

**EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS:
A SEARCH FOR A MODEL**

BY

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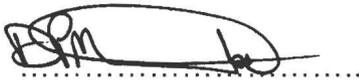
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DECLARATION

I, **Dulcie Pulane Malimabe**, declare that the research project (Experiential Training for University Students “ A search for a model”) submitted for the Master’s degree in Administration at the University of the Free State (Qwa-Qwa Campus) is my own original work, that all sources I have cited or quoted have been duly indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references, and that it has not been submitted for any degree at another University.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DPM', written over a dotted line.

Date

16/07/2007

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother Caroline Mamorare Malimabe, my son Neo Mofokeng, and my family at large, for being my role models, pillars of strengths, motivators and, above all the people whom I admire for their love, support and courage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following, who assisted me in accomplishing this task: -

- ❖ To my heavenly Father, for giving me life, intellectual strength, knowledge and skills to complete this study.
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the problems posed by a lack of experiential training at universities. The factors investigated include the high level of unemployment amongst university graduates and poor performance among new entrants in organizations. The major aim of this study was to explore the possibility of developing a model of experiential training for university students. This was done through the exploration of opinions of university graduates (both unemployed and employed), human resource officers and experienced employers to contribute towards experiential training policies in the universities in South Africa.

The research is a qualitative study of the Phenomenological paradigm. Also used is an exploratory and descriptive perspective. Unstructured (open-ended questions) with schedules were designed to collect relevant information through in-depth interviews and participant observation. A research sample was drawn by means of using the Snowball sampling Technique.

The results of this study indicated that universities of higher learning should as a challenge make an effort to change the process of higher education by introducing various models of experiential training such as internship programs, externship programs, work or job-shadowing programs, cooperative education or work study programs, and learnership programs. As experiential training is a field with a wide proliferation of terms, each institution can decide what it would like to name its pet program.

To achieve the above goal, an eclectic approach to experiential training was proposed, and should be structured in such a way that it helps to bring the two cultures of education and work closer together. The aim should be to provide the students the opportunities to gain and acquire the necessary skills, knowledge

(v)

and practical work experience related to their field of studies, therefore, making education a better preparation for working life. Suggestions for further research were proposed focusing on graduates' employability patterns in South Africa.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Presently South African graduates are facing increasing problems in getting employment, because they have never worked before and they have not been given any job training; they do not possess the expertise employers require. South African organizations require qualifications coupled with work experience for employment. A cursory look in the Star Workplace, Sunday Times (Careers section), among others, reveal this.

The unemployment problem among people with tertiary education, especially university graduates in South Africa, has become a disturbing development. Nowadays graduates without a form of experiential training or work experience find it difficult to obtain employment as firms either stop hiring, or tighten their hiring procedures (Van Dyk, Nel, Van Z Loedolff & Haasbroek, 1998:558).

Government, as a result of the above mentioned problem, has come up with corrective strategies and programs. Specific mention can be made of the Skills Development Act of 1997, South African Qualification Authority Act (SAQA), National Qualification Framework (NQF), and the June 2000 Report by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The CHE Report to the Minister of Education presents the considered proposals of the size and shape of a more effective South African higher education landscape (CHE, 2000: 4).

This chapter presents a brief orientation to the problem, statement of the problem, research questions, aims and objectives of the study, the significance of the study and overview of research design.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The thrust problem behind this study is the extreme concern that a lack of experiential training at university contributes to high levels of unemployment

among university graduates and also to poor performance among new entrants in organizations.

1.3. Research questions

To give the study proper focus and scope the following questions were addressed:

- (i) How can a model of experiential training for university students be developed?
- (ii) What are the opinions of university graduates and experienced employers on the model of experiential training for university students?
- (iii) How can experiential training programmes contribute towards university policies and South Africa in general?

1.4. Aims and objectives of the study

- (i) This study aims at developing a model of experiential training for university students through the soliciting of opinions of graduates and experienced employers.
- (ii) This study specifically aims at exploring the opinions of university graduates (both unemployed and employed) and human resource officers and experienced employers, on existing experiential training or lack of it in relation to the employability of university graduates and their performance on the job.
- (iii) The study further aims at contributing towards experiential training policies for universities and towards the on going debates on skills development and human resources development in South Africa in general.

1.5. Significance of the study

Unemployment among people with tertiary education, especially university graduates has reached spiraling proportions in South Africa. Only 30 percent of all graduates produced manage to obtain employment. One of the causes is a lack of experiential training on the part of the graduates. Most employers prefer an individual who is already in possession of some applicable experience in a given job to individuals without such experience (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001: 96).

In line with current programs and debates around the size and shape of higher education, various strategies and programs should be looked into, and experiential training is one of them (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001: 96).

In 1999 the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted a survey of 2000 newly-qualified graduates to investigate their first employment experiences. According to the findings, 59 percent of the respondents reported that they found a position immediately after graduation as opposed to 41 percent of the respondents who were less successful in finding employment immediately. Some of the explanations offered by graduates themselves for this disparity were that they were perceived as lacking work experience, and that there were very few available positions within their fields of study, and that they were unwilling to search for employment outside the areas where they lived (Piliso, 2001:86).

A study of this nature is, therefore, important in that it will explore the offering of experiential training as one of the remedial strategies for this national problem (unemployment among university graduates).

1.6 Overview of the Research design

This research design is based on qualitative approaches. A qualitative approach is more appropriate for this study, because qualitative research “in

contrast to quantitative research, employs primarily inductive reasoning. The problem is most clearly stated after much data collection and preliminary analysis. Inductive analysis allows one to explore and discover with an emergent research design rather than test deduction from theories in predetermined design” (McMillan & Schumaner, 1993: 91)

The research design is also exploratory and descriptive in nature. The purpose is to seek out new information, insight, ask questions and assess phenomena in a different perspective. The purpose is not to predict but to describe the problem. That means this study seeks to acquire evidence concerning a situation or population (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985: 107).

This research, examine the current problem posed by lack of experiential training at universities and explore the possibilities of developing a model of experiential training for university students through the exploration of opinions of the participants in this study. Therefore, requires the researcher to have access to the group of individuals' who had experience on the phenomenon being investigated (Valle & Halling, 1989:47). The researcher obtained data through in-depth interviews and participant observation, using the Snowball sampling Technique.

The data analysis is phenomenological, which is “the analysis of qualitative data to provide an understanding of concepts from participants' perspectives and views of social realities (McMillan & Schumaner, 1993: 95). The participant of the study are university graduates (both unemployed and employed), human resource officers and experienced employers.

1.7. Conclusion

This first chapter presents an introduction and orientation to the study. It also articulates the research problem of the study, the aims and objectives, the importance of the study and a brief overview of how the research will be conducted. The following chapter (Chapter Two) will deal with the literature review from different authors about experiential training models.

In the field of higher education, there is a growing group of faculties, administrators and interested outsiders who see experiential education as a way to revitalize the university curriculum and to cope with the many changes facing higher education today. This movement is attributed to the educational philosophy pioneered by John Dewey (Kolb, 1984:4). Dewey, regarded by many as the most influential educational authors of the twentieth century, best articulates the guiding principles for programs of experiential learning in higher education. The tools for this involve many traditional methods that are as old as the formal education system itself. These methods include apprenticeship, internships, work/study programs, cooperative methods, studio arts, laboratory studies and field projects. In higher education nowadays, these "traditional" experiential learning methods are receiving renewed interest and attention, owing in large measure to the changing educational environment in this country (Kolb, 1984: 4).

2.3. What is an internship program?

Mondy and Noe (1987: 275), are of the opinion that an internship program is a training approach whereby university or college students divide their time between attending classes and working for an organization. From the employer's point of view, the internship provides an excellent means of viewing a potential permanent employee at work. The internship normally provides much more information than can be obtained in an employment interview. Management is then in a better position to make selection and placement decisions. Internships also provide advantages for students. The experience they obtain through working enables them to integrate the theory learned in the classroom with the requirements of the workplace. At the same time, interns may gain knowledge of the organization that will help them determine whether the firm would be a good place to work.

Some educational institutions, more especially Technikons, offer voluntary or mandatory internship programs to students as part of a program of study, with students receiving supervision from both the academic institution and an employer. Most employers insist that their interns work under a formal

agreement established between the employer and the educational institution. Conditions vary widely, students may be paid or unpaid and may work scheduled part-time or full-time hours during the academic year or over vacations (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994: 120).

Ideally, internships result in students who have real-work experience related to their academic studies, who are well equipped to make the school-to-work transition and who have improved employment prospects (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994:120).

According to Songer (2000), the University of Oregon provides many opportunities for students to participate in experiential education outside the classroom. A variety of campus departments, programs and services serve as an additional resource throughout the campus community about internship opportunities available through University programs and services. Internships enable students to integrate classroom knowledge with supervised on – the – job experience while learning practical skills. Applying theory and practice, internships provide opportunities for students to explore possible career paths (www.Uoregon.Ed: p. 1 of 2).

Internship training is sometimes referred to as cooperative education, which is another method of coordinating the two types of learning. It is used for professional, managerial, clerical and sales personnel along with an educational institution's teaching program. Usually, selected students enrolled in a regular program are introduced into a company for a period of time to gain work experience. Through this training, students gain a better understanding of the relationship between the theory they learn in school and its application. But as it is a slow process, both parties should have patience if they expect to achieve the greatest benefit from it (Meggison, 1991:222).

According to Career Services (2005), an internship program is an undergraduate academic program to incorporate real world work experience and learning into the students university academic experience. Internships also give students educationally-related work and learning experience that

integrate theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development on the job, and contribute to the development of personal and professional maturity and ethics (www.career.vt.edu.externship:p1 of 2).

According to Sherman and Bohlander (1992: 223) internship programs, jointly sponsored by colleges, universities and a variety of organizations, offer students the chance to get real work experience while finding out how they will perform in work organizations. Organizations also benefit by getting student employees with new ideas, energy and eagerness to accomplish their assignments. Some U.S. universities, including Arizona State University allow students to earn college credits based on successful job performance and fulfillment of established program requirements. One approach to help minority ('disadvantaged', in South Africa) students prepare themselves for a management career is to give them employment experiences while they are still in university. An internship program offers students an opportunity to learn on the job and gain hands-on experience.

According to Nigro (1986: 332), internships provide a bridge between theoretical preparation and "live" or practical work experience. Internship is now used or it may also refer to persons who have work experience but have entered training programs for a new kind of work or career. For them, the internship experience is a bridge to that new work or career. Here internship for university students is taken as part of their academic program or after they receive their degrees. University student interns spend a specific period (usually from six months to a year) working in an administrative agency or the legislature as an integral part of their educational program and professional training. Although practices vary from school to school, interns often take classes concurrently. They are sometimes paid by the agency, with summer internships as a convenient arrangement.

The fundamental purpose of the internship experience is to place students in an environment where they can begin to form personal comprehension of the administrative processes. Because the college student may be preparing for a career in some subject area such as forestry, agriculture, social work or for a

career as an administrator, the internship brings students face-to-face with the fact that administration involves real people, real choices and real consequences. Working in a public agency allows interns to test the concepts and techniques they have learned in the classroom and to see how they are applied in practice (Nigro, 1986: 333).

Just as the internship gives the employer the opportunity to size up students for possible full-time employment with the agency, it also helps students assess their competence for possible future career choices. By testing the knowledge and skills which they develop in the classroom, students can ascertain the likelihood of career success in given roles. Therefore, an effective internship program is built on continuing cooperative arrangements between public agencies and educational institutions (Nigro, 1986: 353).

Internship is a cooperative arrangement between an organization and the university on behalf of the students. Every Human Resource Development Professional should arrange to place a Human Resource Development major in his/her organization, not only as a benefit to the organization, but as a professional obligation to contribute to the education of new professionals. Preparation for the internship experience should begin early in a student's academic career (Wolfbein, 1967: 36).

Internships are often part of an agreement between schools, colleges and universities and local organizations. Individuals in these programs earn while they learn, but at a rate that is less than that paid to full-time employees or master crafts workers. The internships, however, function as a source not only of training but also of realistic exposure to job and organizational conditions (Schuler and Huber, 1990: 523).

2.4. What is an externship program?

An Externship program according to Career Services (2005), is a volunteer job-shadowing opportunity for students to spend up to five days during the winter break observing and often working with professionals, investigating a

career field and experiencing a typical week on the job. The experience is intended to help students better understand a work environment and a career field and thus, help clarify career goals (www.career.vt.edu/externship:p1 of 2)

According to the University of Illinois (2003), externship is a way to bring University students together in the workplace. Externs gain an advantage by participating in hands-on experience and in learning that isn't available in a classroom setting (www.careercenter.uiuc.edu:p1 of 2).

2.5. What is a cooperative education program or a work study program?

Cooperative education is both a mode of study and a joint agreement that facilitates employer and school relationships. Much like internship programs, cooperative education aims to give students opportunities to learn in education and then reflect on what they have learned. Cooperative educational agreements offer employers ample opportunity to shape the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students bring with them to the workplace. In the process, employers can decrease the chances that costly training will be needed to rectify basic skill deficiency (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994: 120).

Cooperative education programs or work-study programs in which students alternate periods of full time university instruction with full-time employment, are increasingly popular these days. Some students have been involved in business-sponsored training while attending college. Cooperative education programs involve some 1,000 universities and more than 200, 000 students in the United State of America. Cooperating companies in these earn-while-you-learn programs hire students to work a portion of each year in their field of study, thus giving students money for university expenses as well as valuable job experience. After graduation, many students are offered permanent jobs with the company they worked for during university. For example, General Motors hires 95 percent of the students in its cooperative education program when they graduate (Schultz and Schultz, 1998: 169).

Employers are usually willing to sponsor internships and participate in cooperative educational programs for several reasons: Firstly, they want to be good corporate citizens and believe that participating in such programs will lead to positive public relations. Secondly, they understand the value of strengthening schools at all levels so that employers will not face critical skills shortages or find major shortcomings with graduates who are products of these schools. Thirdly, employers find that students participating in such programs are often highly motivated, work only temporarily and do not have to be highly compensated. Fourthly, such programs give employers the opportunity to try out potential workers before extending job offers. That reduces the chances of mistakes in hiring decisions and it may mean that employer mentors can participate in preparing students (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1994: 120).

Nadler and Nadler (1994: 57), define a work-study program as an activity in which learners work on a job related to their studies part of the time and study part of the time. It is designed to reinforce learning as soon as possible in a work situation. A work-study program is also related to cooperative education, internship and apprenticeship.

2.6. The role of education and training in Higher Institutions

According to Reid and Barrington (1998: 353), education and training help university or college graduates to overcome the problems in preparing for and finding employment to suit their abilities and aspirations. However, changes in demography, new technology affecting work characteristics and patterns and the need for continuous professional updating and upskilling have resulted in more and more adults participating in cooperative education, both before and during working life.

Education and training have been introduced with the aim of providing better preparation for work. Employers and educational institutions are liaising in many ways to help to bridge the gap between education and work. There should also be collaborative measures between employers and educational

institutions which will result not only in providing students with experience of the working environment, but also in opportunities at staff level to help to bring the two cultures of education and work closer together (Reid and Barrington, 1998: 354).

The South African Department of Education recognized the fact that, in the new environment education and training initiatives to improve effective governance, including leadership- management and students' capacity development programmes, are a necessity. Institutions need to provide programmes that do not only require regular attendance of lectures at a central venue at set times. They need to utilize a range of more flexible delivery strategies. The CHE Task Team analysed the different problems and shortcomings of the higher education system and the key issue of equity. Equity should mean more than access to higher education. For Equity to be meaningful, it must also ensure that learners have access to quality education and graduates with the relevant knowledge competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession (CHE, 2000: 17).

