49.12% in total believed that there was very little change. As articulated by black, male student:

> *There was nothing for blacks back then but now there is something. But even the something is not much. I feel that the chances we have now are solid chances but not chances that will take us from what we feel is a lower class or 'the so-called' middle class and putting us where we can create organisations for our families and we can have jobs for kids who haven't been born. Cause that's what I feel whites were in apartheid, children born of whites are able to get jobs from their parents organisations because they are born in a family that has a business (a law firm or something). So until we can do that as black people, I don't think there is a significant change. There has been a change in that now we can go to university, but will we get a job after university? that is the difference we do not see* (Licebo,2017-10).

Only five (8.77%) students claimed that they were no changes at all. As articulated by a black, female Commerce student: *I do not think there are a lot of changes, much could still be done* (Nondumiso, 2017-10). One would agree with the students that much more change is required. Given that the Stats SA and other authors (like Moleke, 2003-2004, Budget speech, 2014) maintain that the South African labour market is still plagued with stark inequalities despite the efforts of the new government to correct the injustices. However, it is also understandable that having to totally achieve the purpose for which these labour market laws/legislations/policies were and are continually being implemented is not going to happen overnight, it will take a considerable amount of time (National Treasury, 2011; Budget speech, 2016;).

Over and above, data reveals that some student's responses confirm the SLM argument that there are separate markets and that race is the predominate factor that determines the employment outcomes of workers. Though students are not in the labour market, what they perceive to be of the labour market reflects the SLM theory. Which recognises that the labour

market is segmented, and that this segmentation arises because of the existence generated by geographical, occupational, institutional factors as well as gender, race and age (Cassim, 1982; Fleetwood, 2006,2008; White, 2010). Likewise, students have a sense that some occupational categories are merely for whites than for black, such as top management positions. Unlike the Orthodox theories, the SLM theorists accept that the labour market is broken into two or more distinct sectors, the primary sector and secondary sector. Therefore, they argue that there are forces that determine the kind of people that get to occupy either one of the sectors (Gordon *et al*, 1973; Cassim, 1989). And just as Cassim (1989) and Moleke (2003-2004) confirm that race is one of the factors used to differentiate among people in the South African labour market. The students also perceive their race and gender to have a bearing on the entry in the labour market.

Moreover, the dissertation finds that the gender and race differences are as inherent in how people view and understand the labour market. This is one question that was not necessarily concerned with one's field of study but indicates that students view the labour market based on their gender and race. Therefore, these were the two factors that had a bearing on students' perception on this subject matter. However, it was surprising to learn that some whites shared same views with blacks more than they disagreed on some. Furthermore, the black population was the most pessimistic, but particularly, black men were the pessimistic group, followed by a few black women followed by a few white men. The majority of black and all white women expressed that they would not affected by the inequalities. This denotes the bearing that race and gender has on how students understand the labour market for them respectively.

7.5. CHOICE OF DEGREES

Research on graduate unemployment has highlighted that the problem of graduate unemployment can be attributed amongst other things to the issue of skills mismatch. Moleke (2005) and Pauw et al (2008) maintains that skills mismatch is an integral part of graduate unemployment. This implies that, while it may not always be the case, graduates who are not in the labour market, are perhaps possessing degrees that are not demand in the labour market. Students in support of literature also believe that there are degrees that are demanded over the others. This indicates that the choice of degree is linked with employment prospect Moleke (2005) and Pauw *et al* (2008:54). Yet Pauw *et al*, submits that the fact that too many students graduate with inappropriate qualifications was frequently raised as one of the major problems faced by firms'. Then it is necessary to understand the reason behind the students' choices of

their degrees and what they think of their choices in respect of their job prospects. This is to understand how the knowledge and understanding of the labour market that students have has influenced their choice of degree.

As can be detected from the table 6.1. 6.2 and 6.3 students had various reasons they attached to their choice of degrees. The most commonly expressed reason, was that students have an interest/passion while the least agreed upon reason was that the degree chosen had less stringent requirements. About 38.60% of the students claimed that their choice of degrees was driven by the passion that they had for the degree. All six faculties shared the same sentiment. However, the Humanities faculty constituted the lowest number of students expressing this view. Whereas the Commerce, Pharmacy and Law students had the majority of students articulate that what drove their choice of degree is the interest and passion they had for the degree. The general idea is that students study degrees hey love or did well in from secondary school. For instance, a white, female student from the Humanities faculty, studying music stated that: '*I have always been a performer, so I can't see myself doing anything else. And I was lucky enough to have parents who were supportive of the fact that I was going into the Art* (Emma, 2017-10). A white, female student from the Commerce faculty expressed that: '*Well I really liked accounting in high school and I knew I would be able to get a job straight after varsity. So that contributed to my choice of it. I like what I am doing so that is the main thing about it* (Rachel, 2017-10)

