

An Internship Model for the Free State Provincial Government

by

Thabo Donald Litsoane

2010005896

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the Master's Degree

in the

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

PROMOTER: Prof. L. Lues

BLOEMFONTEIN

November 2023

DECLARATION

I, Thabo Donald Litsoane, declare that the Master's Degree research dissertation that I hereby submit for the Master's Degree qualification in Public Administration at the University of the Free State is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.



.....

TD Litsoane

29 November 2023

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank myself for the dedication, hard work, sacrifices, and courage to complete this research study.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Liezel Lues, for her guidance, support, and commitment to my research study. Your guidance, support, and motivation encouraged me to persevere and to succeed in completing this research.

In addition, I want to sincerely thank and appreciate my family for their love, support, understanding, and encouragement during the times when I lacked the willpower to keep going. I will always be unable to put into words how much I appreciate and am grateful for everything they gave up for me.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the UFS Library Services and the study's participants, whose support and participation assisted me to finish this research project.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Youth unemployment in South Africa (SA) has been identified as a growing challenge that the SA Government has deemed necessary to address. Due to this challenge, there has been an increasing demand for work experience by youth graduates seeking to be employable in the SA economic market. To address this challenge, the SA Public Service introduced the Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP) as a strategy to provide unemployed youth graduates with critical and scarce skills in the public service. The study therefore aimed to identify the challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the Free State Provincial Government (FSPG). The effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG can only be achieved if the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the programme are identified and addressed.

Research design, approach, and method: The research study employed a qualitative research approach and a descriptive case study design. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews were used as qualitative research instruments. FGDs were conducted with 89 unemployed youth graduates, who were divided into 8 groups. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 supervisors responsible for human resource development and supervision of the unemployed youth graduates and the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

Findings: The research found that the PSIP in the FSPG is still faced with various challenges. These include lack of mentorship and coaching of the unemployed youth graduate interns; lack of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP; and insufficient budget allocations for the programme to incorporate more graduate interns into training interventions and increase stipend payments for the graduate interns. It is therefore important that the FSPG creates an induction programme for the PSIP in which specific factors can be outlined. These include the internship programme policy, the stipends to be provided, contract agreements, performance expectations, and communication channels that the graduate interns can use to raise concerns and challenges experienced during the duration of the PSIP.

Practical implications: The FSPG and other stakeholders need to realise the importance of the internship programme in career development, succession planning of the departments, and experiential learning towards the development of a capable, development-oriented state and a professional public service. It is important that the PSIP is effectively implemented to help the SA Government achieve its set goals and objectives as outlined in the National

Development Plan Vision 2030. An Internship Model for the Free State Provincial Government will further support this.

Contribution: The study findings may assist the FSPG to identify the challenges affecting the implementation of the PSIP in order to make the programme more effective towards experiential learning for unemployed youth graduate interns. The study also makes recommendations to the FSPG on how to address some of the pressing challenges affecting the PSIP.

Key terms: Experiential learning; human resource development; Public Service Internship Programme; Sector Education and Training Authorities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY FIELD	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background and Reason for the Study	2
1.3 Research Problem.....	6
1.3.1 Inadequate working conditions and environment.....	7
1.3.2 Transfer of relevant skills.....	7
1.3.3 Ineffective funding model.....	8
1.3.4 Lack of mentorship and coaching.....	8
1.3.5 Inadequate training interventions for both supervisors and graduate interns	9
1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study	9
1.5 Research Questions.....	10
1.6 Research Methodology	10
1.7 Significance of the Study.....	11
1.8 Explanation of Terms.....	11

1.9	Chapter Outline	13
1.10	Concluding Remarks	15
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES		16
2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	Internship programmes within the context of Public Human Resource Management as sub-field of Public Administration.....	16
2.3	Conceptualization of International Literature on Internship Programmes.....	17
2.4	Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory.....	21
2.4.1	Kolb's experiential learning theory.....	22
2.4.2	The four stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle.....	23
2.4.3	Kolb's four distinct learning styles.....	26
2.4.3.1	Diverging (concrete experience / reflective observation)	27
2.4.3.2	Assimilating (abstract conceptualization / reflective observation) ..	28
2.4.3.3	Converging (abstract conceptualization / active experimentation). 28	
2.4.3.4	Accommodating (concrete experience / active experimentation) ..	29
2.5	Key Characteristics of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory	30
2.6	Challenges Affecting Internship Programmes.....	33
2.7	Concluding Remarks	35
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES		36
3.1	Introduction	36
3.2	Overview of Internship Programmes in the South African Public Service	36
3.3	Legislation and Policies Supporting the PSIP since 1994	37

3.3.1	The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)	38
3.3.2	The White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service	38
3.3.3	Public Service Regulations of 2016.....	39
3.3.4	Skills Development Act (97 of 1998)	39
3.3.5	Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999).....	40
3.3.6	Guidelines for the Implementation of the Policy on Internship Programme of 2006	41
3.3.7	Batho Pele principles	41
3.3.8	Department of Public Service and Administration Policy	42
3.3.9	The 2019 National Skills Development Strategy	42
3.3.10	2030 National Development Plan (Vision 2030)	43
3.3.11	National Youth Policy 2020	43
3.4	Institutions Supporting Public Service Internship Programmes since 1994	44
3.4.1	Department of Public Administration in South Africa.....	44
3.4.2	Sector Education and Training Authorities	45
3.4.3	National School of Government.....	45
3.4.3.1	Breaking the Barriers to Entry	46
3.4.3.2	Cadet Programme	46
3.5	Twenty-First-Century Skills for Public Service Delivery	48
3.5.1	Conceptual skills	48
3.5.2	Interpersonal skills	49
3.5.3	Technical skills.....	49
3.6	Challenges Affecting South African Internship Programmes	50

3.6.1	Lack of effective mentoring and coaching	50
3.6.2	Cheap labour	51
3.6.3	Late stipend payment	51
3.7	Critical review of the statutory, legislative and regulatory framework for internship programmes and the institutions supporting internship programmes.....	51
3.8	Concluding Remarks	52
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		54
4.1	Introduction.....	54
4.2	Research Approach and Design	54
4.3	Population and Sample Size	55
4.4	Method of Data Collection	57
4.4.1	Semi-structured interviews	58
4.4.2	Focus group discussions	59
4.5	Ensuring Instrument Validity and Reliability	60
4.5.1	Focus group discussions	60
4.5.2	Semi-structured interviews	61
4.6	Ethical Considerations.....	62
4.6.1	Nature of participation (permission to conduct research study)	62
4.6.2	Informed consent (benefits for taking part in the study)	63
4.6.3	Protection from harm (potential risks of taking part in this study)	63
4.6.4	Rights to privacy (confidentiality).....	64
4.6.5	Storing and disposal of information	64
4.6.6	Payment incentives to participants	64

4.7	Data Analysis.....	64
4.8	Concluding Remarks	68

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FOCUS GROUP

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH GRADUATE INTERNS69

5.1	Introduction.....	69
5.2	Biographic Information of the Focus Group Participants	69
5.3	Training Received by the Unemployed Youth Graduate Interns	71
5.3.1	Training interventions provided to the unemployed youth graduate interns	71
5.3.2	The development of conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills	73
5.4	Challenges Confronting the Implementation of the PSIP.....	75
5.4.1	Challenges identified by the focus group discussion participants	75
5.4.1.1	Poor financial management.....	75
5.4.1.2	Ineffective recruitment and placement	76
5.4.1.3	Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP	77
5.4.1.4	Lack of performance agreements and assessments	78
5.4.1.5	Lack of continuous training interventions	79
5.4.2	What the FSPG and other stakeholders can do to address the PSIP challenges.....	80
5.4.3	Mentorship allocation for PSIP participants.....	80
5.4.4	Recommendations towards improving the implementation of the PSIP	82
5.4.4.1	Improve financial management	83
5.4.4.2	Develop effective recruitment and placement	84
5.4.4.3	Develop effective monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP	84

5.4.4.4	Develop performance agreements and assessments for PSIP participants	85
5.4.4.5	Develop continuous training interventions.....	86
5.5	Concluding Remarks	86
CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH THE SUPERVISORS		
	88	88
6.1	Introduction.....	88
6.2	Biographic Information of Semi-Structured Interview Participants.....	88
6.3	Supervisory Feedback on the Training Received by the Unemployed Youth Graduates Interns on the PSIP	93
6.3.1	Training interventions provided to unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP in the FSPG.....	93
6.3.2	Development of conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills.....	95
6.4	PSIP Challenges Confronting its Effective Implementation in the Free State Provincial Government.....	97
6.4.1	Late or no stipend payments	98
6.4.2	Lack of mentorship and coaching.....	99
6.4.3	Lack of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP	99
6.4.4	Lack of tools of trade	100
6.5	Recommendations towards Improving the Implementation of the PSIP	101
6.5.1	Increase funding for the PSIP.....	101
6.5.2	Develop an induction programme for the PSIP.....	102
6.5.3	Train supervisors in mentorship and coaching.....	103
6.5.4	Develop performance assessment tools for the interns.....	103

6.5.5 Mentorship allocation for the PSIP	104
6.6 Concluding Remarks	107
CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	108
7.1 Introduction	108
7.2 Recommendations	108
7.2.1 Recommendations based on the literature review on internship programmes.....	108
7.2.2 Recommendations from the literature review on the South African perspective on internship programmes	109
7.2.3 Recommendations to improve skills for public service delivery	111
7.2.4 Recommendations for the challenges affecting public service internship programmes.....	112
7.2.5 Recommendations from the focus group participants.....	113
7.2.6 Recommendations from the semi-structured interview participants	113
7.3 Recommendations for future research.....	114
7.4 Concluding Remarks	114
List of References	115
Attachment A: Interview Schedule: Semi-Structured Interviews	127
Attachment B: Interview Schedule: Focus Group Discussions	132
Attachment C: Letter of Approval by the FSPG.....	136
Attachment D: Letter of Approval by the University of the Free State.....	138
Attachment E: Research Study Information Leaflet and Consent Form	139
Attachment F: Research Study Information Leaflet and Consent Form.....	143

Attachment G: Declaration by Language Editor..... 147

Attachment H: Plagiarism report..... 148

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Methodology outlined.....57

Table 2: Qualitative data analysis techniques.....65

Table 3: Summary of themes identified through focus group discussions and
semi-structured interviews66

Table 4: Intern recommendations to address the PSIP challenges82

Table 5: Years in current position in the FSPG.....92

Table 6: Supervisor recommendations to address the PSIP challenges101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Budget allocation for internship programmes through mandatory and discretionary grants5

Figure 2: Flow diagram for mandatory and discretionary grants for the PSIP6

Figure 3: Kolb's experiential learning theory23

Figure 4: Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle25

Figure 5: Kolb’s four distinct learning styles.....27

Figure 6: Key characteristics of Kolb’s experiential learning theory30

Figure 7: Distribution of focus group participants according to workplace70

Figure 8: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to workplace89

Figure 9: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to age90

Figure 10: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to highest level of education91

Figure 11: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to position occupied.....92

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
CIP	Compulsory Induction Programme
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DESTEA	Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
DoL	Department of Labour
DPME	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DWYPD	Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Authorities
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus group discussions
FSPG	Free State Provincial Government
FSTDI	Free State Training and Development Institute
HRD	Human resource development
ISD	Institutions supporting democracy
NDP	National Development Plan
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSG	National School of Government
NYP	National Youth Policy
OTP	Office of the Premier
PSETA	Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority
PSIP	Public Service Internship Programme
PSR	Public Service Regulations

PW	Public Works
SA	South Africa
SDF	Skills development facilitators
SETA	Sector and Education Training Authorities

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY FIELD

1.1 Introduction

The South African (SA) Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP) is an intervention actively practised since 2002 (Graham and Patel, 2020). The PSIP aims to improve the general shortage of qualified and skilled human capital in the SA public service workforce. It also seeks to assist unemployed youth graduates in creating beneficial networks and connections in order to enhance their chances of finding work and advancing their careers in the public sector after the PSIP. The PSIP goals support the program's implementation in the public sector. One of these goals is to help the Public Service meet its strategic staffing needs by offering young graduates without jobs fast-tracked, practical work experience programmes. Moreover, reducing the high rates of unemployment among young graduates in South Africa is one of the program's primary goals (Kunene, 2020).

The PSIP provides practical work experience to unemployed youth graduates who need the necessary public service skills (conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills). According to Anjum (2020), these in-demand skills include the ability of unemployed youth graduates to deliver quality results to agreed timescales and provide evidence that they can manage projects and plan ahead effectively. The PSIP therefore provides experiential learning to unemployed youth graduates for a predetermined amount of time (between three and twenty-four months) in a planned, structured, and managed programme (Anjum, 2020). Youth in SA is defined as young people between 15 and 35 years (StatsSA, 2021). Experiential learning is defined as acquiring education through experience and reflecting on gained experience (Odendaal, 2018).

Business Tech (2022) reiterates that skills shortage is a real problem in SA and that the SA Government has even considered it a national crisis. Therefore, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) (South Africa, 2013) addresses the skills-shortage crisis among unemployed youth graduates by acknowledging that at least 5% of each of the respective Public Service departments should possess youth involved in the internship programmes. The Free State Provincial Government (FSPG), through its 12 provincial departments, annually attempts to adhere to the 2006 PSIP step-by-step guidelines of the DPSA (South Africa, 2006) and its aim to incorporate at least 5% of unemployed youth graduates into its Public Service departments through the provision and coordination of the PSIP (Radebe, 2018: Personal communication).

In the past, the National Department of Labour (DoL) in SA managed and kept a database of unemployed youth graduates for each province. However, since 2012, the FSPG implemented the PSIP independently.