The Skills Development Act proposes a new skills development strategy, which the Department of Labour believes, will achieve the restructuring and upgrading of the education and training system to produce the skills South Africans need to succeed in the 21st century. Skills development is an urgent priority for South Africa as an integral part of the country's overall objectives of reduced poverty, increased employment, improved international competitiveness, reduced crime and increased economic growth. The overall vision is an integrated skills development system, which promotes Economic and employment growth and social development through a focus on education, training and employment services. The skills development strategy is an integral part of the government's commitment to overall human resources development, which includes education reform and the transformation of health and welfare services. There are six core-components in the proposed strategy. One of the components is a system of Learnership (Skills Development Act, 1997:80).

2.7. Work-related experience and work-shadowing

Reid and Barrington (1998: 380), provide a brief survey of ways in which employing organizations and educational institutions can liaise. Two such ways are “work-related experience” and “work shadowing”. Work-related experience can take a variety of forms, such as visits to organizations by individuals or groups of students, assignments, projects and research. The benefit gained is likely to be in proportion to the preparation accorded beforehand by both parties. Work shadowing or practical work undertaking is a useful way of giving an insight into a particular role or job. It can be used as an aid to greater understanding of the working environment. It can also be used to enrich more formal studies such as when an organization arranges with a university to ‘adopt’ a full-time personnel management student who visits at various times of the year and shadows a Personnel Manager. The aim is to make education a better preparation for working life. One way of assisting to bridge the gap between school and work is to bring these cultures closer together.

2.8. Linkages between structured learning and work experience through learnerships

Learnerships are proposed as a mechanism to facilitate the linkage between structured learning and work experience in order to obtain a registered qualification, which signifies work readiness. Learnerships directly address the “how” of the skills development strategy. They are intended to overcome the present divide between theoretical and skills components. The theoretical component only is insufficient in the quest to provide students with the required work experience (Skills Development Act, 1997: 25).

Through learnerships, structured learning and work experience can be organised for accreditation on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). South Africans presently put responsibility for training in fragmented and diverse structures. Theoretical education is seen as the sole domain of the Department of Education, while skills training, is shared between the

Department of Education, Department of Labour, Industry, Private centres and some NGOs. Learnerships must therefore enable learners to acquire work experience in a variety of ways such as job creation programmes. Learnerships must also be designed to encourage the inclusion of business skills and other issues of national importance, such as AIDS and the environment and issues of importance to industry, such as quality (Skills Development Act, 1997: 26).

2.9. Relationship between work experience and structured learning

Work experience needs to be related to the structured learning and prepare the learner for competence assessment. It may take place at a single workplace, or be spread across several work sites. Small enterprises could also provide work experience for learners if they formed groups of training companies, which between them would be able to provide the range of work experience required. For new entrepreneurs, work experience could be acquired through the performance of a number of supervised contracts of work (Skills Development Act, 1997: 27).

According to Ceda (2000: 13), the number of graduates searching for employment is on the rise despite the deepening shortage of skills. Job searching is just as hard for people with degrees as it is for those without degrees. Life after going to university is not smooth sailing. One example quoted is that of Babalwa Macoba who did a degree in Public Administration at the University of Transkei in 1999 and by the year 2000 was still looking for a job. He said he could not find one because he doesn't have any experience, therefore, he intended to go back to the university to study human resource management.

According to Gosteli (1995: 28), information is meaningless and valueless until it is experienced. Once you can use your information, it becomes a skill. The trouble is that it is extremely difficult to know whether you are using your knowledge or not and since human beings are so adept at pulling the wool over their own eyes, most of the time we convince ourselves that we are using

knowledge when, in fact, we are not. This particularly refers to interpersonal skills and communication.

Gosteli continues to say that he is against purely academic, theoretical knowledge. He contends that he is against going to “have fun in the bush” and calling it team-building. He says that the responsibility of a trainer is to impart a skill. Never assume that the person knows what you are talking about when you explain something to him, no matter how much he nods, no matter how much he can repeat back to you parrot-fashion what you have just said so that “you will know at once whether it has hit home or not”. Then, after you have swallowed your disappointment, find a way of making him do what you want him to understand and you will find that your rate of teaching increases by leaps and bounds, while your pupil’s productivity does as well (1995: 28).

As universities have moved through open-enrollment and so on, to expand educational opportunities for students, women and the disabled, there has been a corresponding need for educational methods that can translate the abstract ideas of the academic into the concrete practical realities of these people’s lives. The field placement or work/study program is an empowering experience that allows them to capitalize strengths while testing the application of ideas discussed in the classroom (Kolb, 1984: 6).

Younger students will need to intersperse more work experience between their years of preparations in formal education. Existing programs of experiential education (Internships, Work/Study programs etc) give testimony to the payoff of such a mix of academic and practical training (Kolb, 1984: 206).

At Alverno University (USA), a common reference point is the students’ development as self-directed learners. The faculty re-conceptualized their liberal arts curriculum to focus on developing abilities, and have created classroom and off-campus learning experiences with sharp attention to the principles of experiential learning theory and practice. A university dedicated to experiential learning concepts can make students to be more balanced in

their learning style, and when they are ready to enter their specialized professional programs, they have already experienced multiple learning modes. Furthermore, students as a group maintain their more balanced preferences during the last two years of university, even though practically all of them enter a particular career track (Kolb, 1984: 206).

It is interesting to note that many secondary schools in the United States of America include in their curricula some opportunities for students to combine study in the classroom with experience in an employment situation. These opportunities vary slightly from school to school and are known by a range of titles such as, cooperative work experience, distributive education, office practice, job experience, diversified training, etc. The programs are usually incorporated into the school's vocational curriculum. The general purpose of the program is to prepare selected students for employment while they complete their high school education. As a result of successful participation, a student graduates with her class, completing a basic general education and being prepared for full-time employment in her chosen occupation (Isaacson and Brown, 1997: 408).

According to Isaacson and Brown (1997: 408), the program is expected to accomplish the following, among others;

- ❖ The student establishes an occupational objective consistent with abilities and interest,
- ❖ The student develops skills necessary for full- time employment as a worker or as an apprentice in a chosen occupation.
- ❖ The student acquires related and technical information necessary for intelligent occupation practice,
- ❖ The student develops appropriate attitudes and personal characteristics enhancing adjustment, success, and progress in the occupational field,
- ❖ The student becomes increasingly mature in his/her relationship to school, economic, social and home life. The specific objectives can be thought of in terms of; - the job skills that the student will need to master, the knowledge that must be gained to perform the work with intelligence and

judgement, and the personal and social traits one must develop to get along well on the job and in the community.

The instruction in job skills is provided by the employer under actual employment conditions and according to the program developed jointly by the school representative and the employer. Students usually work a minimum of 15 hours a week mostly, during the regular university day. The typical program permits a student, usually in the junior or senior year, to attend classes half-time and work in an assigned employment position the other half. In a few large city systems, the student spends one week in university and the following week at work and alternating with a fellow student who is on a reverse schedule. The most common situation, however, has the student in school in the morning and on the job in the afternoon. The employer in the work assignment supervises the student, but a university staff member serves as liaison agent between the school and the employer and maintains close contact with both the student and the employer. The student therefore earns academic credit for the work assignment as a part of the school's vocational curriculum (Isaacson and Brown, 1997: 408).

Work experience is totally realistic because it has every characteristic of a regular job, including pay. The student has an opportunity to face the same situation that every worker encounters and with the added advantage of having a coordinator to assist in making adjustments or solving problems encountered in the position. As the world of work has become more complex, many occupations have been removed from public view so that most students have little opportunity to go behind the scenes and actually see how and where certain types of work are performed. The perceptions they have may be developed on limited information and consequently may be unrealistic (Isaacson and Brown, 1997: 185).

The field trip or industry tour provides many students their first chance to have direct contact with this side of the world of work. This can motivate and encourage students to explore further both the world of work and their own plans. The individual visit by a single student to a specific industry or business

may offer one of the best opportunities to gain insight into a field in which the student is seriously interested. Such a visit often is arranged for an entire working day and usually the visiting student is assigned to a worker with whom the entire day is spent. Such a visit provides maximum opportunity to see a variety of aspects of the job and to question the worker about what he/she is doing, as well as why and how. The student may have an opportunity to spend time with two or three workers in the course of the day. This provides a chance to become familiar with the workers, attitudes toward their work, and opportunities for advancement and work stability among other things. This prolonged contact with one or two workers has become known as job-shadowing (Isaacson and Brown, 1997: 185).

A Work experience program can be exploratory, general or vocational preparatory. Exploratory programs aim at helping students understand various types of work, work settings, tools and equipment used by workers and demands placed on workers and similar factors. General work experience programs are designed to assist students in the development of attitudes and skills that are not narrowly vocational in nature, including punctuality, dependability, acceptance of supervision, interpersonal relations and similar characteristics that apply to all work situations. Another example of direct on-the-job experience is the college-level cooperative-program, usually associated with academic majors in technical areas. In some fields these experiences are referred to as field practice or internship. Typically, all of these involve alternating periods of full-time study and work assignments. An experience of this kind usually comes late in the preparatory program and is designed to develop and sharpen work-related skills rather than to provide exploratory insight into the occupation (Isaacson and Brown, 1997: 187).

Nowadays, the possession of a university degree does not bring automatic employment. Indeed, this harsh reality has brought about not only deep frustration among graduates and young people, many of whom have worked so hard, but also a sense of malaise in the education system itself. Many students switch off from University to Technikon because they quite realistically see university education not helping them to acquire necessary

work experience to obtain employment. Some think that graduates are failing to find jobs because their institutions do not enable them to acquire the skills, attitudes and work experience, which will make them employable. There is widespread fear that if jobs cannot be found for graduates and young people, this might result in crime, delinquency, riots, and threats to the social fabric. Attention has therefore been focused on ways of keeping unemployed graduates and young people off the streets, preferably within some form of education and/or training frame which will maintain and develop their employability, so that if jobs become available, they will be equipped to take them (Craig, 1987: 20).

According to Craig (1987: 8), an innovation took place during the first decade of this century, when Dean Schneider of the University of Cincinnati, College of Engineering introduced cooperative education. Students would go to school for a time and work in a factory an equal amount of time. Then the students would repeat the process, going to school for additional training and going back to the factory for additional practical work experience.

Other corporations hire a substantial number of undergraduate and graduate interns for employment during the summer and throughout the academic year. The companies gain an opportunity to employ individuals on a short-term basis prior to offering full-time employment. In addition, the students bring considerable enthusiasm and the latest technology to the workplace and a refreshing combination that is also cost-effective. The students gain valuable work experience, a look at full-time employment with one employer, a paying job and if successful an offer for full time employment (Craig, 1987: 805).

Although most training and development professionals have at least one college and have spent many years in the academic world, institutions of higher-education are not often considered as resources to address the training development and research needs of business. There should be partnerships in education and training between business and higher education, although, business and higher education have operated relatively autonomously for many years. The driving force behind this relationship

derives from the central importance of education in our knowledge-intensive society. Higher education offers much to business. Most importantly, it has people such as expert faculty in addition to graduates for our workforce. The faculty can develop courses and create new windows on research that can result in new products. The students of today are the employees of tomorrow (Craig, 1987: 802).

Too many South Africans find themselves at two times in their lives in situations that almost perversely mirror each other. In the first, a young person just out of school or university pounds the pavement looking for a job, carrying the degree or diploma by which the education system certifies that one is prepared for adulthood. The first of several employers that the graduate approaches quickly dismisses that particular meaning of a degree or diploma. They say that one must have experience in order to get a job. How does one get the experience? They do not say. In the second situation, an adult already well-experienced at work but without advanced education, wants further educational opportunity or an educational credential (Keeton, 1976: 119).

According to Chetty, Monyokolo & Soobrayn (1992:126), indicated that today thousands of students who have graduated from universities, including many of those who have obtained their second degrees, are unable to find employment. The present unemployment problem was caused by the fact that there was not enough experiential training education in the university curriculum. The government has already taken steps to inject practical work into university curricula and students are expected to do practical work experience as part of their curriculum.

The biggest reason that employers want to hire young workers who already have experience is that South African industry does not offer a great deal of formal training, particularly for entry-level positions. The system it uses is on-the-job training, and is so inseparable from the production system that the Bureau of Labor Statistics has had great difficulty in finding a way to measure. This informal training is really nothing but experience in the job making mistakes and learning somehow from another worker who knows the task.

This being the case, it makes a lot of sense from the employer's perspective to hire someone who is already experienced. Employers however, are looking for more than job skills. They see prior work experience as increasing the chances that a person will be punctual, responsible and stable, and indeed, will possess a whole set of qualities that they associate with productive employees, although no one has objectively determined which qualities contribute the most to performance (Keeton, 1976: 121).

Some employers use experience as a substitute for explicit age requirements. Several recent studies have found that about three fourths of employers do not want to hire young people until they are age twenty or twenty one, whether or not they have a high school diploma, except for women wanting to become secretaries. Some employers will not hire young people under age twenty-one because they rightly suspect that not enough experience has been gained until that age, but others apparently presume that people are not punctual, responsible and stable until they have aged a bit. Such employers seem to believe that seventeen-year-old high school graduates lack the maturity desired, except for casual jobs at hamburger stands and car wash. Yet youths are capable of being as productive as other entry-level employees, if provided with experience and training (Keeton, 1976: 121).

2.10. Community service as part of the University Curriculum

According to Mecoamere (2000), students are happy with Venda University curriculum shifts with the accent on science and technology, and are playing an active role in the institution's recruitment drive to reduce unemployment amongst graduates. According to Mr. Peter Lentswane (Students Representative Council information and publicity officer) more than 3500 teachers were in possession of certificates of qualification but were unskilled and unemployable due to out-dated curriculum formats. He gives an example of students in various institutions around the country who have been taught to "botanize" the leaf but are unable to transform that leaf into food`. He said the University had established eleven new schools geared to the solution of Community-related problems. These included business, economic and

administration sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics and natural sciences, environmental sciences, human sciences and health sciences. Lentswane said four modules such as, Computer Literacy, African Civilization, Scientific Method, and English Communication Skills formed an integral part of the core curriculum, which all newly registered students would be obliged to include in their courses. He said students and staff would ensure that the new curriculum worked (Macoamere, 2000: 10).

At present there is a proposal that each University student in South Africa should be required to do 21 days (3 weeks) of community service before he/she receives a degree. According to Professor Christoff Heyns (Director of the Integrated Bar Project) students must be allowed to select the type of community service they want to do, which is related to their field of study, thereby gaining valuable practical experience. However, the option of doing general development work (e.g. joining the Southern African Volunteers), or doing other community work (e.g. working at the Cancer Society or being a teacher assistant at a local school) should be open. According to Lekgau, Prof Heyns was quoted as saying "Each university must have a Community Service accreditation office, which determines whether involvement in a particular activity qualifies as community service for degree purposes" (Lekgau, 1998: 23).

Prof Heyns also suggested that the proposal could be expanded to include Technikons. He proposed that the University of Pretoria consider setting the process of consultation in motion, which will be required before implementing this kind of project in the near future. The aim of the project is to give students an opportunity to gain practical work experience and make them more responsible by contributing to the notion of nation-building. Prof Heyns believes that students should not be allowed to graduate without doing community service. He proposes simple compulsory community service for all students, linked, if possible, to their discipline. Dr. Hendriks (Director of Marketing) added that, the proposal of community service is a good idea. And the University of Pretoria sees community service as one of the co-activity of this university, and must deliver it in one-way or another (Lekgau, 1998: 23).

2.11. Why graduates find it difficult to secure employment?

Piloso (2001: 86) wonders why graduates are finding it difficult to get jobs. He gives an example of one, Nandipa Ngqobo, who graduated in 1998, but had still not got a job by the year 2001. Her dreams of becoming financially independent, owning a car and moving away from home are fading fast as she adds yet another rejection letter to the growing pile on her dresser. Despite her failure to land a job, this 22 year-old University of Natal graduate stubbornly continues to knock on doors, hoping that eventually a potential employer will actually allow her entry to the notorious South African job market. Although Nandipa was only 19yrs when she obtained her LLB (a remarkable achievement), like thousands of other university graduates, she has been unable to get a job.