A male student from the Humanities faculty made an interest point stating:

> *I chose my degree because it was something related to my interest and skills. The skills I have acquired from my degree are soft skills, perhaps not the most required skills. However, I'm happy with the skills and knowledge I have acquired. I tend to disagree with the idea that soft skills are not needed, everything that occurs requires these skills. When people work, they don't work in a vacuum, they work in a society and work with people. The problem we have is a people's problem not a world problem* (Thulani, 2017-10)

Data reveals that only a few students from the Humanities (which is only 6 students, 10.53%) study humanities because of the interest they have for the degree. Be that as it may, one may argue that perhaps the reason for these students having little interest or passion for Humanities degrees rests - in part - on the fact that unlike the Commerce, Pharmacy and Law students, whose courses have a set career path or profession. The Humanities faculty usually does not

have set career paths. For instance, Moleke (2005 cited in Pauw et al, 2008) explains that fields such as Humanities and Arts do not directly prepare graduates for a profession. On this note, the other reason that can be attached to this lack of interest in Humanities degrees is the one provided by some of the students from the Humanities faculty who articulated that the only reason they ended up with their current field of study is because they were rejected for their first choice (which was either Law, Bcom/Commerce or Pharmacy). Again, this is the only faculty that expressed this view, which may well be another reason why some students have very little interest in the Humanities faculty.

However, data reveals that students from all population groups shared the same sentiment, with 10.53% black students, followed by 3.51% whites and the only sampled Indian student. Furthermore, table 6.3 indicates that there were more female students, with 22.81% and a significantly low percentage of males, with 10.53%. One black, female student while explaining why she ended up pursuing a Humanities degree, stated that: *'I did two years of law, and didn't do so well in it, so I realised I was more into entrepreneurship. So industrial psychology became what I fell back on and I like it now'* (Lynette, 2017-10). An Indian, male students, expressed that though Humanities was not his first choice, he enjoys it now, in his words:

> *I entered university hoping I would do law but that hit me on the face, but the thing is that I do not regret taking the subjects that I am doing now, I am very passionate about them. Sociology, like especially now that I am doing sociology, back then it was just like okay I have to have this but now it is something I am really enjoying, I grew to love it. So in terms of that I do not regret my subjects, I am very confident with them (*Jameish, 2017-10)

This response is closely linked to another view expressed by some students. Claiming that while studying Humanities was not their initial choice, they grew to appreciate the skills that their alternative degrees had to offer. This sentiment was also only raised by Humanities faculty, though all population groups and both females and males shared the sentiment.

Conversely, some students expressed that their choice of study was simply influenced by the good employment prospects of the degree/qualification. As submitted by a black, female student from the Commerce: *'It seemed like a good career choice that would afford me a comfortable life* (Monde, 2017-10). This view was shared by some students from the Commerce, Science and Pharmacy faculties. However, there was no significant difference

between race and gender as this view was shared by both blacks and whites, females and males. However, this confirms one of the findings discussed in 7.3 above that there are degrees that are in perpetual demand than others. These are degrees that afford whosoever possess them good employment prospects in the labour market (Moleke, 2005; Pauw et al, 2008).

Furthermore, this view is relative to the one raised by students who claimed that the only primary reason that they chose their degrees was because such degrees were in high demand. As stated by a female student from the Pharmacy student who expressed that: *I chose Bachelor of Pharmacy degree simply because of job opportunities, but as time went by I also realized that I do have passion for people, and it was not a bad choice at all* (Batseba, 2017-10). This view was also expressed by students from (Commerce, Science, Education and Pharmacy). One can notice that these faculties are amongst others that offer degrees that students believe are sought after by employers as discussed under 7.3. This means that there is a link between choice of degree and the job prospects of that degree. This view I make is also raised by two female students from the Humanities faculty who expressed that: '*I chose what I was interested in. I now regret not looking at the market value or need of my degree*' (Sinekhaya, 2017-10). Patience, from the Humanities faculty also stated that: *'I wanted to do anything that involves interacting with people but now I am feeling it's the worst choice ever, considering that employers target natural science students and if ever they employ social science people they tend to occupy the lowly recognised positions* (2017-10).

These views are in support of the idea that some degrees are in high demand and for this reason very attractive to employers in the face of skills-shortages. This is also confirmed by Moleke (2005), who found that students with certain degrees, (mostly professional degrees) tend to have good employment outcomes, with some obtaining employment speedily after leaving varsity. Considering that, some students based their choice of degree on the perception that some degrees are sought after than others. This indicates that most students are influenced by their understanding of the labour market in choosing their degree. Since the students perceive that some degrees are demanded, or they offer job security than others this perception shapes their choices accordingly.