Therefore, the study was conducted within the FSPG to identify challenges in implementing the PSIP and focused on unemployed youth graduates in the Free State province. The study aims to provide recommendations to the FSPG on improving the implementation of the PSIP to reduce the high level of unemployed youth graduates and prepare them for employment opportunities through experiential learning. In this study, the concept of an *internship programme* is used as an umbrella term, whereas the PSIP refers specifically to the Public Service Internship Programme.

1.2 Background and Reason for the Study

The 2030 National Development Plan (NDP) is a long-term development plan to improve the economy and unemployment in South Africa. For many South Africans, the NDP serves as an action plan for securing a bright future as charted in the SA Constitution. The NDP aims, among others, to promote economic growth and make the economy more labour-absorbing.

According to StatsSA (2021), “*an unemployed person in SA is defined as a person who is unemployed, available for employment, and actively seeking employment.*” StatsSA (2023) further indicates that, for the first quarter of 2023, youth unemployment in SA stood at 46.5% for youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey conducted by StatsSA, the unemployment rate among university graduates between the age of 15 and 35 years stood at 33,6% in the first quarter of 2023 (StatsSA, 2023). For this study, the focus falls on unemployed youth graduates. According to Mabebe (2019), an unemployed youth graduate is defined as any person who possesses a university degree and wishes to work but cannot secure employment.

In light of the above, the SA Government has been necessitated to find working solutions to curb and eradicate the growing rate of unemployed youth graduates, especially since the unemployment rate among youth in SA is growing. The DPSA, in 2002, through the approval of the Cabinet, introduced the PSIP, which is identified as a graduate work experience programme aimed at empowering all unemployed youth graduates (South Africa. DPSA, 2006). According to Kunene (2020), in order to support the ongoing development of unemployed youth graduates for upcoming appointments in the labour market, the PSIP is implemented in South Africa as a practical work programme.

Through the improved introduction of skilled personnel in the public service, the PSIP seeks to accelerate the government's service delivery (Kunene, 2020). The PSIP further provides

specific opportunities for career growth within the public service and teaches the values and work ethics of the organisation. Furthermore, the PSIP aims to improve equitable access to public service employment for unemployed youth graduates in rural areas and among marginalised groups such as women and the disabled. Lastly, the PSIP aims to benefit the public service and the FSPG by allowing them to become acquainted with newly appointed graduate interns and to establish whether they are employable. According to Kunune (2020), the PSIP, when effectively administered, can help monitor whether unemployed youth graduates have acquired any necessary skills required for employment in the public service.

Public Service departments utilise the PSIP to coordinate and integrate academic theory learned at universities or colleges with hands-on application and practice in a work environment (Kunene, 2020). In the public service, the PSIP is a planned, organised, and overseen programme that offers work experience for a set amount of time, usually between three and twenty-four months. This period can be determined depending on the specific needs of the respective department (South Africa, 2006). The PSIP is structured so that when effectively implemented, it can assist in curbing the high unemployment rate among SA youth graduates (Kunene, 2020).

In an attempt to eradicate unemployment and poverty, the FSPG introduced as a strategy the PSIP in 2011 as part of the province's initiative to provide unemployed youth graduates with critical and scarce skills in the public service (Tom, 2019). The FSPG, through its 12 provincial departments, attempts to adhere to this mandate annually by accommodating unemployed youth graduates with no work experience in the public service. According to the 2021 State of the Province Address (SOPA) for the Free State province (South African Government, 2021), the FSPG, through its skills development initiatives and partnership with the Sector and Education Training Authorities (SETAs), has provided 3067 unemployed youth graduates with the opportunity to acquire work experience through the PSIP from 2018 to 2021. The FSPG has provided learnerships at a total cost of R109,781,000 from 2018 to 2021 (South African Government, 2021).

The FSPG and the SETAs, as funders of internship programmes, enable the FSPG to manage the PSIP independently by collecting a database of unemployed youth graduates and allocating them to a PSIP when available (Services SETA, 2020). SETAs involved in funding the PSIP are the Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA), the Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Services SETA), the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), and various other SETAs. The FSPG's PSIP is usually fully funded by SETAs. The funding model of the PSIP requires the FSPG and its respective departments responsible for the implementation of the programme to be

accountable, transparent, and dedicated to the effective allocation to the budget and implementation of the PSIP (Services SETA, 2020). Several Public Service acts and regulations call for effective public service delivery. These include the White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service (South Africa, 1997), which aims to help the public service in SA to develop a multi-skilled and flexible workforce that can enable the public service to adapt to a rapidly changing operational environment. And also the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998), which aims to develop and improve the working skills of citizens in SA (South Africa, 1998). According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023a: online), *effective* refers to “*the ability to produce a decided, decisive, or desired effect*”. Therefore, the effective implementation and management of the PSIP will allow the respective provincial government departments to effectively execute the objective of reducing unemployment among youth graduates in the Free State.

The vehicle enabling the PSIP is the Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999). This act supports skills development initiatives by creating an enabling environment that helps guide and improve the working skills of unemployed youth graduates through training and development initiatives (South Africa. DPSA, 2013). According to this act, a minimum of one percent of each department's annual personnel budget must be allocated to training and development for current and future staff members in the Public Service (South Africa). According to the DPSA (2006), any employer with a payroll over R500,000 must pay a skills development levy to the South African Revenue Services (SARS), in other words the FSPG must pay 1% of their salary bill to SARS. SARS assigns the skills development levy to the relevant SETA. According to the DPSA (South Africa, 2013), this 1% needs to be utilised as follows: 30% of the 1% needs to be made available for SETA funding and 20% should be allocated to training and development of unemployed individuals in SA (Figure 1). Training and development of unemployed individuals include internships, learning programmes, and training programmes for artisans and technicians. The remaining 50% of the 1% in the annual personnel budget of Public Service departments should be utilised to develop skills and capacity for existing public servants in the public service (South Africa. DPSA, 2013). The latter is achieved by addressing skills gaps through mandatory training programmes such as the Compulsory Induction Programme (CIP), Ethics in the Public Service, and Batho Pele principles training (Motene, 2017). According to the Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999), 20% of the 1% is utilised for unemployed youth graduates.

According to Vulekamali (2021), National Treasury provided an estimated R145,951,000 towards unemployed youth graduate stipends between the year 2018 and 2020. Mabeba (2019) refers to a *stipend* as a fixed, regular sum of money paid as a salary. The SETAs, through the 1% funding allocation made by National Treasury, make available discretionary

grant funding to train employed and unemployed youth graduates (Services SETA, 2020) (Figure 1). According to Mabeba (2019), Discretionary grants are awarded for skills development initiatives related to essential and in-demand skills in a particular industry at the SETA's discretion. For example, CETA will provide a discretionary grant to the Department of Public Works or Human Settlements. Mabebe (2019) further indicates that the purpose of Discretionary grants is to support national priorities like lowering unemployment and poverty in local communities while helping the SETA execute sector skills plans through its annual performance plan.

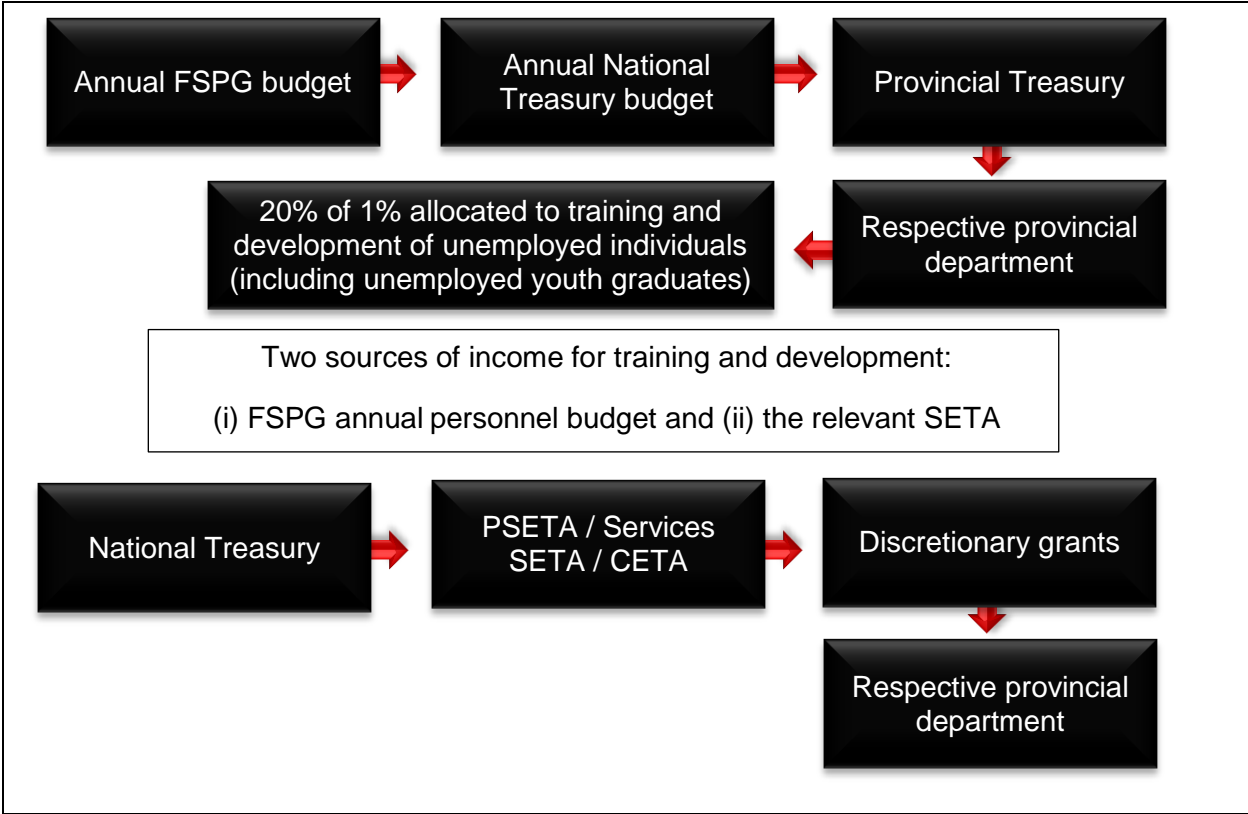


Figure 1: Budget allocation for internship programmes through mandatory and discretionary grants

There is significant importance attached to the Mandatory Grant. It encourages firms or employers to provide workforce and skill needs data to their SETA through their annual training reports (ATRs) and workplace skills plans (WSPs) (Ewseta, 2022). Employers who successfully submit the required annual filings to the SETA are required to get a reimbursement of 20% of the skills development levy each year (Tom, 2019).

In terms of the discretionary grants, the SETAs may choose to provide employers or firms with the remaining 80% of the skills development levy. Employers or firms must submit an application for this financing via the appropriate SETA channels (Tom, 2019). These methods

include writing a letter of intent (LOI), replying to SETA submission windows, and submitting through the relevant SETA's online platform. Each SETA outlines the procedure for how it will accept grant applications (Tom, 2019). These grants are intended to address critical and rare skill shortages, promote job creation and employment opportunities, and incentivize employers and stakeholders to support skill development.

The discretionary grant funding model requires the FSPG to take unemployed youth graduates into their respective departments to help accelerate experiential learning for the unemployed youth graduate interns (Figure 2). Annually since 2018, the FSPG welcomes approximately 100 to 180 unemployed youth graduates on three- to twenty-four-month contracts onto the PSIP (South African Government, 2021). The unemployed youth graduate interns are provided with a stipend of approximately R4000 per month (Tom, 2019). Therefore, the total amount spent on internship programmes in one year can be estimated at R8,640,000 (Tom, 2019). For the 2023/24 financial year, National Treasury has budgeted R110 million for the National Skills Development Fund. The budget allocation for the FSPG, as well as the discretionary grants allocation of the SETAs, had not yet been finalised at the time of the study (June 2023).