Nandipa Ngqobo (cited in Piliso, 2001: 86) angry and frustrated said that, we all grew up believing that graduates hold a competitive edge in the labour market and matriculants compete to get into appropriate tertiary institutions because they are repeatedly told that graduates are more likely to find jobs, progress rapidly in their careers and earn more money. Yet for thousands of despondent youngsters the years of hard work and studying have resulted in nothing.

Molakeng (2001: 26) states that, jobless graduate William obtained a Business Administration degree in 1985, was confident that he would get a job. Now he knows better and he admitted that he was totally wrong. He has sought employment in the government and private sector, but is still jobless. He has now given up. He said he tried so many times to look for a job. Now he is fed up with being repeatedly rejected by prospective employers.

New graduates from university are facing serious difficulties in trying to find their first jobs. The main reason has got to be very poor workforce planning to match the growth in new jobs to the growth in supply of new graduates. The situation is distressing and depressing for individuals, particularly those from

the university who have not been able to find jobs (www.csp.org.uk, 2005:p 1-6 of 12).

In recent report compiled by several university graduates career information bodies, it was revealed that, unemployment levels amongst university graduates have actually risen. The difficult market environment to which existing professionals are currently being subjected and without work experience, the newly qualified university graduates are likely to find it increasingly difficult to secure employment in their professional field. However, the reason being "lack of work experience" the graduates does possess (www.ypg.bcs.org, p 2 of 3: 2001).

A study on first employment experiences of graduates revealed that those graduates who had difficulty on finding employment immediately, could be a number of reasons for this. Percy Moleke from HSRC explains "one is supply and demand" because, most graduates do not possess the skills such as, accountancy, medicine, science and engineering which employers demand. Instead, they possess skills of which there is an over-supply in the labour market such as, law, general B.A, education and humanities, so the demand for them is low. Referring to Nandipa's situation, Kefilwe Mokwena from the South African Graduates Development Association (SAGDA) cited in Piliso, 2001:86). says, an enormous number of students are enrolling for courses such as Bachelor of Arts, Social Sciences, Law and Education. The B.Com and Law graduates are also increasing in number and employment problems are being experienced there.

Looking at the more general fields, it appears that there are clear differences in the signals these degrees conveys to employers. When comparing humanities and arts with economic and management sciences and natural sciences for example, fewer humanities and arts university graduates found employment rapidly after obtaining their qualifications. Economic and management sciences degrees usually have majors associated with character traits correlated with the skills required, work experience and performances which employers requires. Hence these university graduates have an

advantage over those from humanities and arts. The experiences of the latter group reflect the disadvantage that their qualifications do not have a particular work experience or professional focus which makes it more difficult to find jobs. Some of these graduates took longer than a year to find employment which is a matter of concern (Moleko, P. 2003:6).

According to Noxolo Bam (cited in Piliso, 2001: 86), an employment agency consultant, many graduates who approach recruitment agencies often wait for months before landing a job. He added that institutions also largely produce graduates in fields for which there is already an over-supply in the labour market, such as Humanities and Arts, general Bsc and Education

Mokwena, of the South African graduates association (cited in Piliso, 2001: 86) says, the possession of a university degree is no longer sufficient in the labour market. Students also flock to Technikons and other institutions, adding that, community service in higher education should be compulsory and Universities should also liaise with the corporate sector to create voluntary holiday jobs in areas related to the studies of the students.

According to Xaba MJ (2001:12) nowadays, companies employ people who have three to five years work experience. He asked whether anybody could tell him where one could get that work experience from, he says it is disappointing to see someone looking forward to continuing his/her studies because we knew in our hearts that one is wasting time and money because there won't be a job out there when the studies are completed. They also waste their time and money applying to companies that demand people with work experience. He added that, South Africans should know that studying is not the only key to success. You can succeed without education, like starting your own business or concentrating on the sports in which you know you excel.

2.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, the following terms were discussed, such as experiential learning or training, internship program, externship program, the role of education and training in higher institutions, work-related experience and work-shadowing, linkage between structured learning and work experience through learnerships, relationship between work experience and structured learning, community services as part of the university curriculum and lastly, why graduates find it difficult to secure employment. The following chapter, Chapter 3 will detail some practical procedures on how the study was conducted.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of how the research was conducted. This chapter outlines the methodology which was used in this study to collect data. It describes the research design, population of the study, the sample and sampling frame, and the task and instruments, which were used to conduct the research.

This study used a qualitative research paradigm. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that constitute the researcher's perceptions regarding the nature of reality and of the world, and how the researcher can find out about that reality. The main thrust of the qualitative paradigm is to understand social life and the meanings that people attach to everyday life. The qualitative paradigm is primarily inductive in that the researcher attempts to understand a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the settings and it uses an inductive form of reasoning by developing concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data (DeVos, 1998:241).

3.2. Research design

A research design is an exposition or plan of how the researcher has decided to execute the formulated research problem. The objective and aim of the research design is to plan and structure a given project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximized (Mouton & Marais, 1993: 193).

The research design chosen for this study is qualitative in nature and differs from those applicable to experimental research. In this case, the researcher is not interested in variables taking on continuous values and the data the researcher is searching for cannot be tested in a quantitative fashion. Qualitative research deals with what things exist rather than determining or predicting how many things there are (Mouton & Marais, 1993:193).

The research design is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The purpose of exploratory research is to seek out new information, insight, ask questions and assess phenomena in a different perspective. Exploratory research serves three main purposes: to satisfy curiosity, to build a methodology that might be used in later studies and lastly to make recommendations regarding the likelihood of continuing additional research on the topic. Once we have obtained sufficient insights and useful information, we can move to descriptive studies (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 107).

Descriptive study is a design of research in which the main goal is to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or objects. Descriptive studies require extensive previous knowledge of the problem to be researched or described. The purpose of a descriptive study is not to predict but to describe the problem. That means this study seeks to acquire evidence concerning a situation or population. It identifies norms or baseline information that can be used for comparative purposes (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 107).

The technique used to collect and analyze relevant data in this study is the phenomenological paradigm. The research design is a qualitative phenomenological paradigm, which is aimed at finding out the lived experience of subjects. This approach aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives. In order to accomplish this, the researcher should be able to enter the subject's life and place himself in the shoes of the subject (Devos, 1998:80).

Phenomenologically-based inquiries can be divided into two basic types, i.e., those that ask how objects are presented to the various modes of conscious experience, such as, perception or memory, and those that ask how meaning presents itself in experience. Experience means events that appear meaningful including our own thoughts and our feelings. The purpose of phenomenological research is to produce clear, precise and systematic descriptions of the meaning that constitutes the activity of consciousness (Valle & Halling 1989: 45).

Qualitative research (in a phenomenological study) refers to a perspective on the nature of the human realm. From the qualitative perspective, the richness and profoundness of the human reality is seen as closely related to the structures and meanings of natural language. Thus in a broad context of research strategies, qualitative research is identified with a commitment to the logic of natural language as a preferred form for understanding human affairs. Therefore, descriptive and qualitative research designs are overlapping categories with most descriptive studies done from the qualitative perspective (Valle & Halling, 1989: 45).

3.3. Population of the study

The population is a larger group of people from which subjects for the study (sample) are selected. Subjects are the individuals' who participated in the study and are sources of data collection (McMillan & Schumaner, 1993: 95).

The source of data for the purpose of this study were 34 university graduates (both unemployed and employed), 14 human resource officers and experienced employers, drawn from three different areas. These areas were Qwaqwa, Harrismith and Bethlehem situated in the Eastern Free State Province.

As the study used phenomenological paradigm. The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe the structure, content, quality and interpretation of the respondents on the basis of their lived-experience subjective views of the phenomenon, not to describe the characteristics of a group who have had the experience. Rather than seeking to describe the mean and standard deviation of a group as it relates to the experience, the phenomenological concern is with the nature of the experience itself (Valle & Halling, 1989: 48).

In terms of phenomenological research, subjects are chosen who are able to function as informants by providing description - based views of the experience and phenomenon being investigated. The first requirement of

selection is that: (a). A subject has the experience that is the topic of the research, (b). A subject has the willingness to provide full and sensitive description of the experience under examination (Valle & Halling, 1989: 47).

Subjects are also required to have the following important skills: (a) The ability to express themselves, (b) the ability to sense and to express inner feelings and emotions without shame, (c) the ability to sense and express their lived-experiences that accompany these feelings, (d) the experience of the situation under investigation at a relatively recent situation, and (e) the ability to report or write what was going on within themselves (Valle & Halling, 1989: 47).

The target population for this study comprised both unemployed and employed university graduates and Human Resource Officers or Employers. The study deliberately focused on graduates from Historically Disadvantaged Institutions.

This investigation took place around Qwaqwa, Harrismith and Bethlehem in the Eastern Free-State Province.

3.4. Sample and sampling procedure

A non-probability design was used for this study. The advantage of this type of design is that, it is less complicated than a probability sampling design. It also involves less expense and can be conducted to take advantage of the available respondents without statistical complexities of a probability sample. However, the disadvantage of non-probability sampling is that it limits the researcher's ability to generalize the findings beyond the specific sample studied (Dunham, 1988: 302).

The Snowball sampling technique was chosen. Snowball is also called network or chain referral (the process of referral of one member to another) sampling. Snowball sampling may be defined as obtaining a sample by having initially identified subjects who can refer you to other subjects with like or similar characteristics. If the population is unknown to you or others, then the

Snowballing approach is about the only way to find subjects. Snowball is a multistage technique. It begins with one or a few people or cases and becomes larger like a Snowball as it rolls on wet snow and picks up additional snow, on the basis of links to the initial cases (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 182).

For an example, one may run an advert in the newspaper in which one calls for people with certain situations or characteristics to help you in a research project. If 14 people respond to the advert, one is able to successfully interview them. The researcher would then seek to have each of the 14 identify as many people as possible, who are similar to them in their situation or characteristics. If each of the people supplied four new names, there would now be 56 new persons to interview. The stages could theoretically go on until the researcher is satisfied that a sufficiently large sample for conducting the desired research has been achieved (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 182)

The use of Snowball sampling as a strategy for locating and conducting research on the respondents, will significantly increase. If one is successful in getting the initially identified small group to grow in successive stages to a large sample, one has seen the "Snowball" grow from a small unit as it "rolled" into a large unit (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 182).

The Snowball sampling of 48 subjects participated in the study. The subjects were selected to represent the population. The overall sampling frame was 70 subjects and a total of 48 responses were received for an overall response of 68,5 percent. unemployed and employed university graduates and human resource officers and experoenced employers had response rate of 48,5 percent and 20 percent respectively. Typically some of the subjects in a sample refused to participate in the study due to lack of time.

3.5. Data gathering techniques

The following procedures were used to collect data.

The study used primarily an Unstructured (open-ended questions) to collect relevant information from university graduates (both unemployed and employed), human resource officers and experienced employers through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Even though closed-ended questionnaires were used for biographic data. A questionnaire may be defined as a list or grouping of written questions, which a respondent answers. A questionnaire is a data-gathering device that elicits from a respondent answers or reactions to pre-arranged questions presented in a specific order (Adams & Schvandeveltdt, 1985: 202).

In this question format the respondent is free or open to supply answer or information in an unstructured manner. Therefore, space will be provided for the answer during in depth. The in-depth interview as the unstructured interview is actively enter the worlds of people and render those worlds understandable from the standpoint of a theory that is grounded in behaviours, attitudes and feelings of the studies (DeVos, 1998:300).

the unstructured interviews are conducted with a schedule. The schedule is a guideline for the interviewr and contains questions and themes that are important to the research. Although the questions do not usually have to be asked in a particular sequence, they do ensure that all relevant topics are covered during an interview (DeVos, 1998:299).

The main advantage of unstructured interviewwith a schedule is that they provide for relatively systematic collection of data and at the same time ensure that important data are not forgotten (DeVos, 1998:300).

Participant observation as a data gathered technique is also actively enables one to enter into the life worlds of the subjects, by taking very brief notes in a situation, using a key words, phrase or using a tape-recording machine

continuously or selectively through the interview. Facial expressions, body language, mood and other observable expression prove to be very valuable in understanding the totality of the interview (Adams & Schavaneveldt, 1985: 215).

Emphasis was placed on finding out as much as possible about the participants' experiences and the questions provided the participants with ample opportunity to express their views, ideas and opinions more elaborately and freely. This aimed to provide a framework for a subject to speak freely on socially and personally sensitive topics such as unemployment, AIDS, recruitment, selection and placement, Affirmative Action, etc.

3.6. Conclusion

Chapter three presented a brief discussion on different research methods which were used to collect data. The study used qualitative approach but it end up employing some of the quantitative techniques, especially in the analysis of the gathered data. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will present the results and a discussion on those results.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter briefly presents the data obtained from the survey. The data were obtained from the respondents through exploration of opinions on experiential training programs for university graduates. In the presentation of the results, tables, charts and graphs will be used where possible to illustrate the information in a more manageable form.

The data will be presented in the following sections:

Section A: Biographic Information

Section B: Educational Background

Section C: Employment

Section D: Experienced Employers

4.2. SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The data in this section present the gender of the participants.

Table 4.1. Gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Females	15	44%
Males	19	56%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.1., shows that 44 percent of the sample consists of female graduates and 56 percent of male graduates participated in the study (Figure 4).