However, views like this one, contradict what some of the existing research asserts on youth/graduate unemployment. Which claims that students often choose degrees that are not demanded by the labour market. Evidence suggests that students lack inadequate career guidance means that they do not choose fields of study and types of qualifications with good

employment prospects (National Treasury, 2011; Bhorat *et al*, 2013). These findings reveal that most students choose their degrees based on this perception. And this may also mean that most students regard (rightfully so) the labour market as a platform/source of information that they use to make their choice of degree. Because some students who stated that they had passion for their degrees also admitted that they considered job prospects when choosing their degrees as so eloquently expressed by Rachel.

The research finds further that on the question of why students choose their degrees is because some degrees have less stringent requirements. These results echo the findings by Moleke (2005) cited in Pauw *et al* (2013) who, though referring to TVET colleges students, found that some students choose the field of study with less stringent entry requirements. However, Moleke (2005) submits that at times their decisions are purely arbitrary. One may agree with this assertion, given that the easy accessibility of a degree does not guarantee a degree as much as they do not guarantee a job after the completion of the degree. This choice of study maybe faulty as even though a student may obtain such a degree, he/she may not necessarily find employment. It is against this background that one would argue like Pauw *et al* (2013) who suggests that there may be deficiencies in career guidance both in schools and technical colleges.

Evidence form the study in question also indicates that only students from the pharmacy, law and science faculty where mostly passionate about the degree they chose. The majority of Education and Commerce students chose their degrees because the degree secured employment. The humanities students seem to have stumbled into their fields of study because most of them could not get into law or Bcom studies, with some expressing that they were not too sure what to study. This evidence shows that whatever be another reason for the choice of degree, the underlying reason is that they want to secure employment after studies. Furthermore, the questioned revealed that one's field of study is one of the factors that has a bearing on how students perceive their employability. It appears that humanities students, though they expressed that they enjoy studying for their degrees they are concerned about their employment. On the contrary, the commerce, pharmacy and education students all have confident of their employability when considering their degrees. However, race and gender at this stage did not seem to have any bearing on the students' choice of degrees.

7.6. PERCEIVED CHANCES OF JOB ATTAINMENT AND STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE LABOUR MARKET.

Seeing that the state of the South African labour market is infested with *inter alia,* chronic inequalities, slow economic growth and job creation, skills mismatch and skills shortages, high rates of unemployment (Standing *et al,* 1996; Arora & Ricci 2005; Burger & Woolard, 2005; Horn, 2006; Daniels, 2007: Pauw *et al*, 2008; Bhorat *et al*, 2013). Though the unemployment problem pertaining to graduates is said to be much better in comparison to overall unemployment general (Altbeker & Johnston, 2013; Van Broekhuizen, 2016). Some existing research show that even amongst the graduates, unemployment is problem which is attributed to skills-mismatch/shortages (Pauw et al, 2008; Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). Therefore, in light of these labour market trends- amongst others- it is interesting to find out what students (while studying for their degrees) think of their chances of entering the labour market as well as to investigate the expectations they have of the labour market.

These questions are especially suitable given that unlike the neoclassical theories of the labour market, particularly the Human capital theories. The SLM theorists stresses the fact that education on its own cannot guarantee employment as there are other variables outside the individuals control but also factor in how and where one gets employed. Therefore, the question also investigates if the students only consider their degrees when thinking of their chances and expectation or whether they take cognisance of other variables that could potentially affect their employment prospects, such as race, gender etc.

As illustrated in table 6.4. 6.5. 6.6. and table 6.7. 6.8, 6.9 the students' responses on these two questions were either positive or negative, with only a few students expressing that they believed they had to put in more work to improve their employability. Data reveals that students' responses on their perceived chances corresponded their responses of their expectations of the labour market. There were students who had pessimistic perceptions of their chances of employment and thus maintained pessimistic perceptions of their expectations. The general idea among these students was that that with humanities degrees it is not that easy to find employment as with some degrees. While some students claimed that not having experience may limit their chances of good employment. This sentiment was expressed by a male, students from the Humanities faculty as he stated that:

> *Because I do not have working experience**,** probably between 10 to 20 grand, I am thinking of the living costs so that's is roughly were I want to start. But I do not think it*

> *will be simple, that is a fact. Because even with the graduate recruitment programmes they take just one person at a time* (Neville, 2017-10).

This finding is compatible to that highlighted by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) that students demonstrate an acute awareness that their lack of experience, and in particular the fact of not having done a work placement, could hinder the fulfilment of their career aspirations.