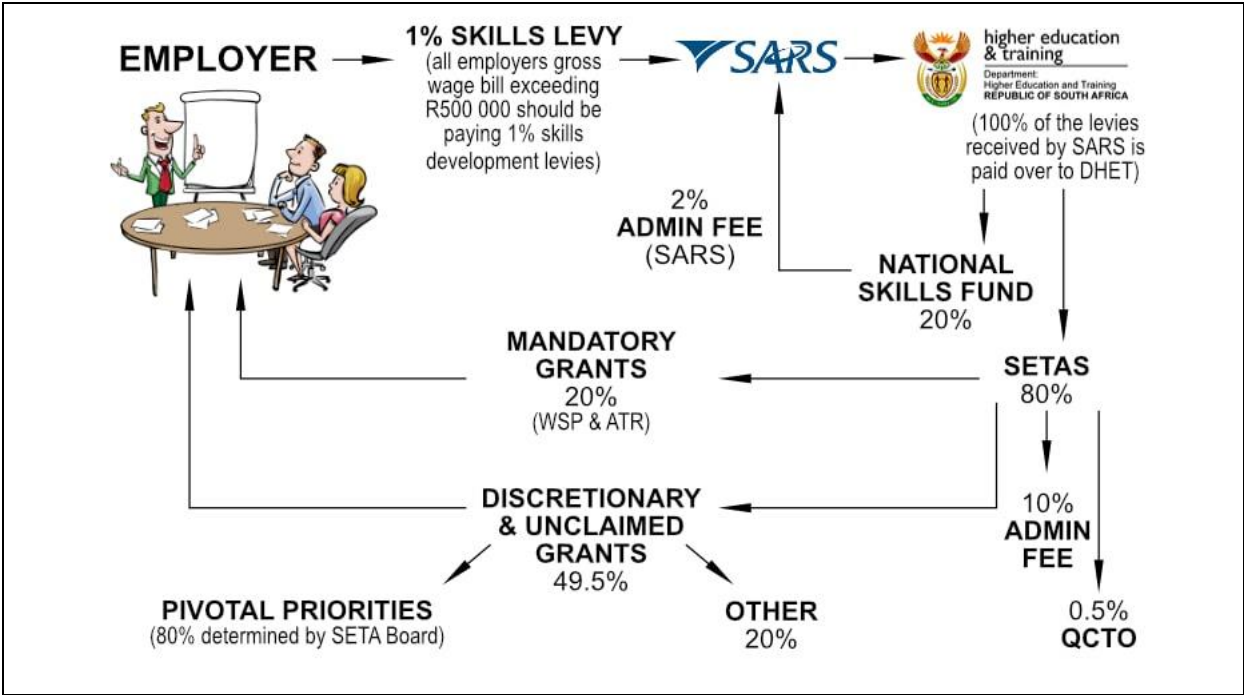


Figure 2: Flow diagram for mandatory and discretionary grants for the PSIP (Services SETA, 2020)

1.3 Research Problem

According to Kunene (2020), the persistently high levels of unemployment among youth graduates in SA remain one of the most urgent socioeconomic problems affecting South

Africa Government. StatsSA (2023) indicates that graduate unemployment in SA sits at 33,6% between citizens aged between 18 and 35 years in the first quarter of 2023. Madubela (2022) confirms that the SA unemployment rate, especially among youth graduates, is among the highest globally. In the 2021 SONA, the Free State Premier cautioned that these conditions are likely to worsen in future and have already intensified because of the Covid-19 pandemic's effects (South African Government, 2021). At the 2019 World Economic Forum (2019), it was predicted that more than 50% of youth in SA will remain unemployed beyond the 2024 general elections. These statistics represent a problematic future for SA youth in acquiring suitable employment at the end of their university or college studies. It is apparent that to address the unemployment among youth graduates in SA, strict measures and systems need to be put in place to monitor and observe any challenges hampering the implementation of the PSIP and the development of the unemployed youth graduates.

The FSPG has also taken extensive measures to allocate unemployed youth graduates into learnerships, artisan programmes, and the PSIP. However, despite the efforts by the FSPG to incorporate the PSIP, challenges continue to impact the effective implementation of the PSIP. The obvious challenges can be grouped into five categories, which are discussed below.

1.3.1 Inadequate working conditions and environment

According to Kunene (2020), analysis of the results from a study conducted by Motene (2017) on the PSIP in the Limpopo Provincial Government revealed that 40% of unemployed youth graduates expressed dissatisfaction with the working conditions of the public service while serving on the PSIP. These working conditions, according to Kunene (2020), relate to the lack of office space, functional office furniture, and laptops and desktop computers. Similar challenges are experienced in the FSPG. The current buildings and infrastructure are not maintained and therefore hold health and safety risks to the unemployed youth graduates. In addition, the FSPG lacks office space, furniture, and equipment to accommodate unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP. These working conditions and environments often leave the unemployed youth graduates demotivated and demoralised to work.

1.3.2 Transfer of relevant skills

According Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023b), "*The capacity to apply knowledge efficiently and willingly in carrying out one's responsibilities is what is known as a skill. Being able to do something competently is a learned skill.*" Wilkinson, Pettifor, Rosenberg, Halpern, Thirumurthy, Collinson and Kahn (2017) note that some unemployed youth graduates have

expressed the challenge of not acquiring any relevant education or training when serving on the PSIP; therefore, skills such as conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills are not developed. A research study conducted by Naidoo, Van Wyk and Adhikari (2017) indicates that unemployed youth graduates, when serving on the PSIP, are expected to execute essential duties without adequate tools of the trade, which affects the transfer of skills to the unemployed youth graduates. A study conducted by Cherry (2020) indicates that the assignment of official duties to unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP led to failure of the programme to successfully transfer meaningful work skills and experiential learning competencies that the unemployed youth graduate interns need. In the FSPG, it is uncertain whether the PSIP transfers conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills among unemployed youth graduates.

1.3.3 Ineffective funding model

According to a study conducted by Malambe (2016), budget constraints in the Public Service departments make it challenging for these departments to provide effective stipend payment processes and tools of trade such as laptops, desktop computers, and even working space. Since the SETAs provide funding for the unemployed youth graduates' stipends (Services SETA, 2020), the departments take very little responsibility for developing, growing, and providing essential tools for the unemployed youth graduates to gain experience regarding the public service. The unemployed youth graduates find it challenging to conduct their required tasks, such as writing submissions, sending emails, and learning administrative work, that can make them more employable in the public service (Mabeba, 2019).

1.3.4 Lack of mentorship and coaching

Finding suitable mentors and coaches for the unemployed youth graduates in the PSIP is a concern. A challenge identified on internship programmes relates to the need for more effective and meaningful mentoring and coaching initiatives by designated mentors in the PSIP (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2007). According to Kunene (2020), a suitable mentor is someone responsible for assisting an unemployed youth graduate in developing skills and relationships and understanding challenges and how to deal with them. Currently in the FSPG, rather than appointing dedicated mentors and coaches for the unemployed youth graduates, supervisors are tasked to act in this capacity in addition to their current position. These supervisors are also not remunerated for this position.

1.3.5 Inadequate training interventions for both supervisors and graduate interns

According to the DPSA (South Africa, 2006), supervisors need to be trained to become mentors to be qualified in mentorship and meet the DPSA criteria that are established for mentorship and coaching. According to Kunene (2020), supervisors need to prepare unemployed youth graduates for permanent employment opportunities by providing training programmes and interventions that can help improve their conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills and performance in the workplace. According to Mabeba (2019), sufficient training interventions for both supervisors and unemployed youth graduates need to be provided to them in order to become more knowledgeable on the roles and responsibilities that need to be incorporated when implementing the PSIP. Concerning training interventions for graduate interns, Mabeba (2019) also indicates that more training interventions need to be made available to unemployed youth graduates to ensure that their performance improves and learning takes place.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG. The period under investigation is the 2018 to 2023 intake.

The following research objectives apply:

1. To conduct an international-literature review relating to internship programmes and identify the challenges affecting the implementation of internship programmes. This will be done in Chapter 2.
2. To investigate the relevance of Kolb's experiential learning theory on internship programmes. This will be done in Chapter 2.
3. To provide an SA perspective of internship programmes, focusing on legislative frameworks and policy guidelines supporting the implementation of the PSIP; institutions and programmes supporting the implementation of the PSIP in SA; and 21st-century skills required in the public service. This will be discussed in Chapter 3.
4. To conduct eight focus group discussions (FGDs) among unemployed youth graduates who were enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. This will be discussed in Chapter 5.
5. To conduct semi-structured interviews among supervisors responsible for HRD and supervision of the unemployed youth graduates and the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

6. To provide recommendations and a conclusion to the FSPG captured in a model on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP to make it more effective. This will be discussed in Chapter 7.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions emerged for this study:

1. What is experiential learning?
2. What are the typical international challenges affecting internship programmes?
3. What are the 21st-century skills that unemployed youth graduate interns need to be employable in the public service?
4. How does the SETA funding model contribute to the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG?
5. How can mentorship and coaching be improved to help assist unemployed youth graduates in career development?
6. What would be the recommendations towards addressing the PSIP challenges in the FSPG?

1.6 Research Methodology

The research study utilised a qualitative research approach and a descriptive case study design. This allowed for a better understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations needed to explain the state of implementation of the PSIP, its effectiveness in preparing unemployed youth graduates for future employment, and its nature in the FSPG.

Furthermore, the research study used the non-probability method and purposive sampling to obtain data from the selected participants. According to Klazema (2019), purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants according to how well they can understand a particular idea or theme.

The target population of the research study was 115 unemployed youth graduates who were enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023 and 31 supervisors who served in the FSPG during this time. The sample consisted of 89 unemployed youth graduates enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023 and 28 supervisors who served in the FSPG during this time. To be eligible for selection, unemployed youth graduates had to be graduates who entered the programme with an undergraduate degree qualification on NQF Level 7. The names of the unemployed youth graduate interns were gathered from the data of interns who participated in a SETA-funded internship programme between the years 2018 and 2023.

The research study utilised the Raosoft sample calculator to calculate the appropriate sample size required to guarantee the study's validity and reliability. The first data collection method was FGDs, with 8 groups total and 10 to 12 participants in each group. As a second method, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 supervisors responsible for HRD and supervision of the unemployed youth graduates and the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will add value to two essential role players in the PSIP. The study will, first, assist the FSPG in identifying the challenges affecting the implementation of the PSIP to make the programme more effective towards experiential learning for the unemployed youth graduate interns. The study will also make recommendations to the FSPG on how to address some pressing challenges affecting the PSIP.

Second, the study will assist unemployed youth graduates with career development in the public service. The research study investigated whether the PSIP helps to develop and grow the skills of unemployed youth graduates during the duration of the three- to twenty-four-month contract of the PSIP in the FSPG. It was uncertain whether the PSIP in the FSPG transfers conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills among unemployed youth graduates. The study also determined whether appropriate training programmes are conducted and used to help build professional capacity for unemployed youth graduates in the PSIP. In addition, the study investigated whether unemployed youth graduates are provided with mentors and coaches to help assist their career development in the public service. The provision and support of a mentor or supervisor are identified as one of the mechanisms that can be used to help prepare unemployed youth graduates for employment opportunities. The PSIP therefore, becomes an important instrument that can be used by the SA government to curb the growing rate of graduate unemployment in SA. When the PSIP is implemented effectively, more graduates can be absorbed into permanent positions that can help strengthen the professional competency of the SA public service.

1.8 Explanation of Terms

Effective

According to Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996), public administration in SA should be governed and promoted by efficient, effective, and economical management and usage of all state resources. Gager (2022) defines *effectiveness* as achieving and meeting objectives. Effective also relates to the relationship

between intended objectives and goals and the realisation of those objectives and goals. It relates to the degree to which something successfully produces the desired result. According to the Public Service Commission (PSC, 2018), effectiveness refers to how well the objectives or outcomes of an organisation or department can be achieved and how well these objectives can produce the desired outcome.

Employability

Employability is characterised as a collection of abilities, characteristics, accomplishments, and knowledge that increase graduates' likelihood of finding work and succeeding in their chosen fields of endeavour (Goodman and Tredway, 2016). According to the South African Constitution of 1996, the South African Bill of Rights presents no designated right for citizens to work (South Africa, 1996). However, the Constitution provides citizens with the right to access employment opportunities, if they exist, and therefore work (South Africa, 1996). This, in turn, benefits the employer, employee, community, and the economy of a country.

Economic development

Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution, under Section 152, enforces the local government with the responsibility to promote the social and economic development of all citizens living in SA (South Africa, 1996). Economic development is described as the achievement of local communities' sustainable economic growth (Madubela, 2022). It also encompasses development that can just as easily boost macroeconomic growth by expanding the creation of jobs, stimulating local economic growth, and even fostering development initiatives like social and athletic events (South Africa. DPLG, 2017). Furthermore, economic development refers to a broad-based sustainable improvement plan that aims to develop the standard of living and quality of life for local communities (Madubela, 2022).

Implementation

Implementation is planned, active efforts that are utilised to integrate innovations and new ideas (Strehlenert, 2017). According to Strehlenert (2017), implementation is also an active process of putting a decision or plan into effect or action. According to Kgwete and Malatji (2021), implementation can be defined as the activity that must occur after preliminary thinking, with the end goal for something to happen. It is simply the carrying out of an idea or policy aimed at doing something.

Knowledge sharing

According to Klazema (2019), the sharing of knowledge between individuals, groups, departments, and organisations is known as knowledge sharing. Human capital and the

interactions among these individuals are the primary focus of knowledge sharing. Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution stipulates that every citizen has the right to receive or impart information or ideas (South Africa, 1996). When someone voluntarily shares and exchanges information they believe could be helpful to society, it is referred to as knowledge sharing. Moreover, freely instructing, counselling, and mentoring others is another aspect of knowledge sharing (Klazema, 2019). In the end, this will result in concepts being challenged and knowledge being expanded. A variety of communication techniques, including meetings, questionnaires, conversations, data collection, and interviews, can be used to illustrate knowledge sharing (Klazema, 2019).

Training

According to the Barnwell (2016), *training* refers to developing scarce and critical skills needed to accelerate transformation, service delivery, and sustainable community and individual development. According to Mpya (2020), training can be defined as a type of activity that is planned systematically and results in enhanced levels of skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for work to be performed effectively. Training involves identifying and helping to develop the key competencies that enable an individual or community to perform current or future jobs in a planned manner. Training and development concentrate on developing the organisational human capital in terms of their roles and responsibilities or jobs, and it uses a variety of methods, including on- and off-site training.

Succession planning

The process of organising and getting ready to replace executives, managers, and other important staff roles that are essential to the organization's long-term success is known as succession planning (Javed, 2019). It even extends to spotting high-potential workers and making investments in their professional development and advancement. For the majority of upcoming managerial roles and positions that will need to be filled once they become vacant, these employees receive specialised training and development. Succession planning is critical in sustaining an organisation's initiative and performance (Javed, 2019).

1.9 Chapter Outline

The research study consisted of seven chapters, which are structured as follows:

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of the study, background on the importance of the PSIP, and its purpose in the SA Public Service. This chapter also included introductions to the study's significance, problem statement, aim, and objectives, as well as the selected research methodology, data collection techniques, and key concepts. This chapter also provided a clear overview of the structure of the research study.