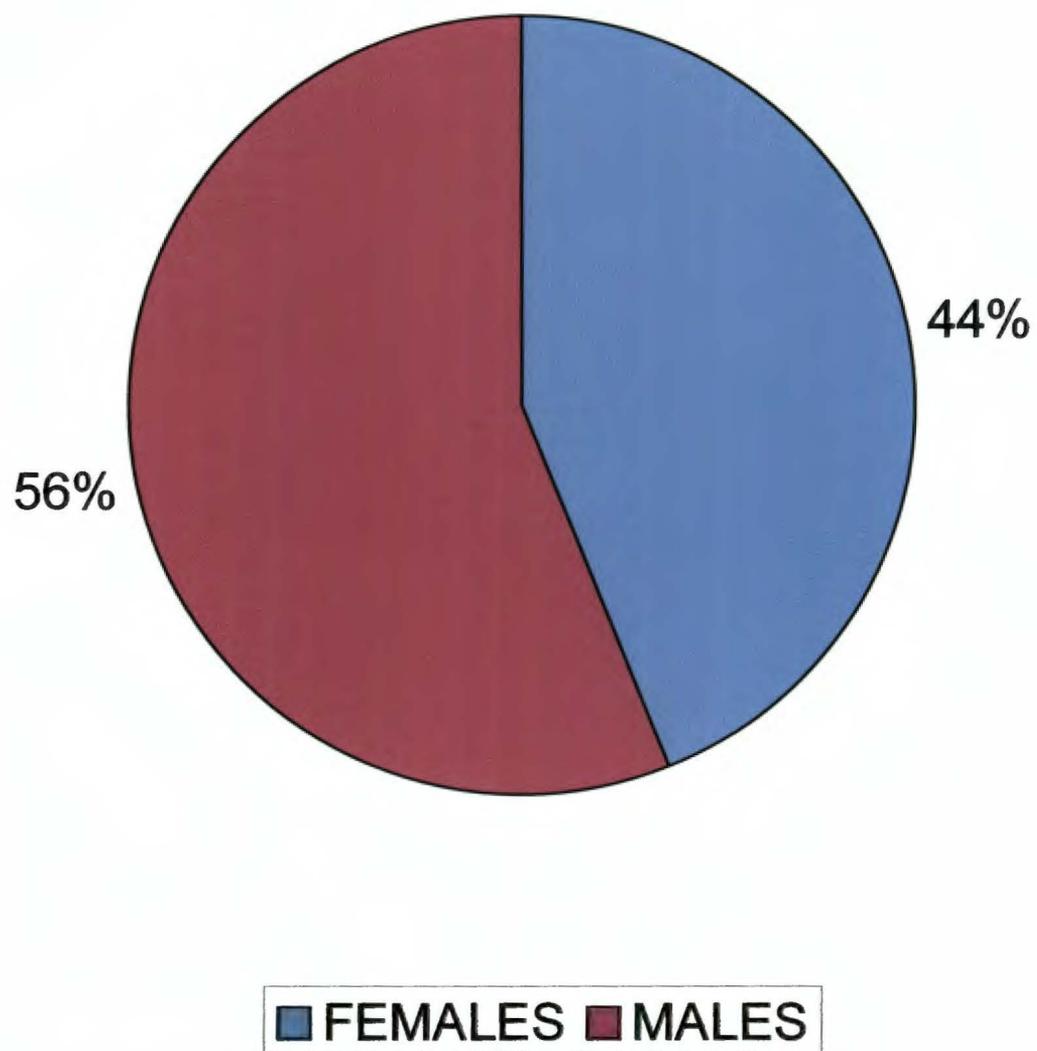


Figure 4. Gender

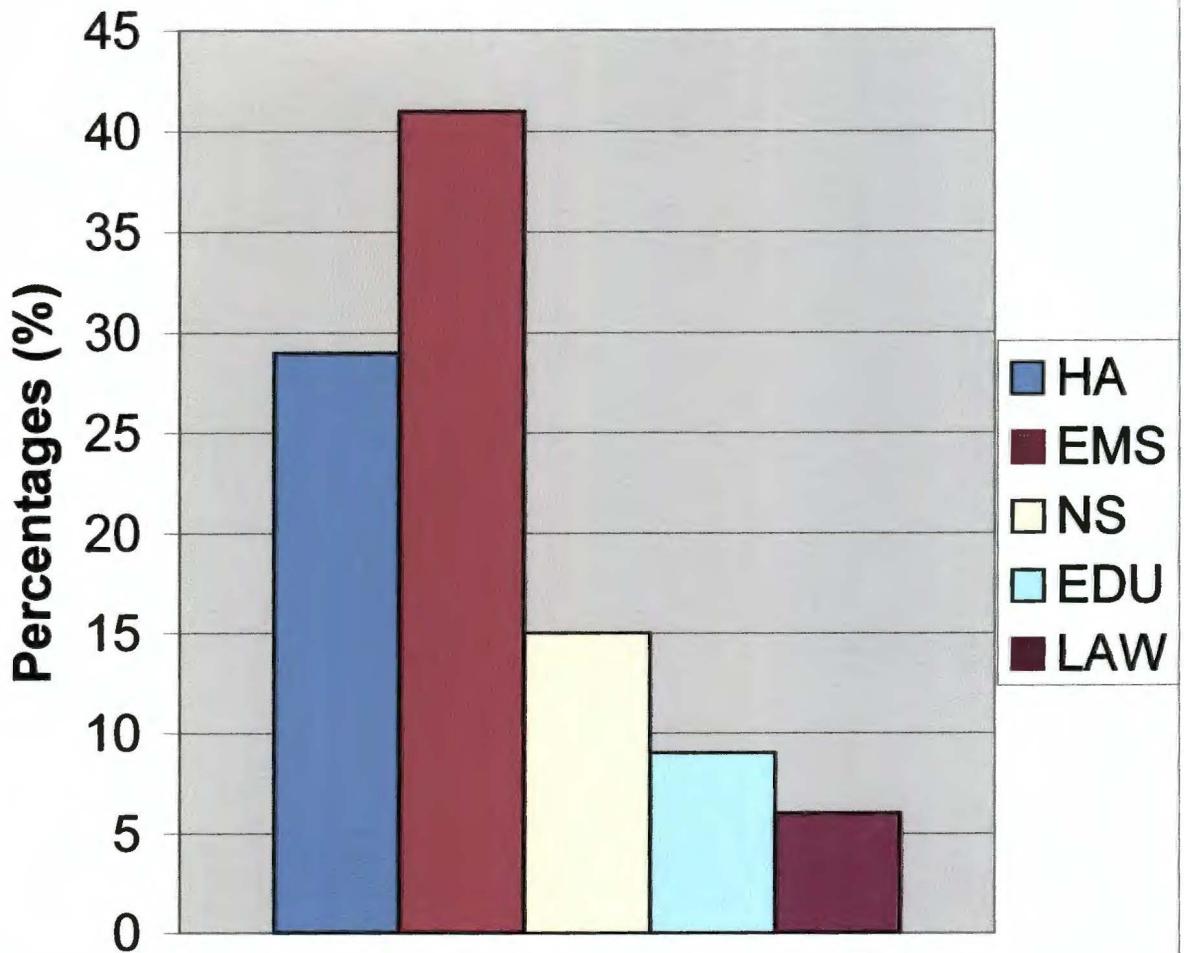
4.3. SECTION B: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

In this section the distribution of graduates according to their fields of study is presented

Table 4.2. Number of graduates in different fields of study

<i>Different field of studies</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Humanities and Arts	10	29%
Economics and Management Sciences	14	41%
Natural Sciences	5	15%
Education	3	9%
Law	2	6%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.2., shows that 29 percent were from Humanities and Arts, 41percent from Economic and Management Science, 15 percent from Natural Sciences, 9 percent from Education and 6 percent from Law respondents participated in the study (Figure 4.1).



**KEY: HA-Humanities and Arts,
EMS-Economics and
Management Sciences, NS-
Natural Sciences, EDU-
Education, LAW-Law**

***Figure 4.1 Number of Graduates in
different field of studies***

Table 4.3. Number of graduates who attended some special training related to their field of studies during their studies

<i>Attended Training</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	18	53%
No	16	47%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.3., shows that 53 percent of the graduates indicated that they had attended special training that was relevant to their fields of study during their studies. 47 percent of the graduates said they did not attend any special training related to their field of studies (Figure 4.2).

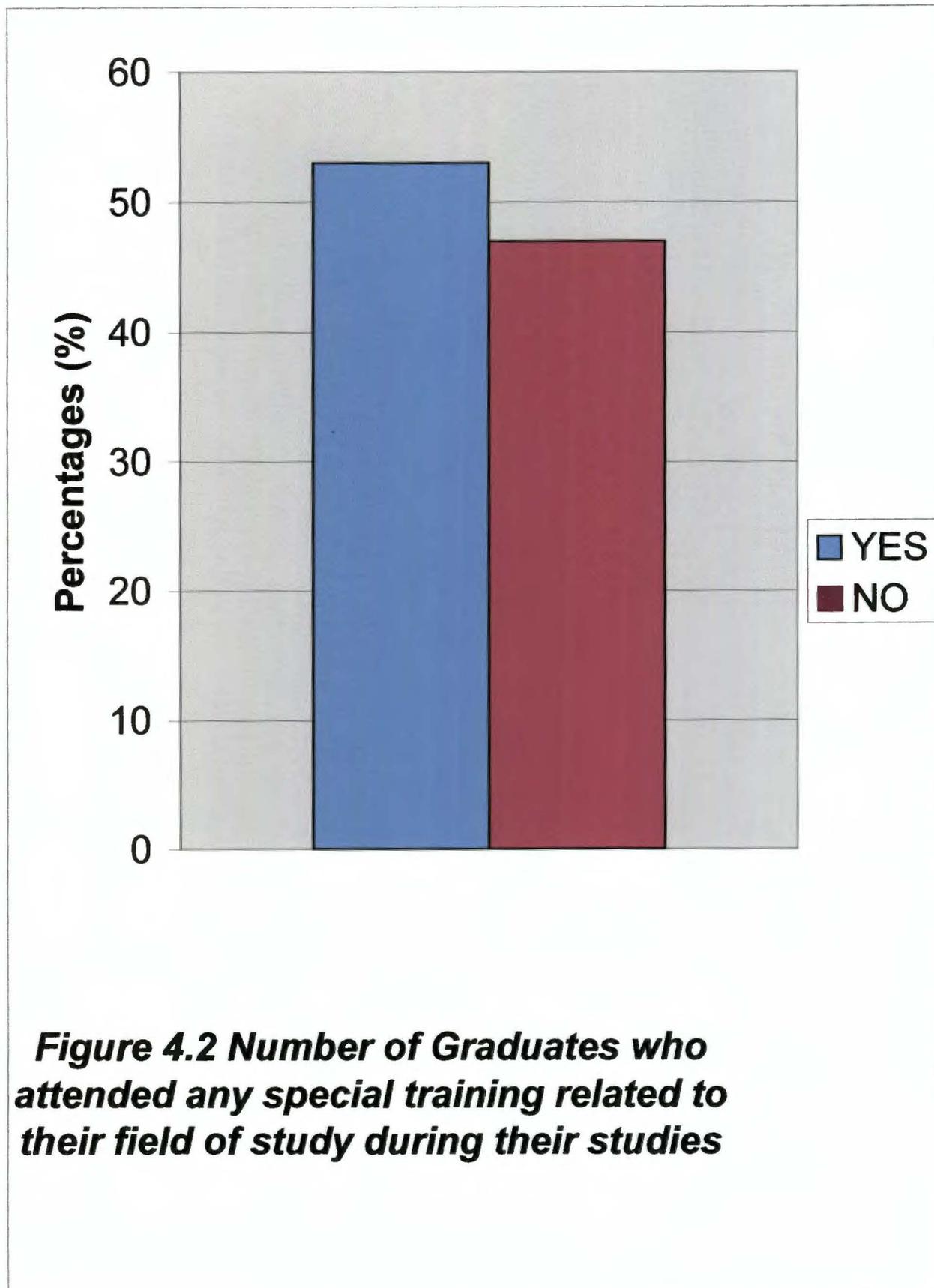
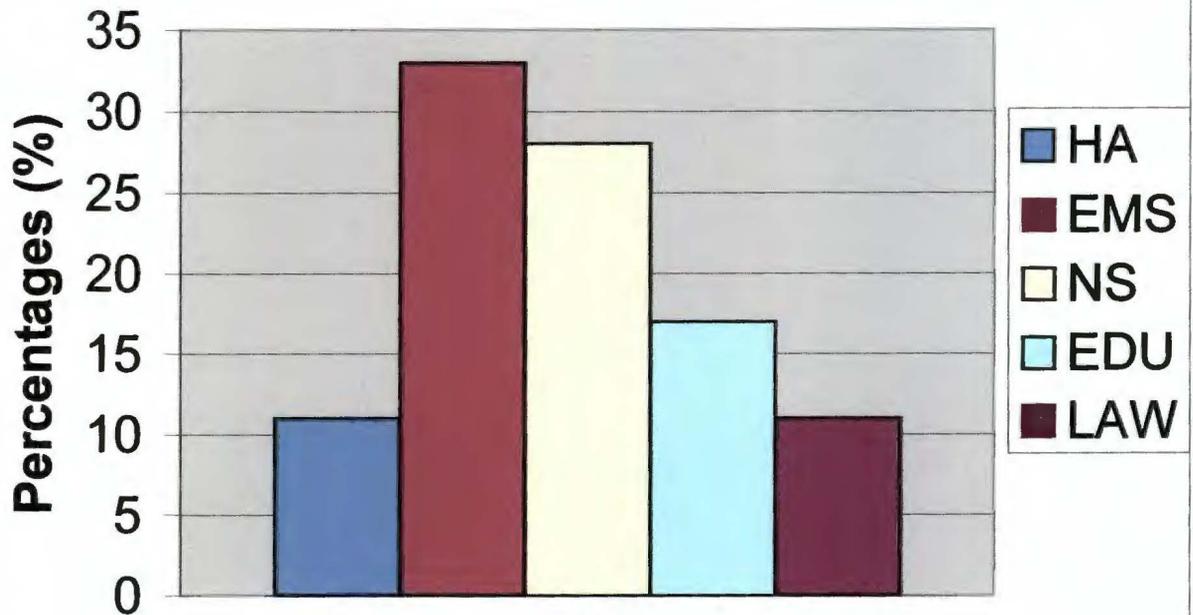


Table 4.4. Graduates who attended special training related to their field of studies during their studies

<i>Field of study</i>	<i>Training</i>		<i>Training</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Humanities and Arts	2	11	8	50%
Economic and Management Sciences	6	33	8	50%
Natural Sciences	5	28	-	-
Education	3	17	-	-
Law	2	11	-	-
Total	18	100%	16	100%

Table 4.4., shows that graduates in the field of Humanities and Arts and graduates in the Economic and Management Sciences experienced the least training during their studies (Figure 4.3).



**KEY: HA-Humanities and Arts,
EMS-Economics and
Management Sciences, NS-
Natural Sciences, EDU-
Education, LAW-Law**

Figure 4.3 Graduates who attended special training related to their field of studies during their studies

Table 4.5. Linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in higher education institutions

<i>Would there be a linkage between Structured learning and Work experience programs</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	32	94%
Not sure	2	6%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.5., shows that the majority of the respondents (94 percent) are of the opinion that there should be a linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in Institutions of higher learning. They mentioned that this integration would empower students to put into practice what they have learned theoretically at the university. This will enable graduates to be knowledgeable of the real world of work because nowadays many jobs need work experience. Experience is needed to handle practical challenges in the work situation and theory would support graduates to come up with new ideas and knowledge within the work situation.

Only (6 percent) of the respondents indicated that they were not sure whether or not there should be a linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in higher education institutions (Figure 4.4).

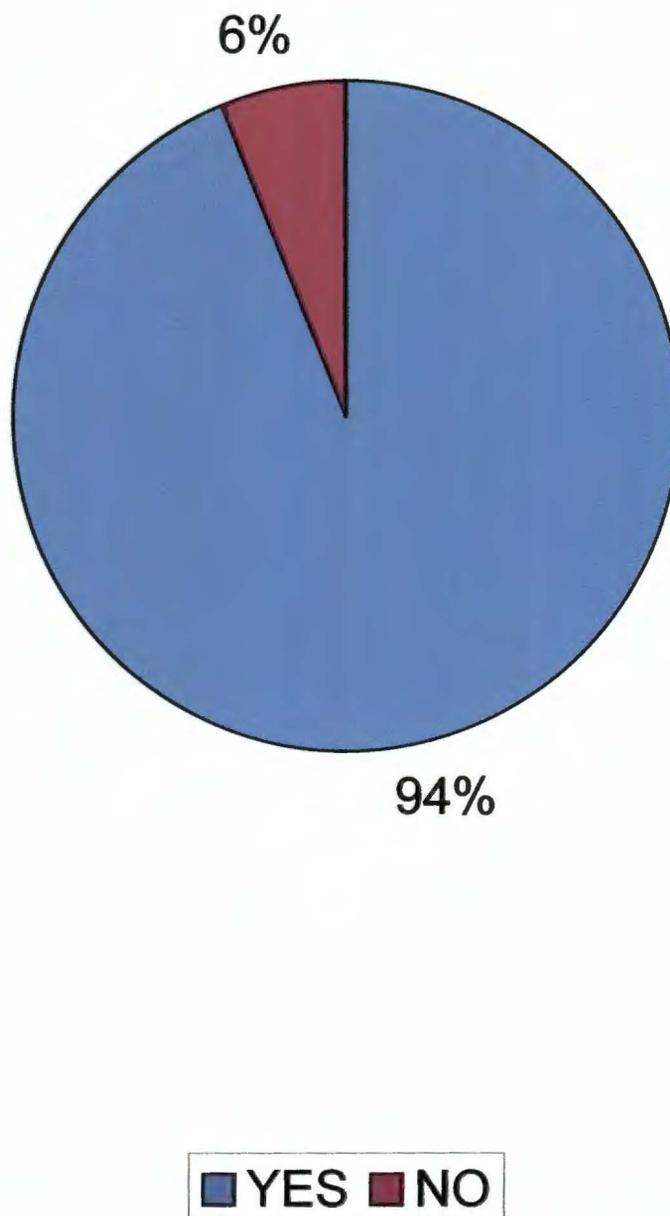


Figure 4.4 Linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in higher educational institutions

Table 4.6. Practical work experience programs in higher education institutions

<i>From which year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 st year level	20	59%
2 nd year level	9	26%
3 rd year level	5	15%
Total	34	100%

According to the respondents Table 4.6., shows that (59 percent) are of the opinion that the university students could start learning practical work experience programs in higher education institutions from first year level (26 percent) indicated that they should start on their second year level of study. Only (15 percent) indicated that they should start practical work experience programs on their third year level of study.