Similarly, students who claimed that they had good chances of employment, expressed that though they did not have high expectation, they did expect to secure good employment that is up to par with their degree. The general perception amongst these students was that they know their degrees secure good employment and they had the necessary skills, qualities to impress employers. As articulated by a black, male student studying a Commerce degree:

> *It is very challenging in SA but then as I said in some industries it is not much of a challenge to get a job. For instance, for me I knew as early as my second year that I have some sort of job security because there is requirement in my degree to have a training contract with a firm. And given that this is a scarce skill the employers are the ones actually looking for employees but in general it is difficult in SA to get a job without experience. I know I won't be rich but I will have enough money to lead a good life* (Sethu Gomto, 2017-10)

This view was shared by a black, female student from the Pharmacy faculty, in her own words:

> *I know I am going to be a pharmacist and those people make a decent living. Anything that is health related is on demand and that is how I know I will find employment easy and make a decent living. But I wouldn't want to work for some forever, my expectations are to have my own business one day* (Debra, 2017-10).

In light of this, data reveals that students field of study had the most influence on how they perceived their chances (as being good or average) and how they measured their expectations (as being high or low). It is also clear that student's responses pertaining to their chances and expectations were impacted by their views on what they though employers were looking for and what they think it takes to enter the labour market discussed in 7.3 above.

Together with that, the results expose that race and gender also had a bearing on what students thought about their chances and which ultimately informed their expectations. With a few black males expressing that they had limited chances. Underlying this sentiment, as expressed by other students was the perceptions that women were much more preferred than men. As a result,

some black male students felt threatened by the fact that the job market still favours white male individuals for certain positions. As explained by one student: '*they are limited, I am a black man. The labour market policies are rooting for black females more than it does black man. So, I still think my chances I slim* (Nyiko, 2017-10). These views were mostly shared amongst the male cohort, with both white and black males expressing this view. Only a few black females saw race as negatively affecting their chances and expectation. The general idea was that inequalities in the labour market based on race and gender affected their chances of unemployment.

Existing Literature confirms that the labour market is characterised by inequalities, among a host of other trends (Stats SA report; Moleke, 2004; Arora & Ricci, 2005; Dias & Possel, 2007; Patel et al, 2011;). For instance, Moleke (2004: 222), when explaining the state of the South African LM, submits that access to jobs is limited and unequally distributed across different groups. He further explains that 'whites still dominate high level occupations; white males predominate in management whereas African women are still concentrated in secondary sectors and occupations with the characteristics of the secondary sectors and occupations with the characteristics of secondary sectors'. Hence for this same reason, students who expressed that they do not have good chances also expressed that they have very low expectations of the labour market. Additionally, this also indicates that their chances of employment and their expectations employability perceptions are shaped by how students the LM for themselves. For instance, a white, female student studying music expressed that:

> *there are places where gender is an issue therefore; I won't have a lot of opportunities in that way. In terms of employment, I am not expecting necessarily permanent employment because you can be in a production for 5 months and be out of formal employment after that. You always have to make employment for yourself happen. Standard rate for a public concert is about 5000 a performance from that though I still have to pay my accompanists and my voice couch for doing extra time with me. It depends on the formal job you do. I will definitely have a job on the side just to keep me afloat* (Emma, 2017-10).

Considering that, the dissertation finds that this evidence contradicts what some of the existing literature pertaining to graduate expectations uphold. Which is the idea that graduate often have high expectations. For instance**,** Rankins and Roberts (2011); Bhorat *et al* (2013); Sibanyoni *et a*l, (2015) and Graham and De Lannoy (2016) amongst other authors submit that graduates are

often perceived to have high reservation wages, refusing to work for less money than they should receive. Yet employers feel that a return to employing a graduate is low, given that graduates require extensive on-the-job training before they provide any returns to the firm. Therefore, in light of this it is argued that it is necessary for graduates to have a more realistic view of what they can offer and what they can expect from their first job given their limited experiential training (Rankins & Roberts ,2011); Bhorat et al,2013); Sibanyoni et al 2015) and Graham & De Lannoy, 2016).

However, in the contrary this dissertation finds that final year students from Rhodes University do not have high expectations. Most of these students (From the Humanities and Science faculties predominately) think they still lack one thing or the other and thus claimed that their expectations were low in terms of the simplicity of acquiring employment, income and occupational level. Such a sentiment was articulated by black, male student from the Humanities faculty, in his words:

> *Not for the first 10 years. I don't have high expectations. Especially as a humanities student. I am not expecting much, but I am expecting something as a graduate because I am a step ahead someone who does not tertiary education. But the only way to earn a lot, I know I have to work hard. As opposed to being so lucky as to get a well-paying job from the get go like a doctor or something* (Licebo, 2017-10).