Chapters 2 and 3 will each cover a comprehensive literature review. In **Chapter 2**, an international-literature review on internship programmes will be conducted and the challenges affecting internship programmes identified. The chapter will also discuss Kolb's experiential learning theory and the six key characteristics of the theory.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the PSIP. The chapter will discuss the legislative frameworks and policy guidelines used to implement the internship programmes in the SA Government. The chapter will also identify some of the institutions supporting the implementation of the PSIP. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the skills required in the 21st-century public service and training initiatives used to transfer these skills to unemployed youth graduates. Finally, the chapter will identify the challenges affecting internship programmes in the SA Public Service.

In **Chapter 4**, the research methodology adopted for this study will be outlined. Chapter 4 will also explain the chosen research design, population and sampling techniques used, and data collection procedure employed. The chapter will further address the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Ethical matters that needed to be considered, such as informed consent and permission from the Director-General in the Office of the Premier in the FSPG, to conduct a research study in the FSPG will also be outlined.

Chapter 5 will present an analysis of the research findings from the FGDs with unemployed youth graduates. The chapter will interpret the responses from the FGDs on how the implementation of the PSIP can be improved to reduce the high level of unemployed youth graduates. This chapter will also identify the challenges relating to the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG, which will be identified using data from the FGDs. Furthermore, the chapter will provide feedback on the findings made by the research study on the provision of the two training programmes (Breaking the Barriers to Entry [BB2E] and the Cadet Programme) used to provide skills to unemployed youth graduates (Moodley, 2022).

Chapter 6 will present an analysis of the research findings from the semi-structured interviews with supervisors. The chapter will interpret the responses from the interviews on the challenges experienced during the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. This chapter will also identify the challenges relating to the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG with regard to the mentorship programme. Furthermore, the chapter will provide feedback on the findings made by the research study on what provisions can be taken to improve the PSIP in the FSPG.

Chapter 7 will provide recommendations and a conclusion to the FSPG on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP to reduce the high level of unemployed youth graduates and prepare them for employment opportunities.

1.10 Concluding Remarks

It is important to note that more oversight of the PSIP in the FSPG is required to foster a generation of public servants capable of addressing key service delivery issues. Skills and experience are essential in the FSPG and can be achieved through the PSIP. Time and resources must be allocated towards promoting development, fairness, equality, and accountability in the workplace. Focusing on the delivery chain will also make it easier for public servants to return to the communities they represent, consult with them, and obtain a directive regarding the top concerns affecting the communities and the surrounding areas. This can be done especially when analysing unemployment among youth graduates as an imperative socio-economic issue. Developmental training programmes and mentoring can help unemployed youth graduates to develop creative and innovative concepts that can be used to employ and redress the high levels of unemployment among youth graduates in SA.

Existing efforts and attempts by the FSPG to equip and help skill unemployed youth graduates cannot go unnoticed. However, more extensive efforts are required to help absorb and create a new culture of public service where servants are willing and knowledgeable of all values and principles of the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996). This culture will be capable of promoting sustainable service delivery and the eradication of poverty. A skilled and accountable public service in the FSPG can be achieved. This can be done by following appropriate rules and regulations stipulated by the DPSA and through constant supervision of the tasks and duties provided to the unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP. Ultimately, this dissertation sought to contribute to a guided direction of examining the employability of recently graduated individuals on the PSIP in the FSPG. The study aimed to contribute to the transfer of skills and development which can create job opportunities for unemployed youth graduates.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 aims to review international literature (peer-reviewed articles, reports, and publications) on internship programmes. The international-literature review is utilised to assist the researcher in acquiring a better understanding of the existing research on internship programmes and their challenges worldwide. The literature is reviewed to ascertain the views of scholars on internship programmes, Kolb's experiential learning theory, and the challenges affecting internship programmes.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section will conceptualize the international-literature review on internship programmes according to different scholarly perspectives. This section will mainly focus on research in the United States of America (USA), Europe, and Asia as the three distinctive schools of an internship programme.

The second section will discuss Kolb's experiential learning theory. Under this section, the focus will be on three aspects that underpin Kolb's experiential learning theory. A discussion of the four stages of Kolb's experiential learning process will provide an in-depth understanding of the learning processes used to develop knowledge. The next part commences with a focus on Kolb's four distinct learning styles, which are: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating.

The third section will discuss the six key characteristics of Kolb's experiential learning theory. The chapter will conclude with a focus on the challenges affecting internship programmes, mainly extracting examples from countries in Asia, Europe, and the USA.

2.2 Internship programmes within the context of Public Human Resource Management as sub-field of Public Administration

The evolution of public administration theory goes hand in hand with the development of human resources. Here, the Industrial Revolution played a fundamental role in extending the scope of Public Administration (PA) by opening public human resources to technical and specialised fields and introducing the need to systematise their skills and experience (Lues, 2023). It also led to a professional civil society. For example, there was a need for expert civil servants who were knowledgeable about taxation, statistics, and administration. The contribution of Gulick and Urwick is considered a keystone in establishing the PA discipline,

which promulgates the concept of planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. Since 1971, private sector institutions have increasingly managed public institutions and provided public goods and services. From the 1980s onwards, developed and developing countries have started reviewing the roles and responsibilities of government institutions and their staff (Lues, 2023). Many of these have been privatised, and those remaining within government have been subject to business-type approaches, such as tendering, performance management and public-private partnerships in delivering services. In South Africa, the structures portrayed are responsible for the realisation and upholding of our democratic dispensation and rely on Chapter 10 of the South African Constitution, which emphasises the importance of transparent, accountable, and efficient public service responsive to the needs of its citizens.

Human Resources has also assisted in the designing of effective internship structures which are in alignment with organizational goals. Support for intern's professional development has also be provided through mentorship and coaching programs which aim to assist and guide the interns through their day to day functions (Graham and Patel, 2020). Human Resources plays a crucial role in the development of internship programs by overseeing recruitment, placement and ensuring a positive work environment. Human resources also handles administrative aspects of internship programs, such as documentation such as contracts, compliance and evaluations of the program's success. Overall, human resources contribute to creating a beneficial experience for both the interns and the organisation.

In Chapter 3, a section is added to outline the challenges to internship programmes in the South African context. Chapter 2 will provide a conceptualization on International literature regarding internship programmes. The section will also provide an overview of some challenges affecting internship programmes from an international perspective.

2.3 Conceptualization of International Literature on Internship Programmes

The review of literature from the USA, Europe, and Asia will help provide an overarching perception of how internship programmes are coordinated and delivered globally. The international literature will also help the study benchmark essential concepts and best practices that can be used to improve the internship programmes in SA.

For instance, in an American case study by Waxman (2018) on how internships replaced the entry-level job, the author suggests that the establishment of the modern internship programme came to reality in the early 1940s when the US Government implemented the newly established Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938. This act stated that all labourers must

be capacitated with the professional skills required by the labour market. According to Waxman (2018), these skills had to be transferred to unskilled and semi-skilled persons and graduates to help improve their performance, ability, and competency to work in a professional environment. This, then, promoted more unemployed youth graduates in the USA to enrol in internship programmes as a stepping stone towards discovering permanent employment opportunities.

According to Campbell (2016), when trying to conceptualize what exactly an internship programme is, many researchers will agree that there is no shared conception regarding what precisely an internship programme experience is. This will continue to pose issues for policymakers, students, researchers, educators, as well as employers in the future. It is therefore imperative to understand and evaluate various scholars' understanding of the internship programme.

O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018) conducted a study titled *Interns and outcomes: Just how effective are internships' as a bridge to stable employment?* The authors define an internship programme as any form of reasonable work experience that is provided to an unskilled and unemployed individual (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). This work experience is aimed at enhancing the unskilled and unemployed individual's learning and understanding ability of work related to a particular area of study. Muller (2020) argues that an internship programme can provide an unemployed youth graduate some experience in a specific industry, and therefore such programme can be instrumental when trying to gain a general overview of a specific industry.

According to Barnwell (2016), an internship programme can also be defined as a strategic process of transferring professional competencies to unemployed youth graduates through employment engagement. Barnwell (2016) identifies these professional competencies to be knowledge, skills, and the right attitude. Furthermore, these competencies are better learned through practice than classroom theoretical learning. According to the Barnwell (2016), these professional competencies learned during an internship programme can help increase unemployed youth graduates' professional skills, while simultaneously exposing them to the mandatory functions and duties of a specific job through the quality learning experience of an internship.

According to Hora, Wolfgram and Thompson (2017), in the USA, internship programmes aim at providing unemployed youth graduates with a form of experiential learning that helps to integrate their knowledge and acquired theory at university with practical application in the workplace and skills development in a professional setting. According to Leary and Sherlock (2020), an internship programme utilises the learning-by-doing approach, allowing

unemployed youth graduates to acquire experiential learning by performing required tasks and functions in the public service. Furthermore, the learning-by-doing approach provides experiential learning by allowing unemployed youth graduates to assess the growing competitive job market and determine whether they are compatible to deliver the demands of a specific job (Anjum, 2020).

Furthermore, according to Waxman (2018), internship programmes in the USA in 2018 indicated a drastic increase from 50% to 62% of unemployed youth graduates enrolling to do an internship programme after completing their university studies. This therefore created a surplus of unemployed youth graduates who need an internship programme to be placed at a specific company or organisation. According to Waxman (2018), the growing surplus of unemployed youth graduates who need an internship programme has replaced the need for entry-level jobs in the US job market. Waxman (2018) further indicates that some US employers eliminated the need for experience in entry-level vacancies. Therefore, the internship programme focuses on providing experiential learning as a form of transferring skills to unemployed youth graduates to learn how to do the job required by actually doing it.

According to Anjum (2020), the experiential learning provided to unemployed youth graduates on an internship programme helps to enhance their work experience and grants them a better opportunity for employment over unemployed youth graduates who did not participate in an internship programme. Waxman (2018) explains that unemployed youth graduates who possess any experience of an internship programme on their CVs have a better chance of being called for an interview when applying for a job than those with no formal experience of an internship programme.

Focusing on Europe, in their article titled *Predictors of quality internship programs: The case of Romanian business and administration*, Marinas, Goia, Igret and Marinas (2018), explain that an internship programme can also be defined as work-based learning, usually as part or outside of formal education. Marinas et al. (2018) also indicate that formal education is used to facilitate students' learning processes from practitioners while improving their learning outcomes. Furthermore, one of the most critical features of an internship programme is identified as the opportunity that the programme provides to unemployed youth graduates to experience, through personal learning, what working in a specific organisation will entail (Marinas et al. 2018).

In their study, *Revisiting the benefits of internships' for interns and host organisations: What are the benefits of internship programmes?*, Ismail (2018) defines an internship programme as a mechanism that can provide skills in a particular area of study to unemployed youth graduates. The specific study areas in which these skills can be acquired can include human

resource management or development, information technology, finance and supply chain management, monitoring and evaluation, and communications (Ismail, 2018). According to O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018), the benefit of these skills is that they can help increase unemployed youth graduates' professional skills, while simultaneously exposing them to the mandatory functions and duties of a specific job through the quality learning experience of an internship.

In a publication titled *Internships, one more advantage of college in Europe* by Viemont (2016), the author articulates that internship programmes are used as a vehicle to provide unemployed youth graduates with the opportunity to incorporate their acquired university knowledge in a planned professional work environment as a form of experiential learning. In light of the above, these internship programmes provide unemployed youth graduates with the opportunity to gain valuable applied work experience. According to Viemont (2016), in Denmark, unemployed youth graduates who have acquired work experience benefit more from subsequent employment prospects, insight into an organisation's functions, and higher wages, even though these effects tend to disappear a few years after graduation. According to Anjum (2020), the insight received from the internship programme can assist unemployed youth graduates to bridge the existing gap between being a student and a professional.

Chen and Shen (2012), in an article titled *Today's intern, tomorrow's practitioner: The influence of internship programmes on students' career development in the hospitality industry*, comprehend the meaning of internship programmes from an Asian perspective. According to them, in Asia, an internship refers to a pre-professional work experience programme that is provided to unemployed youth graduates as an opportunity to gain work experience and exposure in a professional work environment or labour market in particular. This internship programme allows unemployed youth graduates to work in a real-world setting and to perform specific tasks that are required in a professional work environment through a job description and its specifications. Furthermore, Chen and Shen (2012) indicate that an internship programme only provides temporary work to unemployed youth graduates, and, in return, they receive a stipend or salary as a form of payment for their services provided.

In their article, *Impact of internships on job performance among university graduates in South Korea*, Jung and Lee (2016) define an internship programme as a programme aimed at providing unemployed youth graduates with a chance to acquire generic employability skills. According to Jung and Lee (2016), these generic employability skills can assist unemployed youth graduates with the transition from learning in an institution of higher learning to employment. In an article titled *Quantifying impacts of internships in an international*

agriculture degree program by Henneberry and Radmehr (2020), these employability skills include teamwork, leadership, human relations, relationship building, communication, time management, and the ability to solve problems.

In the publication *Fostering quality teaching in higher education*, Hénard (2012) defines an internship programme as a programme that can provide a quality learning experience capable of incorporating knowledge and skills and stimulating career development when effectively implemented. According to Hénard (2012), this quality learning experience assists unemployed youth graduates in increasing their work values and beliefs about the required and accepted conduct in a professional work environment. Henneberry and Radmehr (2020) agree with this statement and further indicate that the internship programme is a practical means for unemployed youth graduates to gain insight into a particular organisation's code of conduct and career. The following section will discuss Kolb's experiential learning theory.