4.3.1. Experiential training: Opinions of respondents

The respondents defined experiential training as follows:

Experiential training is the kind of training that one receives (such as internship training) while studying for a particular career. It means the demonstration of skills acquired in theory lessons e.g. Leadership skills and problem solving skills. Some view it as practical work which a student has to undertake during his/her studies to prepare him/her fully for the world of work after the completion of studies. Other respondents define it as a type of training students attend while they are on holidays to gain experience related to their field of studies. It refers to practical job training related to a particular field of study. It is also viewed as a process where a student is sent to a private company or a relevant government institution as part of his practical work after which the student must write a report for which marks be awarded to qualify him/her for his/her degree. It is seen by others as a process whereby an individual is trained or is being prepared for a particular job towards the completion of his/her degree.

Experiential training is viewed fundamentally as a scenario or an endeavor to equip the learners with hands- on- experience and covers some aspects which might not have been covered during the theoretical learning. It is a training that is specifically designed for a specific job and gives a student the specific skill that is needed by the employer. It is a training which purports to prepare students for their desired jobs. It is when a person practice what he/she has learned in theory and be able to add his/her opinion or ideas where is necessary, it is to gain experience in the field you are studying, it is to observe a particular job and then do it on your own.

Experiential training is a particular work experience that students are exposed to during their studies. It is to acquire the necessary skills and to be familiar with the work - place environment. This allows students to relate theory to practice within a "classroom" environment and also allows them to be more competitive in their fields of study by building confidence e.g. Mentoring, it is a

workplace where the students have to go in order to put what they have learned theoretically into practice and also to see that the knowledge they have gained in the university can make an impact, by bringing new ideas into that organization, it is a type of training that can be provided to the learners to help them to have a better understanding of the field of study they are doing and the work environment. Therefore, provide students with practical work experience.

It is practical work which students are involved in to link their education, which is theory, with the practical work in the industries. It enables the students to be familiar with the work to be done in the field outside the education classroom which is only confined to the school walls, it is all the skills the people must have before they get into jobs, it is when you are learning in the workplace situation where there is a person who guides you on how to do things, when and for how long e.g. In-service-training, it is seen as one way to expose a learner to the practical field of work where the learner will acquire necessary skills and knowledge to perform his duties, this will help to provide an image of what a real job entails when adequate information on work environment has been given.

Table 4.7. Whether Lack of experiential training contributes to unemployment among university graduates

<i>Does it contribute to unemployment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	30	88%
No	4	12%
Total	34	100%

According to Table 4.7., the majority of the respondents (88 percent) believe that lack of experiential training does contribute to unemployment among university graduates. They are of the opinion that most employers ask for a minimum numbers of years of experience, which new graduates do not have and prospective employers don't want to take the risk of employing someone who does not have work experience. They think that someone with lack of experiential training will cost them a lot in terms of training and induction.

A very small number (12 percent) of the respondents were of the opinion that lack of experiential training does not contribute to unemployment among university graduates. They believe that it all depends on an individuals' capability or potential to express himself/herself during an interview, and that it also depends on organizations, whether they want to recruit someone with experience or not (Figure 4.5).

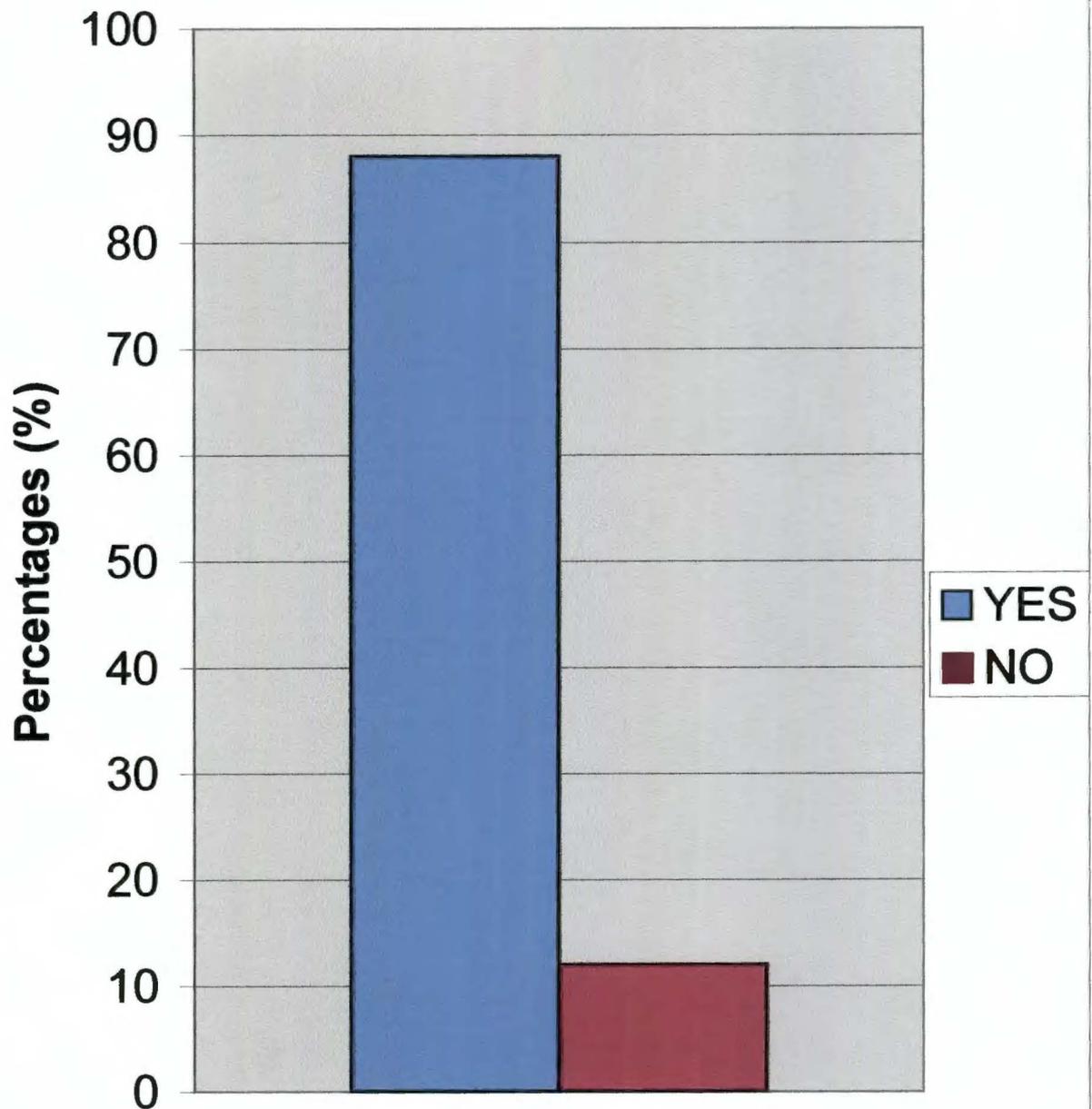


Figure 4.5 Whether Lack of Experiential training contribute to unemployment among university graduates

Table 4.8. Whether Lack of experiential training can contribute to poor performance among new entry-level graduates

<i>Does lack of Experiential training contribute to poor performance</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	29	85%
No	5	15%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.8., shows that the majority (85 percent) of the respondents were of the opinion that lack of experiential training could contribute to poor performance among new entrants. They believe that if graduates were not exposed to the work- environment while studying, they would eventually lose self-confidence, be unstable and nervous, have stress and the fact of being in a work-environment for the first time results in low and poor performance.

15 percent of the respondents believed that lack of experiential training does not contribute to poor performance among new workplace entrants. They were of the opinion that good performance depends on individual ability, knowledge and skills. Other factors such as job satisfaction, conducive working conditions and organizational cultures also contribute to poor performance among new workplace entrants (Figure 4.6).

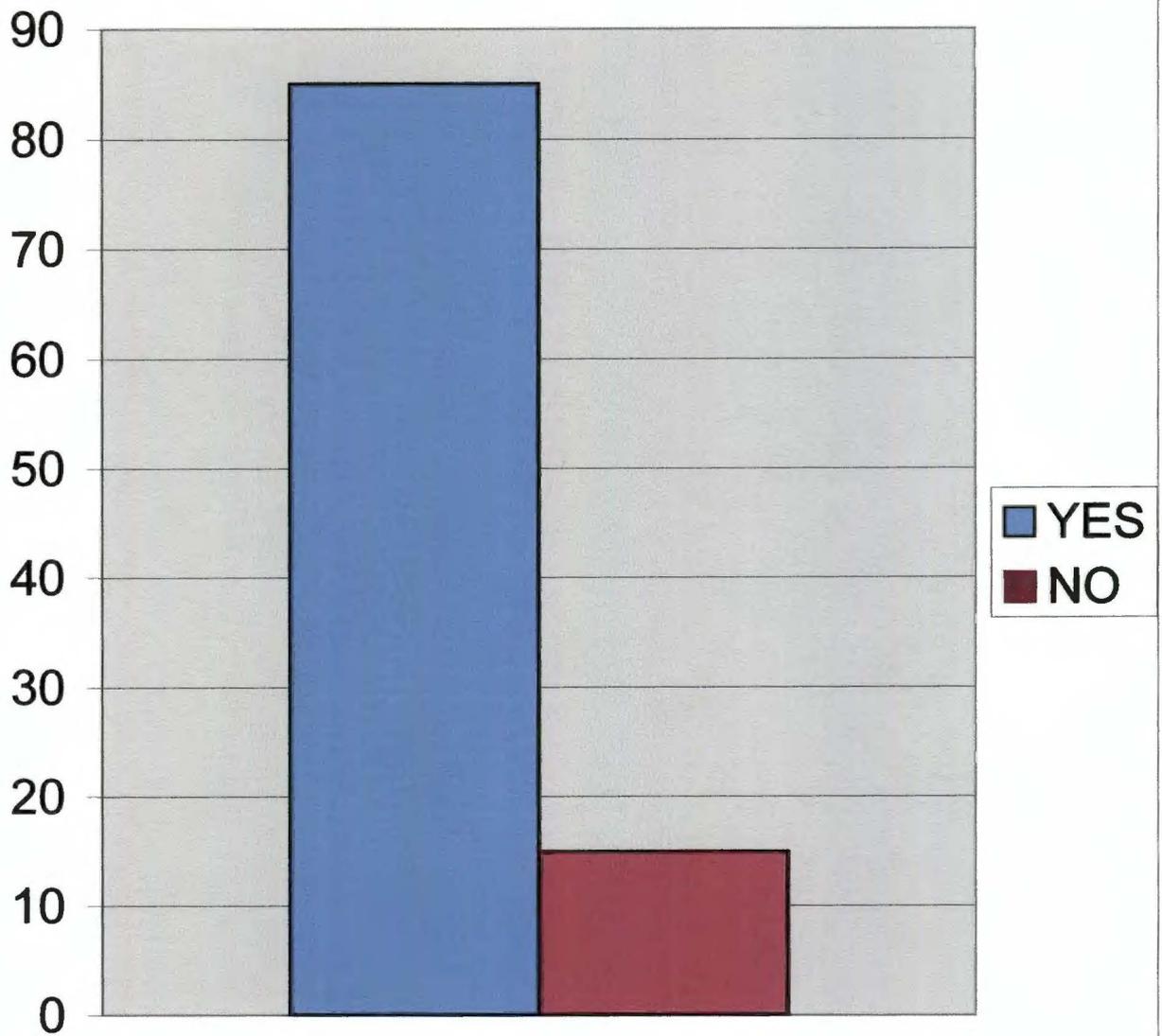


Figure 4.6 Whether Lack of experiential training contribute to poor performance among new entry-level graduates

Table 4.9. Whether experiential training can solve both the problems of unemployment and poor performance of graduates

<i>Can it solve both the problems</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	28	82%
No	6	18%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.9., shows that the majority of the respondents (82 percent) were of the opinion that experiential training can solve the problems mentioned above. They believed that this would happen only if experiential training were introduced and implemented correctly.

Only (18 percent) of the respondents indicated that they do not think that experiential training could solve the above mentioned problems. They believed that it might and it might not help since this depends on the readiness of the graduates to deliver what is expected from them. For example, many students were never exposed to subjects like Mathematics and Information Technology (IT) that are highly in demand today in a global economy (Figure 4.7).

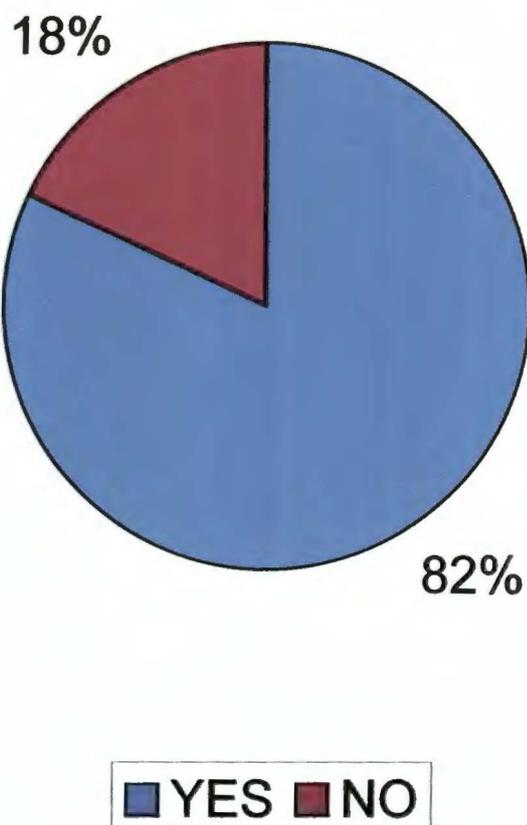


Figure 4.7 Whether Experiential training can solve both problem of unemployment and poor performance of graduates

4.3.2. Opinions of respondents of how an experiential training program should be structured

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinions of how an experiential training program can be structured. Some of their views are as follow:

Respondents believed that experiential training should be structured in such a way that it truly should expose students to the actual daily work like any permanent worker, by giving students work which should have some deadlines involve, board meeting attendance, etc. They also thought it should be integrated with skills development programs, professionalism and strategic planning programs.

A concerted effort is needed from the business community to facilitate experiential training programs for instance, in the Law field graduates serve articles, in medicine graduates are provided with internship programs and in social work students are also provided with internship programs, etc. Such programs should be avail to other fields of study to cater for the needs of the students.

Some students believe that experiential training should be structured in such a way that it should deal with the challenges of the real world. It must actually look at what is needed around the globe, in order to match the global standards that come with new concepts such as globalization, corporate government and so forth.

Some respondents were of the view that experiential training should be a one - year training and students should be given assignments and projects. According to the respondents practical assignments given should form 60 percent of the year mark. The training should be structured in such a way that the respective courses suit the workplace expectations.

Some respondents believed that experiential training should be done during university vacations or after the students had finished their courses. Students

should be given enough chance to link their theory with practice. According to the respondents experiential training must be part of their degrees, meaning that, if they failed experiential training, they should not be awarded their degrees. If this is not done attending experiential training might not be meaningful. Respondents believed that students themselves should look for places where they would like to practice experiential training and at times, their supervisors or lecturers must support them in getting relevant institutions. It can be a non-paying or paying training as per agreement with the companies that will be involved.

4.3.3. Experienced employer's opinions on the structuring of experiential training program:

Employers who participated in the survey contributed several insights on the issue of experiential training. Some of their suggestions were that students should approach managers in various companies and offer to volunteer and assist in some areas in their chosen career. Sectorial factors should be identified and utilized in developing the program. The graduates or "potential" graduates should be introduced to this program and closely monitored for progress. Some form of evaluation and management of performance should be implemented. This can only be achieved through workshops, seminars and full training modules. It should be done in such a way that it can truly expose students to the actual workplace.

According to the respondents an institution that considers implementing an experiential training program should have strategic objectives and social policy objectives that provide a proper context for its educational objectives, for an example, recognizing learning that takes place outside the classroom, and ensuring better job placement results for their graduates as a result of work-experience where graduates will achieve their job preference after the implementation of the program.