Likewise, evidence actually shows that even the students (predominately from the Commerce, Pharmacy and Education faculties) who believed they had good chances, still did not have high expectations. While they thought they would easily acquire employment due to the demand of such degrees. They did highlight that they were expecting entry level positions and expect to actually start as interns which pays out a stipend and not necessarily a salary. Continuing on this note, the dissertation finds that these results contradict another finding highlighted by Bhorat *et al* (2013) that graduates expect their qualifications to open doors at middle management level and are often unwilling to start at entry level. Both these groups of students expressed that they did not have this level of high expectations. With most students showing awareness that they would have to start from the very bottom and work their way up. An Indian male student studying Humanities stated that:

> *…I don't expect to start right at the top, that's not the case, especially nowadays. I will work my way up, from the ground all the way to the top especially with my field of study. I expect to earn anywhere above 10 000* (Jameish, 2017-10).

Notwithstanding, some students who had low expectations also argued that employers should give them the credit, as they are a step ahead from someone who does not have any qualification at all. With some students maintaining that most students when they graduate they usually have financial debt they should pay up. Therefore, when employers recruit graduates they should bear this in mind. As expressed by a black male student from the Humanities faculty:

> *My expectations of the labour market is for the market to consider the skills and interests I have and look into how they could be used. When starting out, at least a good paying job from R8000 to R10000 and hopefully growth opportunities in the job* (Thulani, 2017-10)

A female student from the same faculty shared the same sentiment and stated that:

> *What I expect from the labour market is that it should have a basic start-up salary for graduates, understanding that they have their living expenses; they have to get to work but at the same time they should allow that same person more opportunities to up their position and then to increase their pay* (Lynette, 2017-10).

This is not to say students/graduates should have high expectations but rather that employers need to understand that students have living costs to settle. I personally think that these views that students make are as realistic as they can be. As they are simply asking for employers to take note of their needs as prospective graduates. Which is something employers should do for any job seeker. This same sentiment was maintained by Brown *et al* (2003) expressing that 'graduates frequently enter the labour market with significant financial debt. As a result, they are resigned to the burden of debt because they believe they can get a better paid more interesting and high-status job than those without a university education'. This dissertation finds along these lines that students expect to be paid enough to settle their debts. This cannot request that student make cannot be deemed to be a high expectations. But rather a reality for some students, who invest in education by taking up loans and hope to get decent jobs in order to not only pay of their study loans but to make a living for themselves too. Hence, I am of the mind that this is a realistic expectation that graduates have. Which employers need to be cognisant of when hiring graduates.

It also appears that a study conducted by Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) supports the findings of the dissertation in question. In as much as it contradicts the employers' perceptions that students have high expectations. And the assumption that youth never want to work for anything less than what they expect. Instead, Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) argue that

employers and the society must realize the youth's willingness to work. Furthermore, Graham & De Lannoy (2016) submit that participants specified 'that they would be willing to work for very low-wages-lower than typical minimum wages in various sectors. And while they had big dreams of being lawyers, doctors, they were also willing to take any job that could give them experience or help them pay for university or college fees' (Patel *et al*, 2015 cited in Graham & De Lannoy, 2015). This is the same perception that this dissertation discovers from the Rhodes University final-year students. that whatever be their expectations, they are just not high.

According to this data and as have been presented in table 6.4-6.5. the dissertation finds that Commerce, Education and Pharmacy students were the most confident in their chances to obtain employment. For that matter some of the students from these faculties made it known that they had already found employment or have been offered employment. What is more, is that these responses were given in relation to how students valued their field of study, race or gender. With that said, students from these faculties based their perception of their chances and expectations based on their degree. For instance, these students believed that their degree offered them good chances to find employment and because of this they had positive expectations. Contrarywise, the students from predominately the Humanities faculty, followed by the Science faculty (though referring to a few student), expressed that their chances are limited. These students based their chances and expectations on their field of study, gender and race. Their reason for having low expectations and perceiving very limited chances of employment was tied to the perception that their degrees were not sought after in the labour market or the perception that the labour market inequalities would affect them based on their gender and race. Considering that, the dissertation finds that these perceptions indicate that the idea that students have of the labour market informs how students see their employability.

Finally, studying student's responses on their expectations and their perceived chances confirms that studying for a degree on its own is not enough in obtaining employment (Anord & Rothwell, 2007; Tomlinson, 2007; Tymon, 2013). For the reason that, even the people with perpetually demanded degrees are subject to some barriers as a result of one's race, gender amongst other factors (Cassim, 1989, Brown et al, 2003; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Anord & Rothwell, 2007). This is the same reason for which the HCT theory is criticized. It does not take into account these factors that could be barriers for students even if they acquire good education that is demanded in the labour market. This is where the SLM theory comes in, as it

takes heed of the potential variables that impact one's entry in the labour market as well as they sector they fall into.