2.4 Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Oxford English Dictionary (2023) defines *theory* as a system of ideas intended to elaborate or explain an abstract concept. According to Kivunja (2018), the concept theory is derived from the Greek word *theoria*, which means looking or being able to see things in a particular way. Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023c) defines *theory* as “ a set of justifications connecting a vast number of facts. It forecasts what you should discover from additional observations and experiments in addition to explaining those facts”. A theory can also be defined as a concept formulated to explain, anticipate, and comprehend an experience (Kivunja, 2018).

According to Kolb (2017), experiential learning theory is a theory derived from the work of 20th-century scholars such as Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget, who held the same opinion that learning and development require experience at its core. Schwartz (2010) believes that experiential learning theory is centred on human learning and knowledge development theories. According to Kolb (2017), the knowledge created from experiential learning results from a combination of receiving knowledge and practically transforming that knowledge into experience. In other words, experiential learning theory can help provide a deeper understanding of how learning takes place in a practical work environment. Kurt (2020) further indicates that this theory can assist individuals in developing and designing learning processes.

In a research study conducted by Celio, Durlak and Dymnicki (2011) on analysing the impact of service-learning on students, experiential learning is defined as an active concept of connecting education to community needs and experiences. This requires learners or

students to utilise learned theory or experience in a practical work environment (Cherry, 2020). Chan (2012) explains that individuals must be aware of their current experience in order to draw lessons from it, link it to a past comparable experience (theoretical knowledge), and evaluate the significance of the experience. This acquired theoretical knowledge of unemployed youth graduates requires active experiential learning. According to Gobeil (2022), practical and active experiential learning mixed with theoretical knowledge allows for a deeper understanding of the actual work required.

Furthermore, Gobeil (2022) indicates that experiential learning theory can also be defined as any changes that can happen to an individual simply based on their direct experience. The author further elaborates that these changes provide individuals with a hands-on learning experience that is capable of fostering more than just content memorisation, which is usually used in theoretical learning experiences (Gobeil, 2022). In a study titled *Experiential learning and engagement: The role of professional development and engagement in the graduate assistant experience* by Kolb (2017), individuals are provided with the opportunity to perform trial and error as a form of learning by doing. Furthermore, Muetzel (2015) indicates that experiential learning theory is equivalent to personal change and growth when implementing the hands-on learning experience. The personal change and growth combined with adult learning environments, helps provide experiential learning that is both active and practical can lead to a deeper understanding. As a result, the learning-by-doing method can serve as the foundation for all learning activities (Gobeil, 2022).

Kurt (2020) conducted a study on the humanistic and constructivist approaches to education, in which the learning-by-doing approach is identified as part of experiential learning theory. It is derived from the humanistic and constructivist approaches to education, indicating that learning occurs naturally. The theory further proposes that experience is critical in developing and constructing knowledge. In addition, Kolb (2017) reiterates that learning can happen through discovery and active participation. In other words, learning can occur by doing.

2.4.1 Kolb's experiential learning theory

According to Kurt (2020), Kolb's experiential learning theory can be summed up as the process by which experience is applied practically to develop knowledge. Kolb's experiential learning theory is focused on explaining the impact of experiential learning as a framework that can be used to improve innovation in learning, management, and education (Kolb, 2017). According to Kurt (2020), there are two important parts in Kolb's experiential learning theory (Figure 3).

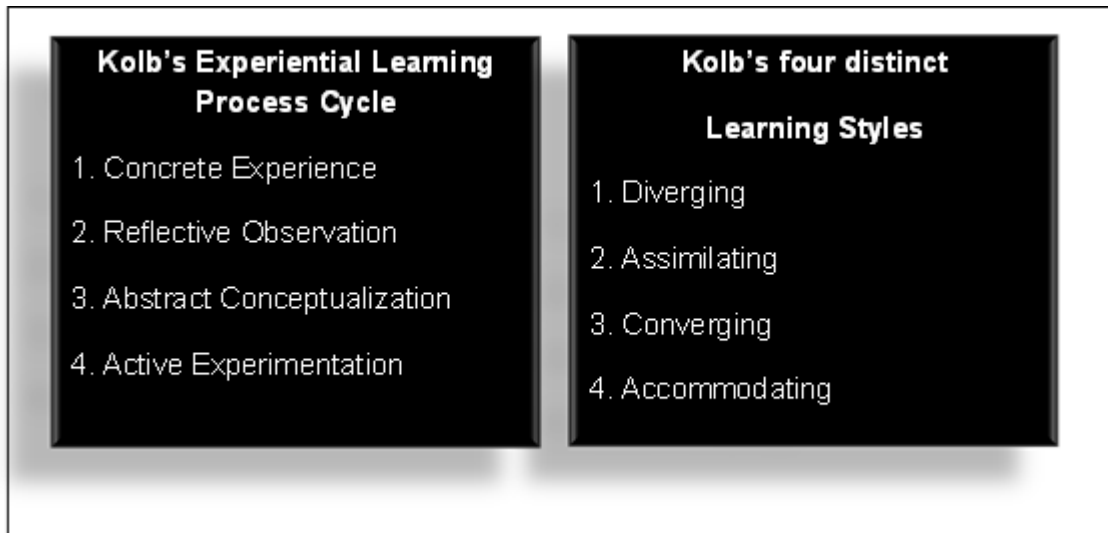


Figure 3: Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kurt, 2020)

As seen in Figure 3, the first part of Kolb's experiential learning theory relates to Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle, which focuses on stages that need to be completed to determine whether learning has taken place. There are four important stages in the cycle, including concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb (2017) emphasises that in Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle, the completion of all the stages in the experiential learning cycle can help assist learners to transform their experience into knowledge. According to Kolb (2017), learners can reflect on past experiences and use them to anticipate future outcomes or concepts. Motene (2017) further indicates that with every new experience, an individual or learner can integrate new observations with their current understanding of concepts. It is therefore important that each individual or learner is allowed to pass through each stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle to determine whether learning has taken place.

The second part of Kolb's experiential learning theory relates to Kolb's four distinct learning styles (figures 3 and 5). There are four styles: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (Figure 3). According to McLeod (2017), these four distinct learning styles form part of a cognitive process. Furthermore, the four styles are utilised by learners to ensure that learning has taken place (McLeod, 2017).

2.4.2 The four stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle

Kolb contends that the learner can enter the cycle at any time and that effective learning can be seen as the learner progresses through it. Kolb's theory of experiential learning highlights in its first section that learning is a four-stage process that enables students to convert their experiences into important knowledge. The second part focuses on the learning styles or cognitive processes that ensure that learning has occurred (Kurt, 2020). In other words, the

theory believes that individuals can demonstrate their knowledge or provide evidence that learning has occurred when they can apply abstract concepts to new situations or challenges. According to Gobeil (2022), Kolb's entire learning theory is based simply on the concept of converting experience (things you have encountered) into knowledge. The author further indicates that with each new experience, a learner can integrate new observations with their current understanding of concepts. It is therefore crucial that each learner has the opportunity to pass through each stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle (Figure 4).

According to Cherry (2020), the experiential learning cycle is established on Jean Piaget's focus, which insists that learners can only create knowledge through interactions and synergy with their environment. Furthermore, Piaget's theory believes that humans can create their understanding of the world (Cherry, 2020). Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that an individual's childhood experiences can play a vital and active role in their development of knowledge and intelligence (Hargraves, 2021). This implies that kids or learners can create new knowledge on the basis of ideas that are presented to them, which can result in long-term changes. Piaget's theory focuses not only on the nature of knowledge and how it is formulated but also on the mental development of a human through biological maturation and environmental experiences (Hargraves, 2021).

Kolb (2017) further emphasises that experience is central to Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle and that something must be changed or transformed by the acquired experience. According to Kurt (2020), for experience to influence change or transformation, it must be experienced, recollected, and memorised. The two scholars therefore acknowledge that for an experience to qualify as learning, it has to produce some kind of learning (Muetzel, 2015). Figure 4 depicts the stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle and the interaction between them.

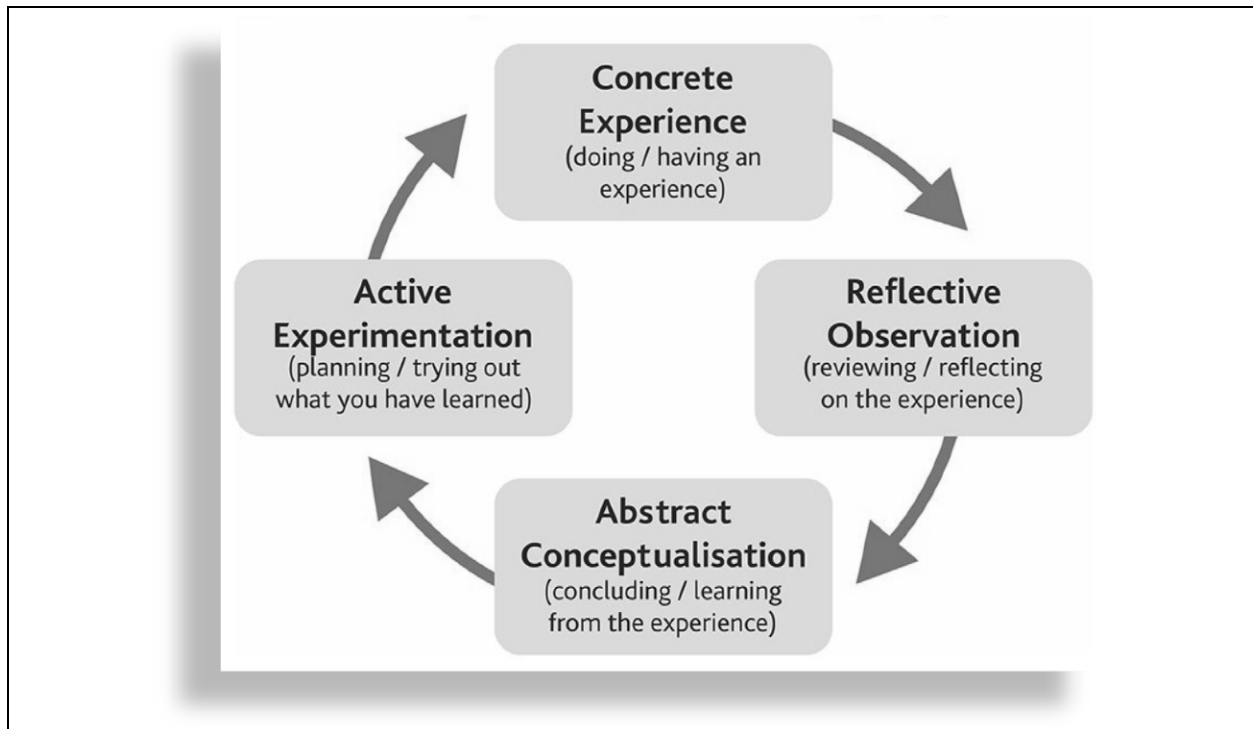


Figure 4: Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle (Cherry, 2020)

The first stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle involves the learner receiving **concrete experience** (Cherry, 2020). Concrete experience relates to the experiences that individuals face daily, irrespective of whether the experience has occurred in a professional, educational, or personal setting (Waxman, 2018). According to Kolb (2017), the concrete experience of an individual can be explained either as a completely new experience or a reimagined experience that might have occurred already. Cherry (2020) further articulates that for a learner to receive concrete experience, they need to engage in an activity or a specific task. In this stage, learners are expected to acquire new knowledge while actively engaging in the tasks specified (Kolb, 2017).

Reflective observation (Figure 4) is the second stage of the cycle and is used to help learners reflect on the tasks that they have completed (Kolb 2017). According to Waxman (2018), learners' learned ideologies and preconceived conceptions can influence their reflective observations. Nonetheless, when tackling new problems and making important choices, students must continually consider their past experiences and modify their strategies (Waxman, 2018). In this stage, learners are provided with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their experiences with others (Cherry, 2020). Furthermore, learners are able to share their experiences with one another and point out any differences between what they understand and what they actually experienced. According to Cherry (2020), communication at this stage requires good vocabulary to be used by the learners for them to be capable of providing an effective review of the events that they have experienced.

The third stage in Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle requires learners to conceptualize their experiences (Figure 4) and refers to **abstract conceptualization** (Kurt, 2020). According to Kurt (2020), this stage requires learners to retrieve their thoughts and experiences to compare or benchmark their experiences with other learners. Cherry (2020) indicates that the transition from reflective observation to abstract conceptualization occurs when students start categorising concepts and ideas in order to draw conclusions from their experiences. This transition requires learners to interpret their experiences and to compare them to their current understanding of the concept (Kolb, 2017).

The fourth stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle is identified as **active experimentation** (Figure 4) (Kurt, 2020). In this stage, learners must apply their knowledge to new concepts and experiences. According to Kolb (2017), learners are expected to be able to make predictions, analyse tasks, and apply their newly acquired knowledge. In other words, learners can put their new knowledge into practice and effectively show what they have learned (Cherry, 2020).

According to Kolb (2017), the stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle are interdependent. Therefore, all the stages must be completed for a learner to develop new knowledge. Furthermore, Cherry (2020) emphasises that a learner should complete the four-stage cycle to prove that effective learning has occurred and that a specific learning style or cognitive process has been used to acquire learning.

2.4.3 Kolb's four distinct learning styles

The second part of Kolb's experiential learning theory focuses on Kolb's four distinct learning styles used by learners to ensure that learning has taken place (figures 3 and 5). According to Kolb (2017), Kolb's four distinct learning styles are four learning styles that form part of the cognitive process (diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating). Learners apply Kolb's learning styles by utilising one specific learning style that is best suited for them (McLeod, 2017). Cherry (2020) also indicates that various factors can influence a learner or individual's preferred style of learning. Factors such as the learner's social environment and educational experiences can influence their preferred style of learning (Cherry, 2020). Tomkins and Ulus (2015) explain that the factors affecting an individual's preferred style of learning can occur simultaneously, where a learner or individual can think and simultaneously feel to learn a particular experience.