Respondents believe that this program should start from course one for a 3 years degree. Students should take 4 years to complete their degrees. Three

years should be formal education and the remaining 1year should be left for experiential training. It should be structured in such a way that it will benefit both the students and the organization.

4.3.4. Programs that will help the university graduates to gain practical work experience

32 percent of the respondents indicated that they did not have any other programs in mind except experiential training. Only 26 percent of the respondents indicated that students should be encouraged to volunteer without pay during their holidays. This should open doors for training and it should also help students to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and work experience required by most employers.

24 percent of the respondents mentioned other programs such as, internships, work study programs, workshops, mentorship programs, in-service training programs, student exchange programs, learnership programs, summer internship, holiday or vacation temporal jobs, seminars and side-orientation programs.

3 percent of the respondents indicated that students should learn to develop their own projects. Another 3 percent of the respondents indicated that it was the role of the government to ensure that students receive experiential training. 9 percent of the respondents indicated that experiential training program is the best program to gain work experience. Lastly, 3 percent of the respondents indicated that it is the duty of the university to see to it that students are well equipped with necessary skills when they leave the University after completion of their degrees.

4.4. SECTION C: EMPLOYMENT

The data in this section shows the success rate of graduates in securing employment after obtaining a degree and the period it took to find employment for those who did not do so immediately. It also shows the graduate's failure rate in finding employment after obtaining a degree and the period of unemployment one had.

Table 4.10. Unemployed and employed graduates

<i>Employed</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	18	53%
No	16	47%
Total	34	100%

Table 4.10., shows that (53 percent) of the graduates indicated as employed and almost half (47 percent) of the graduates indicated as unemployed during the study (Figure 4.8).

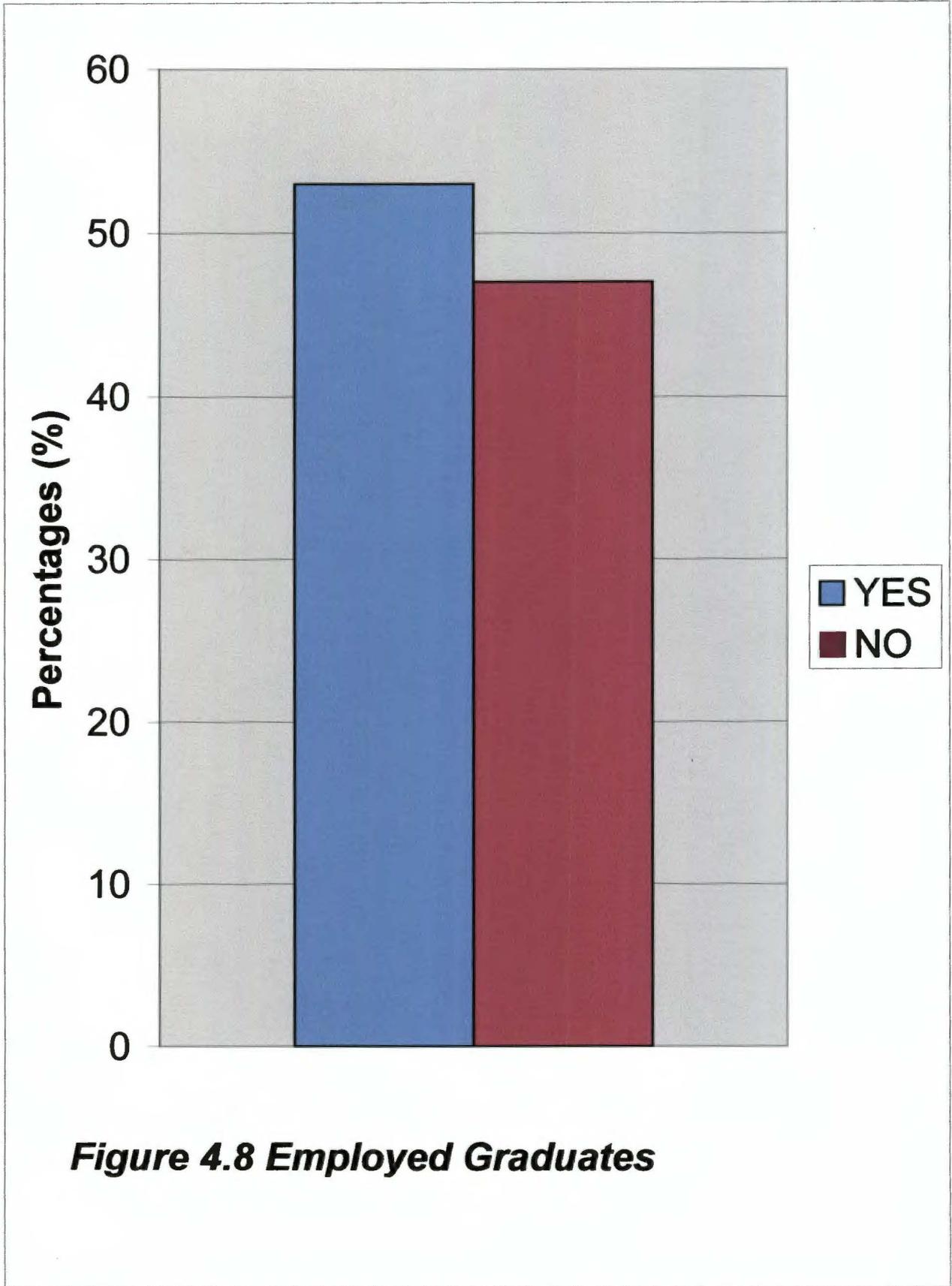


Figure 4.8 Employed Graduates

Table 4.11. Unemployed graduates

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 – 6 months	3	19%
7 – 12 months	8	50%
1 year - 2 years	4	25%
2 years - 3 years	1	6%
4 years & above	-	-
Total	16	100%

Table 4.11., shows that 19 percent of the graduates had been unemployed for 1 - 6 months, 50 percent of the graduates had been unemployed for 7 - 12 months, 25 percent of the graduates had been unemployed for 1 - 2 years, 6 percent of the graduates had been unemployed for 2 - 3 years and data were not obtained for graduates who had been unemployed for 4 years and above.

Table 4.12. Employed graduates

<i>Immediate employment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	11	61%
No	7	39%
Total	18	100%

<i>Immediate employment by field of study</i>	<i>Immediate employment</i>		<i>Immediate employment</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Humanities and Arts	1	9,5%	4	57%
Economics and Management Sciences	5	45%	2	29%
Natural Sciences	2	18%	1	14%
Education	1	9,5%	-	-
Law	2	18%	-	-
Total	11	100%	7	100%

Table 4.12., shows that there were more than half (61 percent) of the respondents who found employment almost immediately after obtaining a degree as opposed to 39 percent of the respondents who were less successful in finding employment immediately. However, as could be expected, not all groups were equally successful in their search for a first job. The respondents who were most successful in securing employment

immediately had graduated in Economic and Management Sciences (45 percent). Graduates in Natural Sciences (18 percent), Law (18 percent), Education (9,5 percent), and Humanities and Arts (9,5 percent) were less successful in finding employment immediately after graduation.

4.4.1. Ways in which graduates entered the labor market (first interaction with the labor market)

The data in this section shows the graduates' first interactions with the labor market, their search for employment and the way they got their first jobs.

The respondents were asked to indicate ways in which they entered the labor market. Factors such as job advertisements, job requirements, work experience one had when recruited, whether the respondents had gone through an interview for that post or not were also asked.

Some jobs were found through advertisements in an internal advertisement on the bulletin (17 percent). The Government vacancy list (22 percent) seemed to have played a major role in helping graduates to find employment. Newspapers (28 percent) and personal enquiries (28 percent) seemed to be an important source of employment information for graduates. The electronic media (5 percent) seemed to be the least important source of employment information for graduates.

Differences in terms of the job requirements were found. Only 28 percent jobs required a person to have a matric certificate as opposed to 61 percent that required a matric plus relevant experience and 11 percent required post-graduate degrees.

Differences in terms of the work experience one had when recruited were found. Only 39 percent of the respondents indicated that they had experience when recruited as opposed to 61 percent of the respondents who indicated that the percent y had no work experience at all when recruited. The majority of the respondents 94% indicated that they had been interviewed for the posts

they secured. Only (6 percent) of the respondents indicated that they were not interviewed for the posts they secured.

Table 4.13. Extent to which training related to studies helped to secure employment

<i>Training related to studies helped secure employment</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	12	67%
No	6	33%
Total	18	100%

Table 4.14., shows that among those graduates who participated in the study and who had attended training related to their field of studies, 67% indicated that their training helped them to secure employment 33% of the graduates indicated that their training did not help at all to secure employment. The data also indicated that chances of getting employment for those graduates whose training helped them to secure employment were twice as high as for those whose training did not help them at all to secure employment (Figure 4.9).

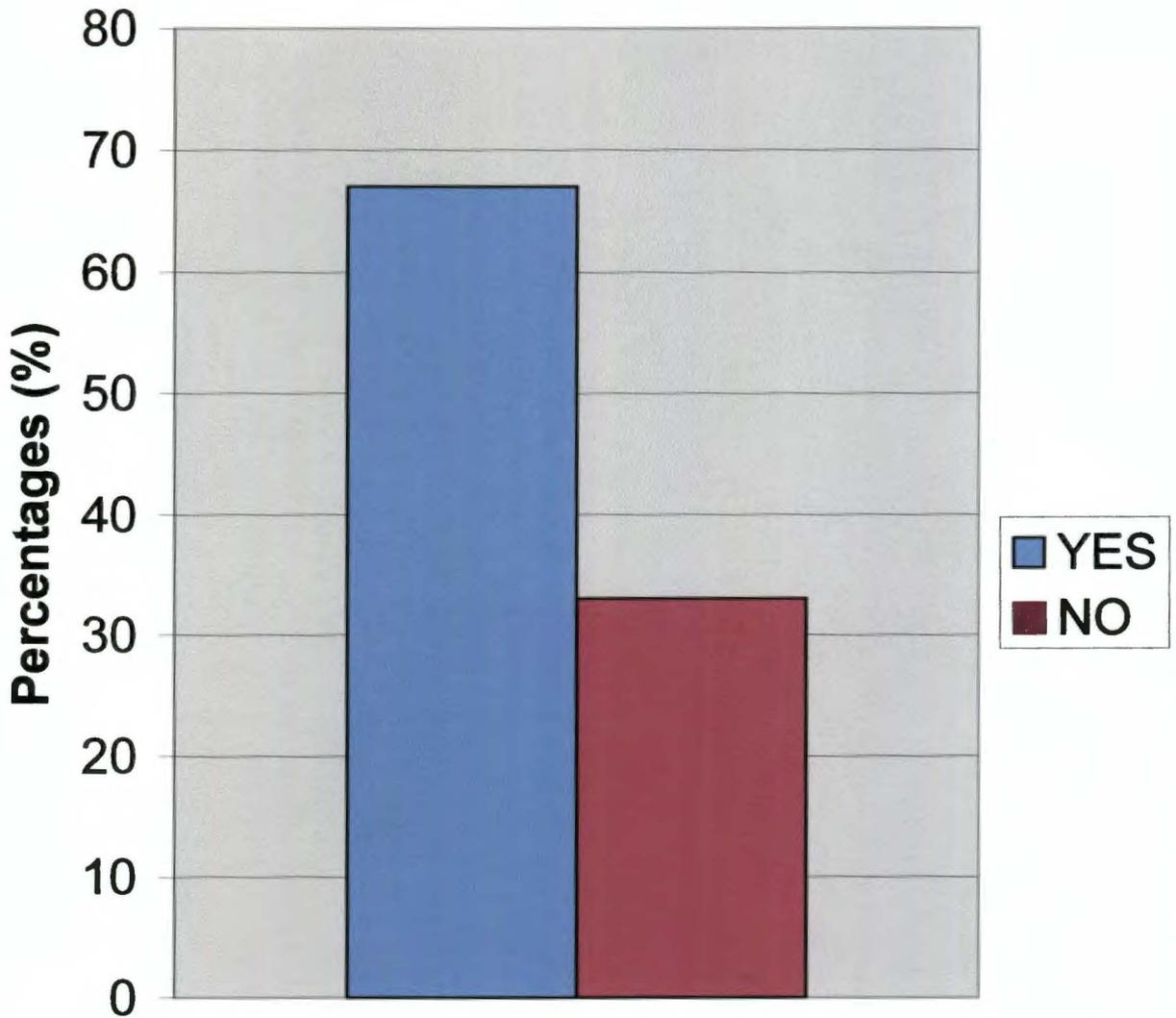


Figure 4.9 Extent to which training related to studies helped to secure employment

Table 4.14. Extent to which training related to studies helped to secure employment in different fields of study

<i>Different fields of study</i>	<i>Employed graduates</i>		<i>Unemployed graduates</i>		<i>Training related to studies</i>		<i>Training related to studies</i>	
	<i>NO.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>NO.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>NO.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>NO.</i>	<i>%</i>
					<i>Absolutely</i>		<i>Not at all</i>	
Humanities and Arts	5	28%	5	31%	2	17%	-	0.5%
Economic and Management Sciences	7	39%	7	44%	4	33%	2	33%
Natural Sciences	3	17%	2	12.5%	3	25%	2	33%
Education	1	5%	2	12.5%	1	8%	2	33%
Law	2	11%	-	-	2	17%	-	0.5%
Total	18	100%	16	100%	12	100%	6	100%

According to the data obtained in the different fields of study, it indicates that graduates in the field of Law and graduates in the field of Humanities and Arts

will gain (100 percent) advantage in securing employment if training is given, unlike in the field of Economic and Management Sciences, Natural Sciences and Education (Table 4.14).

According to the data obtained, there are courses that produce graduates who are unemployable. Graduates from courses that are not directly linked to any particular occupation, for example, Humanities, Arts and Natural Sciences have more difficulties in finding employment. Most graduates in Humanities and Arts were in jobs which were not related to their fields of study and which did not require a degree.

4.4.2. The most common barriers to finding employment among new graduates

Three most frequently mentioned barriers are discussed below:

- ❖ Lack of practical work experience, lack of volunteerism, lack of experiential training, lack technological skills and interpersonal capacity, lack of transparency during interviews and selection and nepotism also hampers the skilled applicants.
- ❖ Over supply of graduates in human or social sciences and graduates in the teaching field, over qualified applicant.
- ❖ Some don't know the right channel of communication and finding employment. Lack of networking skills, misunderstanding of the job requirement.

4.4.3. University education helps in performing tasks and duties

The majority of the respondents (73 percent) felt that their university education helped them to a great extent in performing their tasks and duties. Only 27 percent of the respondents felt that their university education did not help at all in performing their tasks and duties. They said that what they were doing in their jobs differed from what they had learned at university. Some

even mentioned that they were doing work that could be done by “ordinary matric persons”.

4.4.4. Is university education relevant to the world of work?

Most of the respondents (75 percent) indicated that university education is relevant to the world of work because university education is mostly based on theory, which one can apply it practically in the world of work. They mentioned that it also depended on the field of study done e.g. B.Com graduates working in a bank would find their degree relevant. They mentioned that university education could be more relevant if it was linked with the world of work. The structuring of experiential training can help in linking the theory and practice in this case. If it is not relevant, academic courses and degrees should be (re)-designed to be of benefit to both students and the South African economy.

At least 25 percent of the respondents indicated that university education is not relevant to the world of work because it is much theoretical and it must be combined with some practical aspects. They were of the opinion that if universities could offer both theory and practice, then university education would be relevant to the world of work.

4.4.5. How can university education best be linked with the work place?

Respondents believed that by involving employers and the community in the drafting of the university curriculum when the University curriculum is designed, employers' associations, companies, government agencies and NGO's must actively participate to ensure relevance of the program university education, could be made more relevant to the needs of the workplace. This could be done by using joint executive committees that would ensure that these two separate worlds were brought closer to each other. Such a linkage would provide students with opportunities to go to the companies and observe how things are done.