For instance, According to Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) while the human capital theory highlights the importance of skills acquisition to favourable employment outcomes the SLM takes into consideration factors such as variables such as race, class, sex, and age are outside of an individual's control results affect one's eligibility enter the labour market and succeed in it. These differences between the two theories are reflected in student's responses. Data reveals that though all students recognise the value of education and obtaining a qualification, they are also aware of the variables that can affect their employment prospects. Some of these, as articulated by students is their race and gender factor into whether they get employed or not. This sentiment is also expressed by Moleke (2005) as he submits that in the labour market marked by disparities and inequalities, factors such as race, gender can be expected to play a significant role in employability.

Some students, who maintained that they have low expectations and claimed that their chances are limited took cognisance of the inequalities in the labour market that can disadvantage them on the basis of skin colour. As Licebo expressed that the fact that as part of the labour market redress women are preferred than men can disadvantage him as a woman with a same degree as him may be given the job in the name of women empowerment. Similarly, a Commerce student explained how the fact that the white population is still favoured in certain employment might mean that he never gets into certain occupations.

One would argue that most of these perceptions are compatible with the SLM theories. Which in turn indicates that students understand the labour market within the perspective of the SLM theories. This is not to say they dismiss the HTC, but rather that even though they value education as the Human capital approach also does. They do as Tan (2014) put it, see education as not being at the centre of good employment outcomes, but rather one should consider other factors that may offset the education and disadvantage a certain group while it favours others. This also indicates, as already mentioned that how student see their chances and expectations is influenced by what they know about the labour market. This finding is supported by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) who asserts that ones' employability is determined by the labour market other than the actual capabilities of the individuals.

This implies that while one may have the skills and degree needed, the labour market as well as factors describe by the SLM theorists factor into whether you are employable or not.

According to Ntikinca (2014) the Heterodox (from which the SLM theory is rooted) LM approach suggest 'that the concept of employability is highly complex and multi-layered that means that it is shaped by both individual and external factors. This contradicts the HCT perspective which proposes that the individual with the higher level of the education enjoys better labour market success than those with less or none'. Indeed, this study confirms that race and gender factor into how students understand the labour market and thus undertake to develop their employability.

7.7. HOW STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

Much of the issue for graduate unemployment is attributed to the fact that students are hardly prepared for entry for the labour market (Pauw *et al*, 2008; National Treasury, 2009; Bhorat *et al*, 2013 Mlathseni and Ranchhod, 2017). According to existing literature the general lack of adequate preparation for entry into labour market may be a contributing factor to the high unemployment rate among graduates (National Treasury, 2009; Bhorat *et al*, 2013). Especially considering that given that graduate employability also refers to the readiness of individuals to enter the labour (Wye & Lim, 2009). It was therefore, necessary to investigate how students set out to prepare for their entry in labour market. It was especially necessary to explore perceptions on labour market preparation, in light of the previous theme that reveals that majority of students have low expectations and perceive their chances to not be so good. This evidence begs the question as to how students set out to improve their chances in order to prepare for the labour market. And this is what the dissertation found interest in exploring. Accordingly, the data reveals that students are aware that they need to enhance their employability in order to be marketable in the labour market. They do this in various ways as shown in table 6.10. 6.11 and 6.12.

Data reveals that students who had positive perceptions of their chances and expectations. Focussed on their studies. This sentiment was shared across all faculties. It seems they chose to focus on their studies because some of them were already employed, some stated that they were secured that they would get employment. These are the students who also expressed that they have all that the experience they need, or they did not need it because they already have practical experience, or rather have the degree that is demanded in the labour market and as a result were very positive of their outcomes. As articulated by black, female students who studies comedy who stated that: *I am just trying to pass and fortunately, for us you don't even need experience, your degree might just be enough'* (*Zama, 2017-10).* This indicates that it for

this reason, that some students did not see a need in doing other things on the side that other students were doing. After all, research does show that students with certain degrees tend to acquire employment quickly.