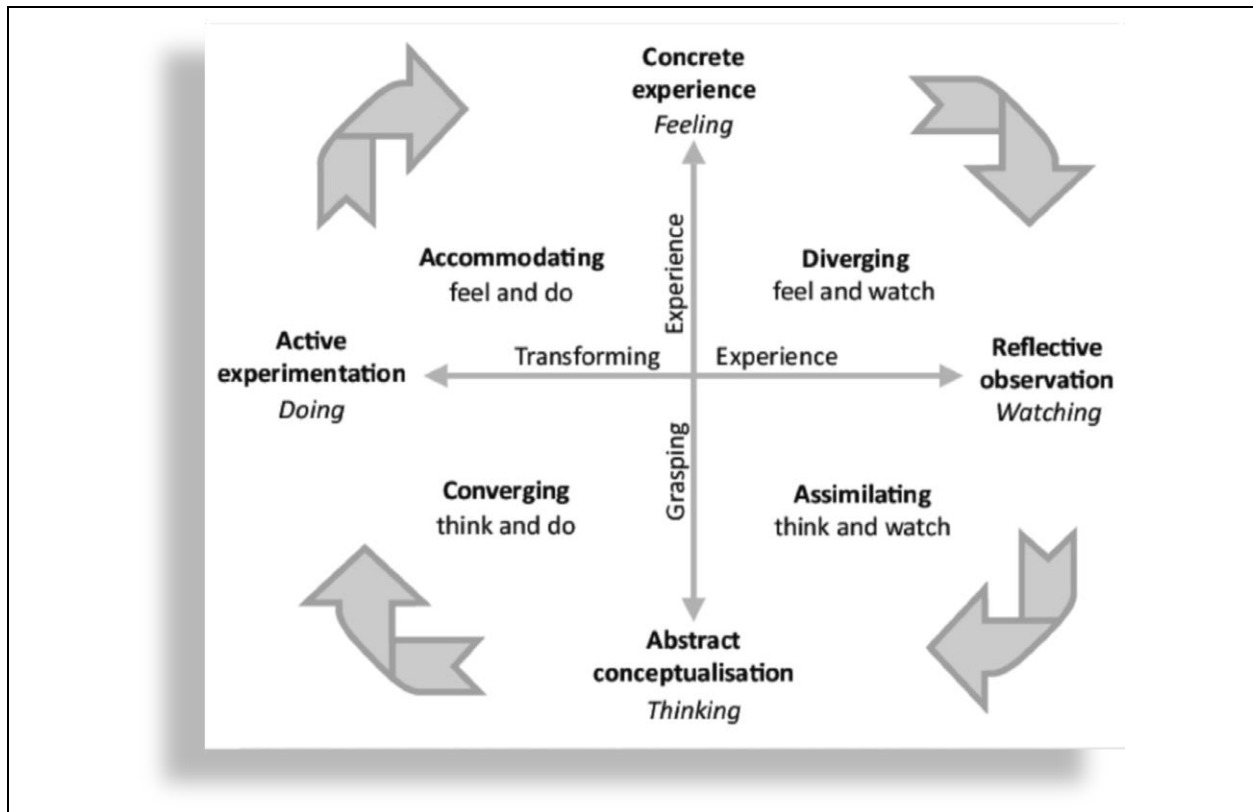


Figure 5: Kolb's four distinct learning styles (Kurt, 2020)

Figure 5 indicates the linkage between the learner's reflective observation and their abstract conceptualization when assimilating or reviewing their experiences (Kurt, 2020). Figure 5 also demonstrates the linkage between the learner's abstract conceptualization and their active experimentation and the converging learning style. Cherry (2020) reiterates that each individual learning style is a product of either a learner's thinking or their feeling. In some cases, it can be both. These learning styles are interrelated and linked to the four stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle (Cherry, 2020). The interrelatedness and linkage between the four stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle and four distinct learning styles is demonstrated in Figure 5. Tomkins and Ulus (2015) indicate that an author named Roger Fry worked together with Kolb to identify the four unique learning styles.

2.4.3.1 Diverging (concrete experience / reflective observation)

Tomkins and Ulus (2015) indicate that in the diverging learning style, individuals or learners tend to use an original and creative approach towards their learning. This original approach to learning is linked to the **concrete experience style** of learning when learners utilise their daily experiences to learn new skills or competencies (Cherry, 2020) (Figure 5). Tomkins and Ulus (2015) argue that learners or individuals using this learning style tend to assess their concrete experiences with their actions taken through using their feelings and the constant monitoring of the activities that they have completed (Tomkins and Ulus, 2015). Furthermore,

learners who utilise this type of learning style can look at or observe (watch) things from a different perspective (Waxman, 2018). According to Cherry (2020), this type of learning style consists of two instructional techniques, which are usually used by individuals or learners using the diverging learning style. These two techniques are: a) using hands-on activities and b) the usage of a classic teacher or class lecture that highlights exactly how to use a system as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Cherry (2020) observes that learners or those who favour a divergent learning style typically take pleasure in activities like idea brainstorming. Cherry (2020) also emphasises that the learners or individuals using this style of learning value the feelings of others and also tend to take an interest in other people's way of thinking.

2.4.3.2 Assimilating (abstract conceptualization / reflective observation)

According to Cherry (2020), the **assimilating (abstract conceptualization / reflective observation)** learning style emphasises the importance of reasoning and thinking (Figure 5). Kurt (2020) explains that individuals or learners using this learning style can review facts and assess their experiences entirely. However, this process is subjective to different learners because some will modify their experiences and information to fit their pre-existing beliefs (Kurt, 2020). These types of learners are also associated with using a concise and logical approach towards challenges (Waxman, 2018).

Like the reflective observation stage of Kolb's Experiential Learning Process Cycle, an individual or learner can use this learning style to reflect on their experiences, utilise a logical approach to challenges, and improve their problem-solving skills (Waxman, 2018). According to Barnwell (2016), assimilating-type learners also consider ideas and the usage of concepts as more important than usage of the learning-by-doing approach (Figure 5). They tend to require sufficient and clear explanations of concepts and ideas by asking questions and sharing experiences with other learners (Cherry, 2020). Furthermore, Kurt (2020) indicates that learners using this form of learning enjoy designing and observing (watching) experiments and working on projects that they can start and finish. According to Cherry (2020), assimilators prefer using the following instructional techniques: a) independent and prepared exercises that learners can complete without too much supervision; b) the classic class lecture technique supported by audio and video presentations; and, lastly, c) demonstrations that utilise tutorials and provide answers.

2.4.3.3 Converging (abstract conceptualization / active experimentation)

Kurt (2020) indicates that the **converging (abstract conceptualization / active experimentation)** learning style highlights problem-solving as a very important approach

towards learning. The converging style of learning (Figure 5) complements the abstract conceptualization stage of learning when learners begin to classify abstract concepts or ideas into working solutions and conclusions that can be used to solve problems (Kolb, 2017). According to Kgwete and Malatji (2021), the learning conducted at university is anticipated to generate future workers with innovative and problem-solving skills. People who use this method of learning are able to make decisions and apply their concepts to novel situations in an efficient manner (Cherry, 2020). Furthermore, individuals or learners who utilise this style of learning tend to avoid people and their perceptions and rather opt to find technical or working solutions to challenges (Cherry, 2020). According to Cherry (2020), convergers prefer to use the following instrumental techniques: a) tasks that are usually done on electronic software; b) tasks that require interactive activities; and, lastly, c) worksheets or workbooks that can provide problem sets and accounts.

2.4.3.4 Accommodating (concrete experience / active experimentation)

According to Cherry (2020), the **accommodating (concrete experience / active experimentation)** style of learning (Figure 5) allows learners or individuals to be adaptive and intuitive towards their learning. In this learning style, individuals or learners prefer to use the method of trial and error to guide their experiences (Cherry, 2020). An approach that is linked to the active experimentation stage of learning is when learners or individuals insist on applying and testing their new knowledge to address challenges (McLeod, 2017). Individuals or learners using this style of learning prefer to discover answers to questions themselves. According to Kurt (2020), these individuals can alter their path based on their circumstances and possess good people skills. Kurt (2020) argues that learners or individuals using the accommodating style of learning prefer the following instructional techniques: a) tasks that are capable of promoting independence and self-discovery; b) activities that allow them to actively engage with one another; and, lastly, c) instructor support to provide a deeper understanding of what they are learning.

The above-mentioned learning styles can provide teachers and lecturers with the ability to identify their students' learning styles through classroom observations (Kurt, 2020). These unique learning styles also allow students to show their preferred style of learning through presentations, collaborative activities, and classroom discussions (Kurt, 2020). According to Cherry (2020), Kolb's four distinct learning styles include learning as a whole process in which all stages of learning can be included throughout the experience of learning. Kurt (2020) also indicates that it is important not to limit learning experiences to stages and that learners or individuals are provided the opportunity to decide on their own preferred Kolb

style of learning. The following section of this chapter will discuss the six key characteristics of Kolb's experiential learning theory.

2.5 Key Characteristics of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

According to Kurt (2020), experiential learning has key characteristics that can be used to make internship programmes more effective in addressing unemployment. One key characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory is the importance of learning and how it should be connected to work experience (Cherry, 2020). According to Muetzel (2015), experience can also create knowledge. This knowledge can be utilised to provide specific services and execute functions related to a specific job. However, Cherry (2020) argues that not all work experiences can create knowledge or teach a learner a new skill. More data need to be analysed with regards to the balance between acquiring theoretical knowledge and experiential learning. In an attempt by Kolb to integrate theoretical knowledge and experiential learning, six characteristics of experiential learning were identified (Kurt, 2020) (Figure 6).

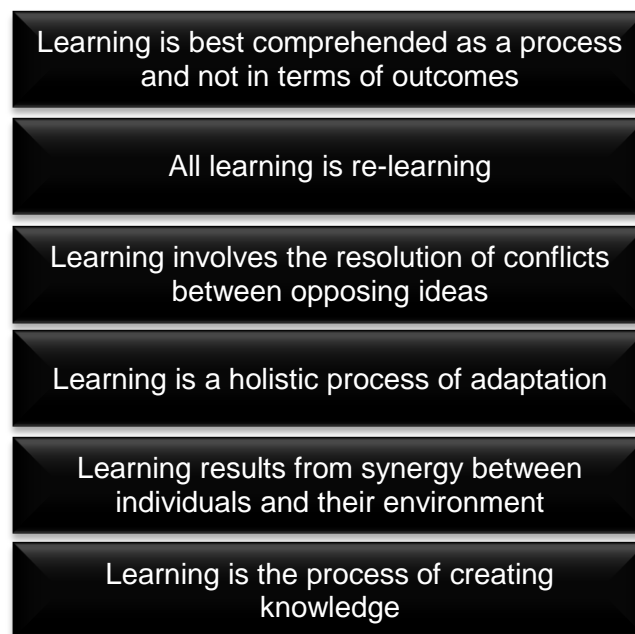


Figure 6: Key characteristics of Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kurt, 2020)

The first characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory is that **learning is best comprehended as a process and not in terms of outcomes** (Figure 6). This implies that an individual can learn a skill or complete tasks better when they take the necessary action to complete a specific task or job. Learning is, therefore, defined as a process that can bring change to a person's knowledge or behaviour (Kurt, 2020). Furthermore, Chapman (2013) indicates that behavioural change can create a process of learning when it aims to produce

results. Chapman (2013) also indicates that learning typically occurs through the connection of experiences in either the workplace or classroom. Cherry (2020) further reiterates that learning and education need to be conceived as the continuous restructuring of experience, in which the process and goal of education should be understood as the same thing.

The second characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory emphasises **that all learning is re-learning** (Figure 6). According to Kurt (2020), learning can be developed or created by an experience that a learner has encountered before, while a new experience can also create learning or a memory that is similar to an old experience (Cherry, 2020). These new ideas allow an individual or learners to construct their own knowledge based on their experiences (Kurt, 2020). The construction of new ideas based on experience promotes the key characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory, which suggests that learning should be connected to experience (Kurt, 2020).

The third characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory requires **the resolution of conflicts between opposing ideas** (Figure 6). In a study titled *The humanistic and constructivist approaches to education: Kolb's experiential learning theory and learning styles* by Kurt (2020), the author notes that disagreements and differences that can cause conflict are typical instruments that can be used to foster solving techniques in most learners or individuals. These tensions or differences are usually resolved through reflections, feelings, and thinking processes implemented by those involved in the conflict (Viemont, 2016). Furthermore, these reflections, feelings, and emotions can create an experience that can be used to reflect, reference, or regret.

According to Kurt (2020), the fourth characteristic, **learning is a holistic process of adaptation**, emphasises that learning should not just be seen as the result of cognitive thinking (Figure 6). It should also integrate other functions of human beings, such as their feelings, behaviour, and their perception of things. Kurt (2020) also indicates that learning encompasses other specialised adaptation models, such as problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making. According to Kgwete and Malatji (2021), problem-solving as a mechanism used by students to learn and adapt to new experiences can encourage the students to be self-reliant.

According to Cherry (2020), the fifth characteristic indicates that **learning results from synergy between individuals and their environment** (Figure 6). This characteristic articulates that learning can occur when an individual conceptualizes new experiences into an already existing concept or even accommodating already existing concepts into new experiences. This implies that a learner will reflect on what they already know and will use that knowledge to solve or perform a new task or function. However, Kurt (2020) believes

that learning is influenced by specific characteristics of a learner and their learning environment. According to Barnwell (2016), employers need to provide unemployed youth graduates with an enabling environment that will help facilitate the learning of competencies and skills through experiential learning programmes linked to skills acquisition, attitude development, and professional competencies needed in the actual work, such as soft skills. These soft skills include emotional intelligence, a team-player attitude that helps the new employee to work better with other employees, a growth mindset that demonstrates maturity, adaptability to a new environment and openness to feedback, and a good work ethic (Kurt, 2020).