4.4.6. Respondents' opinions on experiential training

The respondents were of the opinion that experiential training is a good tool which could be useful, beneficial and relevant in solving unemployment among university graduates. Experiential training was also viewed by the respondents of this study as a boost to the economy which would help newly employed graduates to be immediately productive.

Respondents were of the opinion that if the experiential training program could have clear aims and objectives and implemented correctly, they would benefit students in gaining practical knowledge and experience. Such programs would also enable them to acquire the relevant skills and better prepare them for the workplace. Respondents propose that this should be made compulsory in all degrees programs within an institution.

4.4.7. Role players in the construction and implementation of an experiential training program

The respondents believed that the following role - players should be involved in the development of experiential training programs.

- ❖ Both the public and private sectors
- ❖ Employment or recruitment experts and institutions
- ❖ Universities
- ❖ Students
- ❖ All government departments
- ❖ Society
- ❖ Academics, professionals and heads of departmental schools
- ❖ Managers, policy makers and training practitioners.

Actually, everybody should play a role in the development, construction and implementation of an experiential training program.

4.5. SECTION D: EXPERIENCED EMPLOYERS

This section briefly present the data obtained from experienced employers.

Table 4.15. Is work experience a requirement?

<i>Is work experience a requirement?</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	9	64%
No	5	36%
Total	14	100%

Most of the respondents (64 percent %) indicated that work experience is a requirement when selecting individuals for appointment. Some of the reasons include the following:

They said a person with work experience is regarded as an asset in that the person would understand how an organization or a company works, understand the work relationships between people and how to intervene and deal with these relationships. The person would also understand how to “read” the focus of the company and what its “core” business is. This person would have an advantage in “plugging” into a new organization and positively contributing to the business of the organization.

According to the respondents, work experience is one of the criteria for selecting applicants and is an added advantage if the experience acquired is relevant to the job applied for. According to the respondents, what is needed is someone who will be able to adapt to new ways of doing things (technology) and who is capable of displaying those qualities needed in the organization e.g. punctuality, dependability and having the ability to handle and tackle the organizational problems, in order to be able to fit into the work environment.

The respondents believed that the reason for appointing an individual with experience in an organization is that organizations want to attract candidates who have the necessary potential, competencies and traits to fill the job and to assist the organization in achieving its objectives.

Only 36 percent of the respondents indicated that work experience was not always a requirement when selecting individuals for appointment. They said they appointed staff in terms of the Employment Equity Act with regard to appointment criteria as stipulated by the Act's terms and conditions and in terms the requirements of their branches. They also said that it was possible that they could need experienced people at times, depending on the positions they needed to fill (Figure 4. 10).

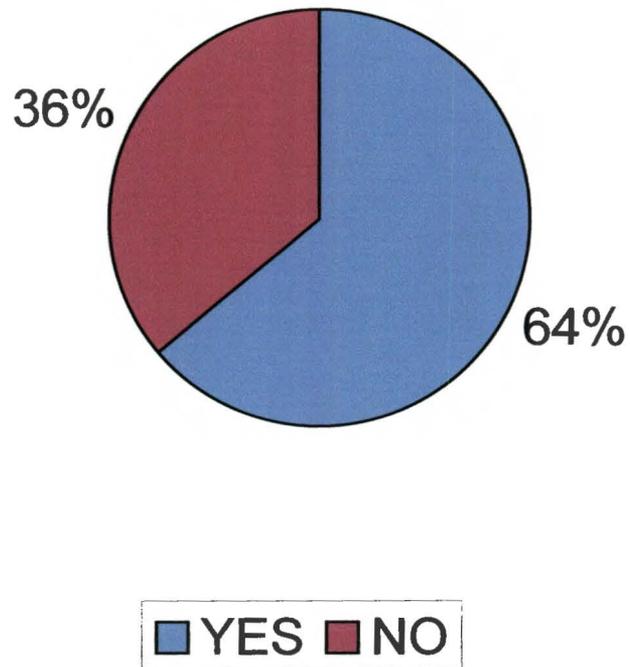


Figure 4.10 Is work experience a requirement?

4.5.1. How can Universities prepare their graduates for the workplace?

Some of the answers given by respondents to the above question were the following:

As part of their final year students should spend at least 3 months in practical experience acquiring skills that most companies require.

Respondents believed that universities should send their students to companies in order for the students to gain practical work experience. Students can be given stipends after performing certain tasks. This could be voluntary, depending on the company. Universities should invite companies to give presentation about their core business so that students can have an idea of what is happening within that field. Other institutions and government departments should also assist students to gain practical work experience during their holidays by giving them temporal jobs or summer-internships.

Respondents believed that universities should also provide graduates with an understanding of how companies and other organizations work and assist them to get jobs. Graduates need to understand the ethos and the work ethics of employer organizations and companies. Issues such as accountability, transparency, honesty and loyalty should be addressed within practical courses graded towards preparing graduates for the job market.

4.5.2. Is there a relationship between work experience and effective performance in the workplace?

The majority of the respondents (79 percent) believed that there was a relationship between work experience and effective performance in the workplace. Respondents mentioned that the prepared graduates would have a sense of focus and confidence in their ability to do their jobs. This would make graduates more productive members of a team. It was felt that lack of work experience has an impact on individual performance within the organization. A new employee needs basic skills in all areas, such as how to answer the telephone, how to manage people, how to handle conflict and how

to control various situations. Therefore, people who know what is expected of them normally perform effectively.

Only a few of the respondents 21 percent, believed that there was no relationship between work experience and effective performance in the workplace. They indicated that one could have all the experience in the world but still perform below the expected levels. On the other hand, one cannot perform effectively without the necessary experience. Some jobs may require experience while in some jobs experience might only be an advantage.

4.5.3. Can companies prepare students for the world of work?

According to the respondents, companies should give students part-time training during their holidays to gain practical experience and accept them when they want to volunteer.

Companies should also advertise their part-time vacation jobs on the university bulletin boards. Companies should offer free education to students, by way of offering workshops and having open-days whereby students receive exposure to that particular sector. This can be achieved through relationships between the universities and various companies around them.

Universities should also engage with other organizations and through government or private funding, co-jointly set up programs to prepare students for the world of work.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter, presented the opinions of respondents on experiential training for university students, and also presented the results through tables, charts and graphs. In the next chapter, the summary, based on the discussions of the findings, is made, and recommendation regarding the current situation of unemployed university graduates and issues for further research are presented.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the data presented by the respondents will be analysed in view of the literature reviewed. The data analysis technique used was phenomenology. Phenomenology is the analysis of qualitative data to provide understanding of concepts from participants' perspectives and views of social realities (McMillan & Schumaner, 1993:93).

This approach is more appropriate for the study because it uses form of inductive reasoning, aiming at understanding and interpreting the meaning that the subjects give to their everyday lives and allows the researcher to enter into the subjects' life and place himself in the shoes of the subject (DeVos, 1998:80). The conclusions from the findings and recommendations for further research and action will be succinctly stated.

5.2. SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Respondents for this study were drawn from both unemployed and employed female and male university graduates, human resource officers and experienced employers responsible for recruiting employees for companies and other organizations.

From the data, it is clear that respondents had the qualities required for the study such as the ability to express themselves and express their inner feelings and emotions without shame, and express their lived-experiences that accompany these feelings. They had a relatively recent experience of the situation under investigation and the ability to report or write what was going on within them. This is in line with the demands of the phenomenological paradigm which was chosen for this study.

5.3. SECTION B: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Respondents who participated in the study were drawn from different fields of study such as, Humanities and Arts, Economics and Management Sciences, Education and from Law. The majority of the respondents (82 percent) studied at Historically Black Universities, as opposed to (18 percent) of the respondents who studied at Historically White Universities. Graduates who participated in this study graduated between the years 1998 and 2001.

A slight majority (53 percent) of the respondents attended special training relevant to their fields of study during their studies and the rest (47 percent) of the respondents did not attend any special training related to their field of study.

5.3.1. Models of experiential training

Respondents for this study mentioned several models of experiential training that universities could use to prepare their graduates for the workplace. They specifically mentioned the linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in higher education institutions through learnerships, experiential training programs, internship programs, externship programs, cooperative education or work-study programs and job-shadowing programs.

5.3.1.1. Linkage between structured learning and work experience through learnerships

Respondents were of the opinion that integration could help students to put what they had learned into practice. This, they believe, would enable graduates to adjust more quickly in the real world. According to the respondents, experience is critical to the performance of newly employed graduates.

Another important factor mentioned by the respondents was the implementation of experiential training programs in the higher education

sector. The respondents were of the opinion that institutions of higher learning need to introduce these programs in their institutions as a matter of urgency. They believed that if experiential training could be introduced and implemented properly it would go a long way to equip students with the necessary skills.

An institution that is considering implementing an experiential training program should have managerial objectives and social policy objectives that provide a context for its educational objectives, such as, increasing enrolment, and validating and recognizing learning that takes place outside the classroom (that means intermixing of education and work experience as a way to bridge the gap between education and work for the university students). This ensures better placement results for graduates as a result of actual work experience. Graduates with non-occupational education normally experience problems of gaining access to the best jobs. Cost-standard and cost-effectiveness should be identified, through the sharing of resources with other institutions.

5.3.1.2. Experiential training program

The respondents generally viewed experiential training as the practical work experience which students should undergo before they can go to the market place. Experiential training is one way to expose students to the practical field of work, where they can acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed to perform their duties. This could also help to provide the image of what a real job entails when adequate information and training on the work related environment has been given.

Experiential training was also described by the respondents as the practical work which a student has to undertake during his/her studies to prepare him/her fully for the world of work after the completion of his/her studies. This can be undertaken during school holidays or as part of a course program. This is done in order for students to gain practical work experience which is related to their field of study, such as on the job training (real situation). The

respondents also viewed experiential training as the kind of training one receives while studying for a particular career. That means, the demonstration of the required skills from theoretical form by application of the necessary skills such as internship, leadership skills and problem solving skills.

Songer (2000) cites the University of Oregon as providing many opportunities for students to participate in experiential education outside the classroom. Experiential training such as internship enable students to integrate classroom knowledge with supervised on - the - job experience while learning practical skills applying theory and practice, and internships also provide opportunities for students to explore possible career paths (www.Uoregon.Edu: p.1 of 2).

Kurb and Prokopenko (1991:14) define experiential training as the process of drawing lessons from practical work experience in order to improve work methods and effectiveness. They also contend that experiential training occurs on the job, on condition that the work content and objectives provide opportunities for learners. They add that experiential training depends on the individual person's ability and keenness to learn from experience.

Other researchers, however, often think of experiential training as being a new process in higher education. In fact, it is thousands of years older (Newstrom & Davis, 1993:297). In the past, however, several forms of experiential education existed in apprenticeship and internship. Experiential training means that participants learn by experiencing, in the training environment, the kind of human problems they would face on the job. This approach tends to produce more changed behaviour than the traditional lecture and discussion, in which people talk about abstract ideas. Newstrom & Davis, 1993 felt that theory is necessary and desirable, but the ultimate test is how it applies in a real situation.

From both the literature and responses, it is evident enough that universities should implement experiential training programs in order to bridge the gap between formal education and work related experience. This will help to expose students to the real world of work and help them to acquire the

necessary skills, knowledge and experience needed in South Africa's economy.

5.3.1.3. Internship program

Respondents view internships as a bridge between theoretical preparation and "live" or practical work experience. Internship for university students is taken as part of their academic programs or after they receive their degrees. University or Technikon interns spend a specific period (usually from six months to a year) working in an organization as an integral part of their program and professional training. Although practices vary from institution to institution, interns often take classes concurrently. They are sometimes paid by the host agency (Nigro, 1986:332).

Mondy and Noe (1987:275) view an internship program as a training approach whereby university or college students divide their time between attending classes and working for an organization. From the employer's point of view, the internship provides an excellent means of viewing a potential permanent employee at work. The internship normally provides much more information than can be obtained in an employment interview. Management is then in a better position to make selection and placement decisions. Internships also provide advantage for students because the experience they obtain through working enables them to integrate theory learned in the classroom with the practices of the work place. At the same time interns may gain knowledge of the organization that will help them determine whether the firm would be a good place of work or not.

Invariably respondents of this study harped on the fact that internships offer students the chance to get real - work experience while finding out how they might perform in the organizations. Organizations also benefit by getting student employees with new ideas, energy and eagerness to accomplish their assignments. An experiential training program offers students an opportunity to learn on the job and gain hands-on experience while they are still at University or Technikon.

5.3.1.4. Externship program

The respondents viewed externship programs as a volunteer job shadowing opportunity for students to spend up to five days during the winter break observing and often working with professionals, investigating a career field and experiencing a typical week on the job. The experience is intended to help students better understand a work environment and a career field, and thus help clarify career goals (www.career.vt.edu/externship/welcome: p1 Of 2)

5.3.1.5. Cooperative education or work study program

As Universities have moved through open-enrolment and so on, to expand educational opportunities for the poor and the disadvantaged, there has been a corresponding need for educational methods that can translate the abstract ideas of academia into the concrete practical realities of people's lives. The field placement or work study program is an empowering experience that allows students to capitalise strengths while testing the application of ideas discussed in the classroom (Kolb, 1984: 6).

According to Nadler & Nadler (1994:57) cooperative education programs or work study-programs are an activity in which learners work on a job related to their field of study part of their time. It is designed to reinforce learning as soon as possible in a work situation. The work-study program or cooperative education program is also related to the internship program, experiential training or learning program and apprenticeship.

In good cooperative educational programs, the university and the employer are engaged in a joint venture, first to educate, and second to provide a smooth transition to regular employment. An opportunity is created for a dialogue to take place between the University and the employer spotting practical deficiencies in the student's ability or preparation. According to the respondents closer linkages between university education and work are necessary. This does not mean that higher education must have greater

occupational content, but that the intermixing of education and work experience can be a way to bridge the gap between education and work for university students (Keeton, 1976:124).

5.3.1.6. Work or job-shadowing program

The field trip or industry tour provides many students with their first chance to have direct contact with the world of work. This can motivate and encourage students to explore further both the world of work and their own plans. The individual visit by a single student to a specific industry or business may offer one of the best opportunities to gain insight into a field in which the student is seriously interested. Such a visit is often arranged for an entire working day and usually the student is assigned to a worker with whom the entire day is spent. Such a visit provides an opportunity to see a variety of aspects of the job and to ask the worker about what he/she is doing, as well as why and how. The student may also have an opportunity to spend time with two or three workers in the course of the day. This provides a chance to become familiar with the workers' attitudes towards their work, and opportunities for advancement and work stability among other things. This prolonged contact with one or two workers has become known as work-shadowing or job-shadowing (Isaacson & Brown, 1997:185).

The respondents generally view job-shadowing, work-related experience or practical work undertaking as a useful way to gain an insight into a particular role or job. It can be used as an aid for greater understanding of the working environment. The aim is to make education a better preparation for a working life. Respondents were of the opinion that one way of assisting to bridge the gap between school and work is to bring these two cultures closer together.

Respondents believed that altering the structure and content of the courses cannot alone achieve the required results. What is needed is increased understanding, leading to a degree of culture change in higher education institutions, and better preparation of newcomers by employing organizations. There should also be collaborative measures between employers and

educational institutions which must not only result in providing students with experience of the working environment, but also in bringing opportunities at staff level to help bring the two cultures of education and work closer together.

5.4. Lack of experiential training

Some respondents also believed that lack of experiential training did contribute to unemployment among university graduates and poor performance among new entrants in companies. They mentioned that most employers ask for a minimum of some work experience, which new graduates do not have. Prospective employers usually do not want to take the risk of employing someone who does not have any work experience. If graduates are not exposed to the work environment while studying, they may be unstable and nervous, or have stress, which may lead to low or poor performance.

Nowadays, the possession of a university degree does not bring automatic employment. Indeed, this harsh reality has brought about not only deep frustration among graduates and young people who have worked so hard, but also a sense of malaise in the education system itself. Respondents think that graduates are failing to find jobs because their institutions have not enabled them to acquire the skills, attitudes and work experience, which would have made them employable (Craig, 1987:20).