For instance, Moleke (2005:13) submits that field of study is the major determinant of employability for those with higher education qualification. Those in fields of study that guaranteed a profession and those whose fields of study are perceived positively by potential employers tend to find employment quicker. The data reveals that for this same reason some students just wanted to focus their energies on obtaining the degree. Because of they believed that their degree promised good employment prospects. This for them was all the preparation they needed. This view was submitted by another black female form the Law faculty, she expressed that: *'Right now, I am not, I am focussing on exams. I think the best way to prepare is to get a qualification. That is how i am doing most of my preparation'* (Nontendo, 2017-10)

Conversely, some students wanted to work hard, gain more experience, and do community engagement. One should notice that these are the self-same qualities that students identified as the ones being required or sought after by employers. Therefore, these results reveal that because students thought that employers wanted these qualities. It was for this reason that they thought they should prepare themselves by acquiring these qualities or attributes. This rationale is confirmed by Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) as they submit that it is logical that youth perceptions of the labour market have a strong effect on the effort they invest to find employment. This assertion proves true in this study, as evidence shows that because experience was deemed to be the key factor that determined whether you find employment or not students also thought that experience will enhance their employability. Therefore, the way to prepare themselves was to gain experience. As articulated by a black, male student from the Humanities, stating that: *'I want to gain more skills, so I am working on that now* (Nyiko, 2017-10). Similarly, a considerable number of students was of the mind the they needed to obtain experience to enhance their employment chances.

Essentially, these findings highlighted that students endeavour to do the very thing that they think the labour markets wants. Hence, some students think they are not ready for the labour market because they measure their readiness based on whether they have the qualities that are needed to make a successful entry in the labour market. the general perception of students is that without these qualities, one may not find (desirable) employment. Therefore, the findings suggest that students' perceptions of the labour market, especially what they think it takes to

enter the labour market and what they think are the employers' requirements, all influence not only their perceived chances of getting employment but also how they prepare for employment. These responses varied mainly by field of study, whereby students expressed their perceptions based on the value they put in their degrees. However, race and gender featured in the perceptions of students in a sense that black students (both males and females) are the ones who thought they needed improve their employability by acquiring more experience. When most of white students were just focussed on their studies. One may assume that this difference between race and gender is a result of the perceptions that the white population has more chance to finding employment than the black population. For instance, whites already operate from a privilege afforded to them by the apartheid regime as expressed by Emma above. But the black population still has challenges to overcome to successfully enter the labour market. This again proves how ones experience of the labour market informs how they understand their employability.

7.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed and analysed the data in relation and in comparison to the existing literature in achieving the primary and secondary goals. In doing so the chapter has highlighted instances when data and the literature review were in alignment and when they were incongruent to each other. Thus, filling the gaps or showing that further research on some areas is necessary for clarity. The following chapter provides a conclusion of the entire dissertation

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to study students perceptions of their employability as revealed by their understanding of the labour market. In addressing this question, the study also explored the bearing that factors such as gender, race and field of study have on students' perceptions of the labour market and of their employability. Therefore, data was first collected regarding the knowledge and views that students have of the South African labour market. This was followed by the data collection of the students' perceptions of their employability. Indeed, these results helped understand the idea that the final-year students have of the labour market and how they see their employment prospects based on their ideas of the labour market.

Firstly, just like Fleetwood submits that there are two main accounts of the labour markets: (i) the orthodox account which circumvents the analysis of social structure. And the Heterodox account (from which the SLM theories emanate) which acknowledges that labour market is characterised by segmentations that are preceded by the social structures. The students' responses of the labour market reflected both these accounts. However, students' perceptions were divided between a few students who saw and understood the labour market through the lens of the orthodox account (particularly the Human Capital theory). Whereas a considerable number of students shared the sentiment within the framework of the SLM theory.

The few students whose perceptions of the labour market matched those of the human capital theory, are the students who focused mainly on the acquisition of education. They, alluded to the fact that education was a key to success. Without which one may be subject to unemployment. For instance, these students thought that unemployment was caused by the fact that people lack education. This is the same view that the Human capital theory maintains. And though this might be the case to some extent, they did not consider other factors that may impede on an individual being unable to obtain education. Or that there could be other factors that hinder an individual from obtaining employment even when he/she has the necessary education.

In contrary a considerable number of students gave responses that are much more compatible with the SLM ideas. Which, though it recognizes the value of education also takes cognisance of the social structure and other factors that lead to the segmentation of the labour market and hat impeded on the mobility of people to especially the primary sector. These students raised

issues like inequality, corruption, nepotism as factors that could impede on one's employment prospects despite their education attainment level.

On top of that, the results of the study reveal that students have a concrete awareness of the labour market. I say concrete, given that most of the students' perceptions of the South African labour market of students were in alignment with existing research. Despite the fact that most students have never been in the labour market and thus were not answering from their experience of it. The dissertation find that students' perception captured the realities of the state of the South African labour market which includes that the labour market is infested with labour market inequalities. Students are aware that there are degrees that employers seek after and degrees that do not necessarily have good employment prospects.