The sixth characteristic of Kolb's experiential learning theory suggests that **learning is the process of creating knowledge** (Figure 6). According to Cherry (2020), The exchange of two types of knowledge is understood to constitute knowledge: (a) social knowledge, which is co-constructed in a socio-historical context; and (b) personal knowledge, which is defined as the learner's subjective experience (Cherry, 2020). According to Muetzel (2015), irrespective of experience being able to create knowledge (personal or social), this specific characteristic emphasises that experience is created from learning, which in essence will create knowledge that an unemployed youth graduate can use for future employment opportunities.

These six characteristics provide a deeper understanding of the learning process that unemployed youth graduates utilise to gain more knowledge and experience through experiential learning (Chapman, 2013). According to Marinas et al. (2018), experiential learning in an internship programme can provide unemployed youth graduates with the chance to participate actively in the educational process. It can also complement their formal university or college education, which usually provides theory and not practical work. The internship programme allows and benefits unemployed youth graduates who have enrolled in the programme to possess a competitive advantage over those without experience in an internship programme (Waxman, 2018). This advantage of acquiring experiential learning during the internship programme allows the unemployed youth graduates to understand how to conduct themselves in a work environment.

Marinas et al. (2018) indicate that experiential learning can also increase unemployed youth graduates' motivation to work and help them to retain information and knowledge for long-term usage. According to Marinas et al. (2018), experiential learning is the most effective way to develop unemployed youth graduates' learned theory and skills into required job-market-related competencies and the much-needed experience to reduce unemployment. The next section of this chapter will discuss the challenges affecting internship programmes.

2.6 Challenges Affecting Internship Programmes

In their article, Leary and Sherlock (2020) ask the question, service-learning or internship? According to the authors, the general overview of some industries suggests that an internship programme can help unemployed youth graduates to adapt to challenges when transitioning from university to a professional work environment. According to O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018), interns who can adapt to such challenges learn soft skills, which in turn makes them favourable for employment opportunities. Furthermore, Cherry (2020) indicates that interns who possess the ability to manage work environment challenges have a much greater chance at employment opportunities after acquiring experience.

According to Hora et al. (2021), potential challenges must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of internship programmes on an organisation and the interns or individuals. A challenge that has been identified to have a significant impact on internship programmes is late payments of stipends resulting in unpaid internships. According to Schwartz (2013), unpaid internships are assumed to create a negative learning attitude that hinders the opportunity of learning to take place. An unpaid internship is a challenge that affects interns or individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds, who find it difficult to access their workplace due to transportation that needs to be paid (Zehr, 2016). According to Cherry (2020), this challenge further increases the division between interns or people with lower socioeconomic status and those with higher socioeconomic status.

According to Schwartz (2013), another pressing challenge in internship programmes is the need for more employment policies and benefits for interns or individuals. A study conducted by Zehr (2016) shows that interns in Canada in the early 2000s were not eligible to receive any benefits or protection from sexual harassment in the workplace due to a lack of employment policies protecting their human rights in the workplace. Situations such as this lead to the identification of more challenges affecting interns or individuals during their internship programme (O'Higgins and Pinedo, 2018). Furthermore, Cherry (2020) indicates that interns or individuals leaving institutions of higher learning and seeking employment after graduation are usually forced to accept any work opportunities they can find, irrespective of whether they have protective employment policies. However, countries such as the USA, Canada, and Poland have developed policies that are utilised to regulate their internship programmes (ILO, 2015).

The misconception that employers treat interns as cheap labour is another challenge affecting internship programmes, as identified by O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018). Barnwell (2016) indicates that some employers displace permanent workers to use interns to save wages and salary costs. According to Cherry (2020), an internship programme can improve

an intern or individual's soft skills, such as problem-solving, listening, communication, decision-making, and even analytical skills. According to Zehr (2016), some responsibilities assigned to interns consist of clerical responsibilities, which provide very little or no skills development to them. Inasmuch as the internship programme is designed to attract new talent and introduce it to the work environment, the programme must be equally structured in a manner that promotes the absorption and retention of the developed human capital skills.

Zehr (2016) conducted a study on "*student internship experiences and learning opportunities*". In the study, the author identifies another common challenge affecting internship programmes as student dissatisfaction during the duration of the programme. According to Zehr (2016), interns begin to develop a negative attitude towards their work when their initial expectation of the programme is not met. According to Hora et al. (2021), if interns fail to deal with these challenges, their attitude may result in anger, frustration, and possible depression. The dissatisfaction of the interns, according to Barnwell (2016), is due to the challenge that most internship programmes do not provide interns with pre-training. Furthermore, Zehr (2016) indicates that the lack of pre-training for interns takes away their opportunity to reflect on what their role will be and what challenges they may encounter during the duration of the programme.

In a study conducted by Macharia (2023), in Kenya, one of the primary contributors to the high levels of unemployment among youth graduates in the country is the lack of experience of these graduates leaving institutions of higher learning after the acquisition of their qualification. The situation is not made any easier, since the labour market and employers in Kenya constantly demand candidates to possess experience as a minimum requirement for employment (Macharia, 2023). According to Cherry (2020), unemployed youth graduates have a far better chance at employment opportunities when they have received the necessary experience to merge their acquired knowledge with experiential learning in their chosen field of study.

In a study conducted by Cowan (2015) on the working memory that underpins cognitive development, learning, and education, the author identifies another challenge affecting interns or unemployed youth graduates on internship programmes. This challenge relates to the overwhelming amount of work and new information they need to recall. According to Barnwell (2016), most interns are afraid to ask questions and need to remember things and make mistakes. During performance assessment of the interns or individuals, those who seem to be uncomfortable asking questions are usually identified as candidates who will not be good communicators in the workplace (Cowan, 2015). This challenge requires interns to learn in the best method that is suitable for them and understand that they will make

mistakes, which is part of the learning process, and therefore learn from them and provide effective communication when faced with challenges (Barnwell, 2016).

2.7 Concluding Remarks

According to O'Higgins and Pinedo (2018), the reasonable work experience provided to unskilled and unemployed individuals can help provide practical work experience and improve their employability skills in the labour market. Leary and Sherlock (2020) also indicate that the practical work experience provided to interns through an internship programme can help enhance their learning ability and understanding of work-related functions and workplace challenges. According to Barnwell (2016), unemployed youth graduates must be conscious of the ever-changing workplace environment, which in turn requires an ever-changing workforce (Cowan, 2015). Employers are challenged with a demanding workload and workforce. Barnwell (2016) articulates that employers continuously seek unemployed youth graduates with more than just theoretical knowledge. Kurt (2020) further suggests that potential employers are seeking young, unemployed graduates with the soft skills needed in the workplace and who are prepared for the workforce.

Internship programmes have been identified as a tool that can help equip unemployed youth graduates with better knowledge and practical understanding of a practical work environment through experiential learning (Cherry, 2020). The practical experience given to unemployed youth graduates is a strategy to eradicate the high levels of unemployment among these graduates. Furthermore, the internship programme can assist unemployed youth graduates with the opportunity to forge beneficial relationships and networking opportunities that can help improve their employment and career prospects (Waxman, 2018).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of SA Public Service internship programmes. The overview will assist the researcher in acquiring a better understanding of the internship programme as a strategy to transfer knowledge and experience and address the growing unemployment rate in SA. The chapter will discuss the legislative frameworks and policy guidelines for implementing the internship programmes in the SA Public Service. These legislations and policies help inform and develop the PSIP framework and its implementation in the SA Public Service.

The chapter will also identify some of the institutions supporting the implementation of the PSIP in SA since 1994. This includes institutions such as the DPSA, SETAs, and the National School of Government (NSG). These institutions also assist in implementing the PSIP in the SA public service. The chapter will also discuss two training programmes used to transfer skills to unemployed youth graduates. These training programmes include BB2E and the new Cadet Programme.

Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the skills required in 21st-century public service. These include conceptual skills, interpersonal skills, and technical skills. The three skills are relevant to this study based on their impact and influence on unemployed youth graduates and the public service. The chapter will also focus on the 21st-century challenges affecting the successful implementation of internship programmes in the SA public service, mainly extracting from SA scholars. The chapter will end with a conclusion.

3.2 Overview of Internship Programmes in the South African Public Service

In a study conducted by Malambe (2016), internship programmes in SA were approved and adopted by the SA Government as an HRD strategy for the public service, in 2002. This HRD strategy utilised internship programmes to provide continuous development to SA citizens through practical programmes in the labour market (Malambe, 2016). Pietersen and Malatji, (2022), further indicates that the internship programmes also aimed to prepare unemployed youth graduates for the formal job market. Furthermore, Graham and Patel (2020) explain that the private sector also uses this strategy to address the growing unemployment rate in SA.

According to Pietersen and Malatji, (2022), the PSIP was also introduced by the SA Government as a strategy to address the growing rate of unemployment, especially among women and the youth. To combat this issue of unemployment, the SA Government introduced the PSIP in 2002, as a tool to attract unemployed youth graduates to the public service to gain experience and develop skills in the public service. Honwani (2018) claims that the PSIP, as a strategy, introduced learnerships, apprenticeships, and artisan programmes as a mechanism to redress the skills shortage in the SA public service and reduce unemployment among SA citizens. According to the DPSA (South Africa, 2006), the PSIP experience allows unemployed youth graduates to test their skills and attitude development in a practical work environment.

According to Malambe (2016), the PSIP in SA has the ability to successfully transfer knowledge and experience to unemployed youth graduates. The transfer of experience assists unemployed youth graduates in executing tasks and duties effectively without induction, supervision, or orientation programmes when officially employed. Pietersen and Malatji, (2022), further indicates that the PSIP is unique in its implementation and benefit to organisations. The PSIP enables an organisation or department to evaluate any unemployed youth graduate's potential performance in a realistic environment compared to the traditional formal interview format. The next section of this chapter will discuss the legislation supporting the PSIP.

3.3 Legislation and Policies Supporting the PSIP since 1994

According to Hills (2017), legislation in SA is better understood or interpreted as law. The author defines law or legislation as any written statute enacted by legislative bodies with the authority to make laws (Hills, 2017). Munzhedzi (2016) defines legislation as the function of government that typically makes laws for a country on any specific subject or matter. The following legislation and policies help inform the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service. These include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996), the White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service (South Africa, 1997), the 2016 Public Service Regulations (PSR) (South Africa, 2016), the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998) (South Africa, 1998), the Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999) (South Africa, 1999), Guidelines for the Implementation of the Policy on Internship Programmes of 2006, Batho Pele principles, DPSA Policy, and the 2019 National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) for SA.

3.3.1 The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)

Chapter 10 (Section 195) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996) (South Africa, 1996) provides some critical prescribed basic principles and values governing public administration, the PSIP, and its governance in the public service. The Constitution further explains what is required and also describes how institutions supporting democracy (ISDs), also known as chapters 9 and 10 bodies, help foster a culture of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and responsibility in the public service. These elements are fundamental to achieving a sound developmental state in SA (South Africa, 1996). These ISD bodies include the Public Service Commission, the Public Protector, and the Auditor-General (Motene, 2017). These bodies are expected to operate independently to help foster effective monitoring and report directly to Parliament. The information gathered by these institutions is usually placed within the public domain for anyone to access and view. According to Munzhedzi (2016), this form of transparency is essential to foster accountability in the SA public service, an element that is required in the PSIP. The level of transparency provided by these institutions promotes the key objective of the government, which is to place people first, also known as Batho Pele.

3.3.2 The White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service

The White Paper on Human Resource Management (South Africa, 1997) was created to provide a public service that is professional, impartial, and representative of all sections of society. The White Paper on Human Resource Management helps inform the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service and its human resource management practices (Mabope, 2018). Furthermore, Mabope (2018) indicates that developing human resource practices can help create and support strategies that the public service can use to accelerate economic and social transformation.

According to Govender (2019), to meet staffing needs, all national departments and provincial administrations must create integrated human resource strategies with their operational and strategic plans. The particular employment equity goals and targets required for a representative workforce should be included in these strategies. Furthermore, Mabope (2018) suggests that public service departments' human resource plans should be visible when hiring interns and meeting all of their needs in terms of development. Mabope (2018) also indicates that, among other things, the human resource plan should ensure that an organisation supports its HRD. According to Govender (2019), if the departments properly and appropriately plan for the career and development needs of their interns, they will be able to learn and grow more quickly.

3.3.3 Public Service Regulations of 2016

The 2016 PSR (South Africa, 2016), as amended from the 2001 PSR (South Africa, 2001), serve the purpose of providing regulations that control the conditions of employment in the public service, the terms of office, the code of conduct, as well as career planning for public service officials (Pietersen and Malatji, 2022). According to Shilumani (2020), the PSR apply to all individuals employed by state institutions and departments. Kunene (2020) further indicates that the PSR also provide regulations for appointing officials in the public service, as well as for their required training needs. According to Mabope (2018), the primary goal of an internship programme is to provide meaningful, practical work experience, which can be attained through the provision of training programmes relevant to the interns' needs. Therefore, the PSR should clearly outline how the interns' training needs will be catered for and met.