Respondents were of the opinion that the commonest reason that employers would want to hire young workers who already had experience was that most industries did not offer a great deal of formal training, particularly for entry-level positions. The system used was on – the – job training. This informal training is really nothing but experience on the job, making mistakes and learning somehow from another worker who knows the task. Therefore, it makes a lot of sense from the employer's perspective, to hire someone who is already experienced. Employers are continually looking for more than job skills. They see prior work experience as increasing the chances that a

person will be punctual, responsible and stable, and will possess a whole set of qualities that they associate with productive employees.

In discussing issues relating to curriculum content, Peter van Schoor from the University of South Africa's Bureau for student Counseling and Career Development observes that many graduates get skills that are no longer wanted in the job market. Many of them specialize in public administration, psychology, human resources, sociology, law and public relations. Many of these skills are not required by the economy and for this reasons, we have highly educated people without jobs. Recruitment specialists say the economy needs graduates in biotechnology, engineering, IT and commerce and people with technical and commercial training. Therefore, the education system must be completely restructured before it is too late (Ceda, 2000: 13).

Respondents believed that career guidance in Black schools should begin at primary school level. They also suggested that an audit of the skills required by the employment sector should be done. According to the respondents, Community Service in higher education should be compulsory and applied across the board. Universities should also liaise with the corporate sector to create voluntary holiday jobs. However, students should still carefully consider their decisions when selecting the field of study they want to pursue.

Some respondents were of the opinion that graduates were never exposed to subjects like Maths and Information Technology (IT) which are highly in demand today in a workforce. Factors such as lack of resources and unqualified educators in some institutions also contribute to job unpreparedness on the part of students and ultimately contribute to unemployment.

The possession of a degree is no longer sufficient in the labour market. Where you got it from and who you are, are all factors which crucially affect employment opportunities. Companies often employ people who have three to four years work experience. One can rightly ask where can one get that work experience-from? It is disappointing to see someone looking forward to

continuing his/her studies because students know in their hearts that they are wasting time and money because there won't be a job out there when the studies are completed. Graduates also waste time and money when applying to companies that demand people with work experience. Xaba (2001:12) rather indifferently suggests that South Africans should know that studying is not the only key to success. "You can succeed without education, like starting your own business or concentrating on the sports in which you know you excel".

Respondents in this study believed that a person with work experience is an asset to the company. The person would understand how a company works, the relationships between people and how to intervene and deal with these relationships. The person would understand how to "read" the focus of the company and what its "core" business was. This person would have an advantage in "plugging" into a new company and positively contribute to the business of the company. Employers need someone who will be able to adapt to new ways of doing things and who is capable of displaying those qualities needed in the organization.

5.5. SECTION C: EMPLOYMENT

The respondents generally mentioned the most common barriers to finding employment among new university graduates. They mentioned factors such as lack of information about the organization, ignorance, poor performance during an interview, not having years of experience needed, over-supply of graduates in their field of specialization being over qualified, lack of volunteer experience, irrelevant curriculum, lack of technological and interpersonal skills, and most critically the lack of practical work experience.

As graduates are increasingly having difficulty in finding suitable jobs, unemployment is a matter of increasing national concern. Individuals and society also expect an adequate return on their extensive inputs into higher education. The process of finding work after graduation in which one's skills, abilities and energy are used is often not quickly accomplished.

From the findings, it can be deduced that female graduates are more employable than male graduates. Out of the graduates who participated in the study, almost half are unemployed. The majority (50 percent) of the respondents were unemployed for seven to twelve months, while some (6 percent) of the respondents have been unemployed for up to three years. All graduates indicated that the lack of experiential training contributed to their difficulty in securing employment.

The findings of this study are in agreement with those from the study undertaken by Piliso (2001), as for the reason why graduates finding difficulty in securing employment.

The belief that graduates hold a competitive edge in the labor market is slowly wearing thin. Matriculants also compete to get into appropriate tertiary institutions because they are repeatedly told that graduates are more likely to find jobs, progress rapidly in their careers and earn more money. Yet for thousands of despondent youngsters the years of hard work and studying have resulted in nothing.

According to Ceda (2000:13), the number of graduates searching for employment is on the rise despite the deepening shortage of skills. Job searching is just as hard for people with degrees as for those without. Life after going to varsity is not smooth sailing as previously thought.

This study is in agreement with the study undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on about 2000 newly qualified graduates relating to employment hunting experiences. According to their findings, in terms of seeking and finding employment, 59 percent of the respondents reported that they found a position immediately after graduation as opposed to 41 percent of the respondents who were less successful in finding employment immediately. Some of the explanations offered by graduates themselves were the lack of work experience and that there were very few available positions within their field of study. Piliso adds that institutions also largely produce

graduates in the fields for which there is already an over-supply in the labor market, such as Humanities and Arts, general B.Sc and Education (Piliso, 2001:86).

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, models of experiential training were discussed, such as, the linkage between structured learning and work experience programs in higher education institutions through learnerships, experiential training programs, internship programs, externship programs, cooperative education or work study programs and work or job-shadowing programs. This chapter also highlighted that, lack of experiential training contribute to unemployment and poor performance among new entrants in companies. Finally, the problems encountered by new graduates in seeking and finding employment were discussed. The next chapter, chapter six provides findings, recommendations, limitations and general conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will present the findings, recommendations, limitations and the general conclusions of the study.

6.1. Findings

The purpose of the study was to develop a model of experiential training for university students through the exploration of the opinions of graduates and experienced employers and to contribute towards the designing of experiential policies at universities.

The following is a summary of research findings conducted in selected areas of the Eastern Free-State Province. The investigation took place around Qwaqwa, Harrismith and Bethlehem.

The survey involved a total of 48 subjects. The sample comprised of 34 university graduates and 14 experienced employers. From the graduates, 53 percent indicated as employed and almost half (47 percent) of the graduates indicated as unemployed during the study. On the other hand, data from the experienced employers, 64 percent indicated that work experience is a requirement when selecting individuals for appointment and 36 percent and only 36 percent indicated that work experience was not always a requirement when selecting individuals for appointment.

The data revealed that 53 percent of graduates indicated that they had attended special training relevant to their field of study during their studies and 47 percent indicated that they did not attend any training relevant to their field of studies during their studies.

An interesting finding is the extent to which training related to study helped to secure employment in different fields of study. According to the data obtained, it shows that 67 percent of those graduates who participated in the study and

who had attended training related to their fields of study benefited from experiential training in securing employment.

The data also indicated that, for those graduates whose training helped to secure employment was twice as high as the number for those graduates whose training did not help them at all to secure employment.

It is important to note that those respondents who tried to find employment after obtaining their degree did so immediately as opposed to a slight minority of the respondents who were less successful in finding employment immediately after graduation. However, as could be expected, not all groups were equally successful in their search for a first job. Graduates who were most successful in securing employment had graduated in Economics and Management Sciences. And graduates in Natural Sciences, Law, Education, Humanities and arts were less successful in finding employment.

This study was in agreement with the study taken by Piliso (2001:86) where he finds that, in 1999 the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted a survey of about 2000 newly qualified graduates in order to investigate their first employment experience. According to their findings, in terms of seeking and finding employment, 59 percent of the respondents reported that they found employment immediately after graduation.

The data also reveal that, 88 percent of respondents believed that lack of experiential training does contribute to unemployment among university graduates. They are of the opinion that, most employers ask for a number years of work experience of which new graduates don't have.

The literature also highlighted problems experienced by graduates after completing their degrees. It indicated that, nowadays the possession of a university degree does not bring automatic employment. Graduates are failing to find jobs because their institutions have not enabled them to acquire the skills, attitudes and work experience, which would have made them employable.

The study was in agreement with the study taken by Xaba (2001: 12), stating that companies often employ people who have three to four years work experience. She added that it is disappointing to see someone looking forward to continuing his/her studies because we know in our heart that he is wasting time and money because there won't be a job out there when the studies are completed.

As discussed in chapter two, thousands of students who have graduated from universities, including many of those who have obtained their second degrees, are unable to find employment. The present unemployment problem was caused by the fact that, there were not enough experiential training education in the university curriculum. The government has already taken steps to inject practical work into university curriculum and students are expected to do practical work experience as part of their curriculum (Chetty, Monyoko & Soobrayan, 1992:126).

The data also reveal that, 85 percent of respondents believed that lack of experiential training could contribute to poor performance among new entrants. They believe that, if university graduates were not exposed to the workplace/work-environment while studying, they would eventually lose self-confidence, be unstable and nervous, have stress, which may lead to low or poor performance.

The findings indicate that, there is a need to consider models of experiential. The literature review in chapter two indicated several models of experiential training such as, apprenticeship, internship programs, externship programs, job-shadowing, cooperative or work study programs and learnership programs. The models not only attempt to solve the problem of unemployment among university graduates, but also help to give students practical work experience relevant to their field of studies.

The results of this study led to the suggestion that the possession of a degree without experiential training is no longer sufficient in the labour market. It shows that models of experiential training should be developed and be

relevant in accordance to the economic demands of the country. This is also important for the economy because it could help to create an adequate labour supply of trained graduates who will meet the demands of the labour market. Furthermore, it should be in the interest of the University to have graduates who succeed in their studies and find proper employment.

The findings of the study are in agreement with those from the study undertaken by Kolb (1984:206) in terms of developing a model for experiential learning/training. Kolb states that students need to intersperse more work experience between their years of preparation in formal education. Existing programs of experiential training education (internship, work or study programs, etc) give testimony to the learning payoff of such a mix. In this model, the university becomes a centre for lifelong learning. And a university dedicated to experiential learning concepts can make students more balanced in their learning style and experience multiple learning modes.

The data reveal that work experience is a requirement. When selecting individuals for appointment work experience is also one of the criteria for selecting applicants and is an added advantage if experience acquired is relevant to the job applied for.

The data also reveal that the majority (94 percent) of the respondents felt that there should be a linkage between structured learning and work experience programmes in institutions of higher learning. They thought that this integration would empower students to put what they had learned theoretically at the university into practice. And this would enable graduates to be knowledgeable of real world.

This study was in agreement with the study taken for the Skills development Act (1999:25) which found that, learnerships are proposed as a mechanism to facilitate the linkage between structured learning and work experience in order to obtain a registered qualification, which signifies work readiness. Learnerships directly address the “how” of the skills development strategy. They are intended to overcome the present divide between theoretical and

skills components. Theoretical components only are insufficient in the quest to provide students with the required work experience.

The research conducted proves that work experience needs to be related to structured learning. This will give students a better understanding of what is needed in the work environment. And this will also provide students with necessary skills to gain practical work experience related to their specialized fields of study.

6.2. Recommendations

Aim at developing model of experiential training for university students:

1. Institutions of higher learning should introduce and nurture experiential training in their curricula.
2. Employers and business people should actively be involved in developing programs that will include experiential training. This will insure that the programs are relevant and in accordance with the economic demands of the country.
3. A study of this nature needs to be done, but on a much broader scale. A bigger sample needs to be used for a broader base of views and opinions although the findings of this study can be seen to be common to all university graduates in South Africa. It will also be interesting to include white graduates to compare how black and white graduates are affected by the unemployment crisis or whether the high rate of unemployment is more common amongst black or white graduates.
4. Previous research findings used in this study are mainly based on overseas research as indicated in the literature review. Therefore, more research still needs to be done in this area, focusing on graduates' employability patterns in South Africa.

6.3. Limitations of the study

The researcher encountered the following problems:

1. During data collection, time constraints and lack of financial sponsorship made it difficult to have access to cover the whole area of Thabo Mofutsanyana District in Eastern Free State Province due to transport costs, as the target respondents were far from one another.
2. The lack of written literature based on South Africa was experienced. The researcher used published literature based on United State of America.
3. In some instances the subjects did not provide complete answers to the interview questions because of lack of time.

6. 4. General conclusions

The unemployment experiences of graduates in the labour market should be seen in the context of the South African labour market as a whole. Graduates are increasingly having difficulty in finding suitable jobs in the economy. Factors that influence the high unemployment levels for graduates include the growth in the number of jobs that require graduates to have work experience and the over-supply of new graduates.

As the supply of university graduates often exceeds the demand for people with tertiary qualifications, the South African economy is faced with the challenge of assimilating mist of those graduates.

The study was able to identify different models of experiential training (refer to p.p. 67-72 for the various models to choose from an appropriate one) such as internship programs, externship programs, work or job-shadowing, cooperative education or work study programs, and learnership programs. As experiential training is a field with a wide proliferation of terms, each institution can decide what it would like to name its pet program.

While some of the models of experiential training exist, the study was able to develop an eclectic approach to experiential training. This proposed eclectic approach to experiential training will accommodate the diversity of learning styles thus allowing not only to equip students with work experience, but also to provide students with necessary skills, knowledge and practical work experience related to their field of studies.

An eclectic approach to experiential training was seen as a structured educational strategy integrating classroom studies with learning through productive work experience in a field related to the students' academic or career goals. It allows the students to acquire work experience needed to perform any work related job. This involves partnership among students, educational institutions and employers with specified aims and responsibilities for each partner.

To have a positive effect on outcomes using the eclectic approach to experiential training, the students need to be trained in number of areas related to their fields of study. If the student is not trained, using an eclectic approach, this will have a negative effect on output.

Therefore, an eclectic approach to experiential training will contribute towards reducing high levels of unemployment among university graduates and poor performance among new entrants in organizations. Such a model will necessitate changes in the formulation of university policy.

It will take a lot of time, energy, courage, commitment, perseverance, negotiations and cooperation between universities, government and industries to develop an eclectic model of experiential training for university students that will contribute towards the employability of students. Studies like this therefore, purport to address some of the present issues involved.

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APENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
QWAQWA CAMPUS

Private Bag x13
HUTHADITJHABA
9866
Tell: (058) 718 - 5000



DATE:

TO WHOM IN MAY CONCERN.

This is to confirm that M's Malimabe D.P. student number 1993370038 is a registered Master's degree student in Industrial Psychology.

She is currently undertaking a research project on experiential training for university students (A search for a model) and has chosen to conduct the study in your institution. I therefore, appeal to you to allow her to conduct her study. Ethical and Confidentiality principles will be ensured and adhered to during and after the study.

Hoping you will find this in order.

Sincerely,

.....

Prof. A.P. Venter (082 779 0977)

Supervisor

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1. Degree obtained:
2. Where did you study for your Degree:
3. Year graduated:
4. Major courses:
5. Have you ever attended any special training which is relevant to your field of study during your studies, If so, where and for how long?
.....
.....
6. Do you think there should be a linkage between structured learning and work experience program in higher educational institutions? (Explain your response)
.....
.....
.....
7. From which year do you think university students' should start learning practical work experience programs in higher educational institutions? (Explain)
.....
.....
.....
8. In your opinion, what is experiential training?
.....
.....
9. In your opinion, does lack of experiential training contribute to unemployment among university graduates?
.....
.....
.....
.....

10. Do you think that lack of experiential training can contribute to poor performance among new workplace entrants?

.....
.....
.....

11. Do you think an experiential training program can solve the problems mentioned in 9 & 10 above? (Explain)

.....
.....

12. According to your view, how should an experiential training program be structured?

.....
.....
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13. Do you have any other programs in mind beside experiential training that might help university students to gain practical work experience?

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5. What are your views on experiential training?

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6. In your opinion, how should an experiential training be structured?

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7. In your views, who should be the role player in the construction and implementation of an experiential training?

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APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR EXPERIENCED EMPLOYERS

1. When selecting individuals for appointment in your organization, is work experience a requirement? (Explain)

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2. What do you think university can do better prepare their graduates for the workplace?

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3. In your opinion, is there a relationship between work experience and effective performance in the workplace? (Explain)

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4. In your opinion, how should an experiential training program be structured?

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5. In your opinion, what should be the role of companies in preparing students for the world of work?

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6. Which other individuals, agencies, organizations and structures should be involved in the development of students in experiential training program?

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