Students are aware of the changing nature of the labour market, which has become volatile and highly competitive and that it requires people with a diverse set of skills. With that said, majority of students realised that though a degree is necessary, it was not enough. They realised that a well-rounded person is what attracts employers and what makes an individual employable. Therefore, these perceptions not only show that students are knowledgeable about the labour market but this study also confirms some of the critics of the HCT and the orthodox approach in general. Which for the most part fails to explain some of the trends of the labour market that the students and the SLM theory accounted for. Such as inequalities, discrimination and the issue of unemployment among others.

While the Human capital theory focusses on the acquisition of education and skills and lack of them thereof. The SLM theory focusses on the barriers and variables that impeded on the mobility in the labour market. And as has been discussed, students also perceived these barriers and exogenous factors that contribute to the unequal and segmented structure of the labour market. Though this dissertation did not explore all trends and characteristics of the labour market. This evidence may go some way to confirm the assertion made by Cassim (1982) and Fleetwood (2006) that the SLM theory (Heterodox approach) constitutes as an insightful analysis of the labour market.

The dissertation finds further that each students' perception of the labour market affected their perception of their employability. Where the students' views of the labour market were positive, their perceptions of their employability were positive. But were students views of the labour market were negative, so were their perceptions of their employability. For instance, students (from the humanities faculty) were of the view that their degrees did not have good

employment prospects. Though they thought that the skills they gained would help them manoeuvre their way into the labour market. However, when asked about their chances, it was for this same reason that they expressed that they have very low expectations and also expressed that they had low chances of finding employment. Whereas, students who thought their degrees would secure them good employment (mostly from Education, Pharmacy and Commerce) were convinced that they had good chances in the labour market.

In the same vain, students (mostly black males) who understood that the labour market's inequalities had consequences for them, expressed that they had low expectations and thought they had low chances because they realise that they would be disadvantaged by the eminent inequalities. Contrarily, students (mostly white and black females) who thought that though there were inequalities in the labour market. Also expressed that they had white privilege, while slightly different to the reason given by whites, black females were convinced that the labour laws redress operate in their favour. As a result, they believed they would not be affected by inequalities. It is for the same reason that they thought they thought had good chances in finding employment.

This reveals the relationship that exists between how students understand the labour market and how they not only perceive their chances but how their understanding of the labour market influences how students develop their employability, and how they prepare for the labour market. For instance, given that students perceive that employers seek for people with experience. Because of this general perception, students set out to obtain experience because they believed that experience makes one employable. On the same vain, people who had experience, thought they were employable because of the perception that employers look for experience. The relationship between the understanding about employment outcomes and perceptions of employability is also apparent in that the attempt that the students set out to put in enhancing their employability reflects the views they have of the labour market.

Moreover, one of the goals of the research was to find out if students views of the labour market and their perceptions of their employment prospects differ based on field of study, race and gender. It was not a surprise to find that indeed students perceptions differed based on these factors. However, the dissertation also finds that though there were differences based on these factors, they were not significant. In other words, there was never an instance were one race would say something that was totally disagreed or not acknowledged by another population group. This is the same with gender, when one gender category expressed an opinion, it was

also expressed, though not entirely, by their counterparts. The same was with one's field of study. When some students gave responses in reference to their degrees, such as that some degrees are sought after than others. This idea was shared even by the students who did not consider that their degrees are sought but were aware that some degrees had good employment prospects.

Therefore, while there were some differences on these grounds, they were not absolutely exclusive. Students had a general and shared understanding of the inequalities in the labour market, of issue of unemployment, of employers' requirements and what they thought it took to enter the labour market. Moreover, students shared sentiments on their choice of degree, and expectations of the labour market. However, study also highlights that factors such as race, gender and field of study have a bearing on how students view the LM and how they understand their employability and even how they want to enhance their employability. Evidence shows that most white students saw their labour market prospects in a good light, thought other blacks also shared the same perception. Similarly, most black students had pessimistic perceptions of the labour market, but this was also shared by some whites who felt threatened by labour market policies. Hence the study finds that there were no significant differences between students' responses based on race or gender and even the field of study. As none of the perceptions of the students were exclusive based on field of study, race and gender. Students, despite of their demographics had a common understanding of the labour market. Which in turn shaped their perceptions of their employability

Over and above, the study made two contributions firstly, by casting light on students understanding of the labour market. Secondly, it has shown how this understanding influence what students think of their employability and how they set out to enhance their employability so as to prepare for the labour market. On top of that the study has shown that students' idea of the labour market and their perceptions of their employability reflect the two approaches that accounts for the labour market (Orthodox and Heterodox). On the same vain, it confirmed that the segmentation theories provide a better analysis than the HCT. Furthermore, the study has also found that students have general perceptions of the labour market, some of which are confirmed by the literature as has been revealed in chapter seven. However, there has also been divergence between what the existing literature maintains and the perceptions of the students.

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