Furthermore, Motene (2017) emphasises that under Regulation III of the 2016 PSR, the state and its executive authority should plan with available budgeted funds to provide recruitment, retention, training, and development of current and future human resources in the public service. This rule implies that money needs to be set aside for the interns' training requirements (Mabope, 2018). Strategies should also be in place to keep interns in the department for as long as they demonstrate their competence (Motene, 2017). The department's training plan should also take into account the training requirements of its human capital, which is brought in to obtain experiential training following the completion of their academic degree (Pietersen and Malatji, 2022),

3.3.4 Skills Development Act (97 of 1998)

Legislation informing the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service is the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998). The introduction of the Skills Development Act brought changes that influenced education and training in SA (Malambe, 2016). According to Genesis (2016), the drafting of the Skills Development Act by the DoL in SA was a form of mechanism used by the department to establish an enabling environment capable of improving the working skills of the SA labour force. The Skills Development Act is utilised to devise strategies to develop and improve the working skills of citizens in SA (Malambe, 2016).

Chapter 1 of the Skills Development Act identifies four key strategies for skills development in SA. The first strategy is the introduction of new institutional frameworks that will be used to determine and implement national and workplace skills development strategies. The second strategy is to provide more training and development programmes, with the third being to provide learnerships as an opportunity to first job seekers. The final strategy is to establish a

National Skills Authority (NSA) and SETAs, with the aim here to improve the standard of training and quality assurance in SA.

Malambe (2016) articulates that the Skills Development Act additionally sought to boost the amount of money spent on training and education in the workforce while enhancing the return on investment for businesses. Additionally, the act sought to incentivize employers to use the workplace as a dynamic learning environment and to give newly hired employees the chance to gain work experience via education. This act's Section 2(1)(c) encourages employers to hire people who are having trouble finding work and to give opportunities for newcomers to the workforce to obtain work experience (Malambe, 2016). The PSIP should therefore devise a plan to help recent graduates who don't have the experiential training that employers demand to land jobs (Malambe, 2016). Section 25 of the Skills Development Act stipulates that the terms and conditions in accordance with an agreement made between the learner and the employer, the PSIP should require an employer to give its learners the required practical experience and to release the learners to attend the required training programmes (Genesis, 2016).

3.3.5 Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999)

Another legislative framework informing the PSIP framework on its development and implementation to promote and accelerate skills development in SA, is the Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999) (South Africa, 1999). The SA Government introduced the Skills Development Levies Act in 1999 as a mechanism to address the skills-deficit challenge in the public service. The act introduced legislation that required every employed citizen in SA to pay a skills levy that was aimed towards raising capital to support the development of critical skills, social development programmes, and basic adult education (Genesis, 2016). According to Genesis (2016), each employed citizen in SA contributes 1% of their total income paid by their employer to the skills development levy in SA. This act promotes new approaches that can be used to develop training and public servant skills for an envisioned capable and developmental state.

These above-mentioned legislations act as regulatory legislations which are put in place by the government and other entities to ensure that all specifications, needs, and categories of unemployed youth graduates in communities have adequate access to employment. Initiatives such as the PSIP are used to address unemployed youth graduate needs. These initiatives are conducted and delivered through programmatic interventions such as the PSIP, which serve as an opportunity to transfer skills development to unemployed youth graduates in various communities. In addition to these acts, relevant policies supporting the PSIP also need to be acknowledged and will be discussed briefly.

In a study conducted by Hills (2017) on the legal frameworks in SA, the author defines policy as an organisation's declared position on either an internal or external challenge. According to Tebele (2016), policy is defined as the formulation of rules, norms, and guidelines intended to govern certain decisions and actions of citizens and governments. Mabope (2018) defines policy as a document based on the government's political priorities, which are usually outlined in the governing party's manifesto as part of its programme of action. Some policies in SA that support the implementation of internship programmes in SA are subsequently discussed.

3.3.6 Guidelines for the Implementation of the Policy on Internship Programme of 2006

The purpose of this guiding policy of 2006 on the internship programmes is to provide opportunities for students (unemployed youth graduates) to enrol in an internship programme that can help make them competent for employment (Kruger, 2020). This policy programme helps inform the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service. The 2006 internship programme policy also aims to assist PSIP implementers in aligning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the implementation of the policy directives of the internship programme in the public service (Kunene, 2020). According to Kruger (2020), the guiding policy on internship programmes aims to build and encourage sustainable partnerships between local government councils and local business leaders to address the shortage of rare skills in SA local communities. According to Mabope (2018), the policy also aims to enhance unemployed youth graduates' ability to link their theoretical knowledge and skills with the practical application of a natural work environment.

3.3.7 Batho Pele principles

Another policy and legislative framework informing the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service are the Batho Pele principles. The Batho Pele principles in the SA public service are the continued effort to improve the lives of the people of SA through a transformed public service. The SA public service is accountable, responsive to the needs of all members of society, representative, coherent, transparent, efficient, and effective (South Africa, 1995). According to Mehlaphe (2018), this improvement in people's lives is advocated by the PSIP, which provides an opportunity to unemployed youth graduates to gain relevant skills needed in the public service through an internship programme in the SA public service.

3.3.8 Department of Public Service and Administration Policy

For institutions such as the DPSA, an internship programme is a public service graduate work experience programme that is utilised to target unemployed youth graduates. The DPSA (South Africa, 2006) indicates that the PSIP is responsible for providing unemployed youth graduates with work experience or even an opportunity to practise the work skills they have studied and will practise in the future. Different kinds of internship programmes exist for different fields of study, such as medicine, social work, engineering, and even public administration and management. According to the DPSA (South Africa, 2006), internship programmes can also benefit the employer by providing the opportunity to understand unemployed youth graduates and establish whether they are employable to the organisation or not (Kruger, 2020).

The DPSA (South Africa, 2006) explains in detail the planning framework that is supposed to be utilised for the PSIP. According to Mehlape (2018), the planning framework for the PSIP should include the following seven elements and characteristics. First, the planning process of the PSIP should articulate and determine which of the Public Service department's strategic occupational needs the internship programme can contribute to. Second, the department should investigate whether it has sufficient resources at its disposal to implement the PSIP. Third, the employer should establish the contents that will be used in the programme. Fourth, clear learning content needs to be established to help measure the effectiveness of the PSIP to the unemployed youth graduates and the employer. Fifth, it is also essential to consider the appropriate duration of the PSIP, with the maximum duration of the programme indicated by the DPSA (South Africa, 2006) to be approximately 24 months. Sixth, the department should establish some criteria that it will be used to measure performance in order to select and retain unemployed youth graduates for contractual or permanent employment. Lastly, the department or employer needs to identify or create performance appraisal criteria that will be used to acknowledge successful unemployed youth graduates in the programme.

3.3.9 The 2019 National Skills Development Strategy

The 2019 NSDS is a policy document outlining all national priorities and strategies regarding skills development in SA. The NSDS helps inform the PSIP framework on its development and implementation in the SA public service (Gxaxu, 2019). The NSDS requires all SA citizens to participate in the country's social and economic development. The NSDS is characterised by certain guiding principles, which include lifelong learning; the promotion of equity, partnerships, and cooperation; demand-led effectiveness and efficiency; and, lastly, flexibility. Furthermore, Gxavu (2019) indicates that the NSDS has five objectives. The NSDS

seeks to: 1) advance employment and sustainable livelihoods via skill development; 2) enhance the calibre and applicability of skill development; 3) support and encourage recent graduates to engage in workplace training and integrated learning programmes in order to gain new critical skills; 4) advance and expedite high-quality training for tenured staff members; and 5) give priority to the transfer of critical skills in order to advance sustainable development and service delivery. These five objectives serve to assist the government's ambition to transform education and training in SA radically.

3.3.10 2030 National Development Plan (Vision 2030)

The SA National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 aims to help reduce the rapid increase of unemployed youth graduates through professionalising the public service. The NDP articulates that, to reduce unemployment in SA and build a professional public service, the SA Government should make the public service and local government a career of choice for unemployed youth graduates. This requires the public service and local government in SA to create graduate recruitment programmes that provide skills development initiatives and assessments that will be used to transfer skills and experiential learning in the public service work environment. Furthermore, the NDP Vision 2030 requires the public service staff at all levels of government to provide guidance and support to unemployed youth graduates as a form of assessment to determine whether learning and the transfer of skills are taking place or not. In Chapter 9 of the NDP, the improvement of education and innovation and training are identified as core elements that can be used to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in SA (Mpya, 2020). According to Cwele (2019), the provision of quality education and training can encourage technology shifts and drive innovation that is needed to solve present-day challenges confronting SA communities. These services need to be flexible in order to cater and be responsive to the needs of children, families, and communities (Mpya, 2020).

The NDP Vision 2030 therefore aims to address the challenge of unemployment among youth graduates through skills development programmes such as internships and learnerships in the public service (Cwele, 2019). Skills development remains an important weapon of the SA Public Service to combat unemployment in order to create employability and inspire sustainable development (Malambe, 2016). The PSIP is essential for skills development and the extermination of unemployment among unemployed youth graduates.

3.3.11 National Youth Policy 2020

According to Mthlane (2020), the National Youth Policy (NYP) is a strategy developed by the new Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) in the Office of the Presidency to respond to challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic. In their study titled *National Youth Policy, 2020–2030: A decade to accelerate positive youth development*

outcomes, Makoae et al. (2021), the article insists that, in order to achieve positive youth development outcomes for young people in all three areas of the SA Government by 2030, the 2030 NYP is defined as a cross-sectoral policy strategy. The policy aims to prioritise government resources to incorporate and promote youth development, promote youth education in scarce skills, accelerate economic emancipation, and address physical and mental health challenges confronting youth in SA (Mthlane, 2020).

In another study conducted by Engelbrecht et al. (2017), the authors also indicate that the NYP aims to provide opportunities to youth in rural and marginalised areas to access employment. According to Mthlane (2020), these opportunities include access to government-funded internship programmes and artisan and learnership programmes. The next section will examine the institutions supporting the PSIP and its implementation in SA.

3.4 Institutions Supporting Public Service Internship Programmes since 1994

This section identifies and discusses institutions that have been supporting the implementation of the PSIP in SA.

3.4.1 Department of Public Administration in South Africa

The DPSA is a government department responsible for establishing norms and standards relating to labour relations, the health and wellness of employees, the conditions of service (employment), and other employment-related practices for all government employees (South Africa, 1996). The DPSA has developed and implemented internship programmes for various government departments to adhere to the various legislative frameworks relating to SA's HRD initiatives, including an internship framework and a scarce skills strategy (Takawira, 2019).

The DPSA has taken the initiative to incorporate internship programmes as a strategy to provide newly graduated students and those working towards completing their studies an opportunity to access and gain exposure to the working environment and experiential learning (Malambe, 2016). According to the step-by-step guidelines on internship programmes in SA by the DPSA (South Africa, 2006), public service departments implementing the PSIP need to ensure that all unemployed youth graduate interns participate in formally structured skills development programmes. According to Takawira (2019), the DPSA, as one of SA's largest employers, stands to benefit directly from the PSIP, as it will improve the quality of the skills pool from which it can recruit future employees. Furthermore, Malambe (2016) concludes that positive internship experiences can help create future employees who are dedicated and service-oriented.

3.4.2 Sector Education and Training Authorities

SETAs, which consist of 21 economic-specific sectors, were established in March 2000. Legislative frameworks that support the SETAs include the Skills Development Act (97 of 1998) and the Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999), which act as crucial implementation and change agents of the NSDS. Malambe (2016) indicates that the SETAs were established to act as facilitation agents that need to encourage participation and action in economic sectors that they represent and serve. The SETAs are used in SA to help facilitate investment and development of skills through a levy grant system that encourages and promotes training within the formal employment sector (Takawira, 2019). According to Kunene (2020), SETAs also establish learning frameworks through skills development programmes such as internships, learnerships, and other artisan programmes. The SETAs also work in collaboration with Education and Training Quality Authorities (ETQAs), which act as sector-specific regulatory bodies that monitor the quality and accreditation of skills development institutions (Mabeba, 2019).

3.4.3 National School of Government

The NSG is a government training institution that the SA Government tasks to build the human capital capacity of the SA public service as part of the SA Government's developmental agenda. As an institution supporting the implementation of the PSIP, the NSG was established based on the fact that a capable SA public service is an important component that can help various sectors of the economy and society to flourish (Kgwete and Malatji, 2021). The NSG (2020) claims that the foundation of the organisation is compliant with the South African Constitution, which ideally mandates public service in the country to advance the progressive realisation of human rights and community development.

The NSG also helps public organisations institutionalise efficient and trustworthy learning to help them consistently improve their results and impact in SA communities (Kgwete and Malatji, 2021). The internship programme of the NSG aims to provide affordable access to qualified training interventions and the creation of collaborative and integrated network training (Moodley, 2022). The NSG annually places unemployed youth graduates in internship and training programmes as part of their contribution towards the students' skills development and acquisition of workplace experience.

According to Anjum (2020), the training programmes offered to unemployed youth graduates on the internship programme by the NSG help to provide first-hand experience on how work is executed and shared to produce an objective in the public service. Anjum (2020) further articulates that the NSG's approach to the shared learning and shared doing experience deeply impacts unemployed youth graduates who may consider future employment in the

public service. Furthermore, the shared learning-and-doing experience assists unemployed youth graduates to understand better where their education fits into the real world and how it can be applied in the public service (Anjum, 2020). The PSIP includes training programmes such as BB2E and the new Cadet Programme (NSG, 2022).

3.4.3.1 *Breaking the Barriers to Entry*

BB2E is a training programme initiative implemented by the NSG in partnership with the European Union (EU) to help skill unemployed youth graduates and orient them on how the public service is organised and how it functions (NSG, 2020). This particular training programme was used as an initiative to prepare unemployed youth graduates to acquire future employment opportunities in the public service of SA. According to the NSG (2020), the BB2E programme outcomes aim to equip unemployed youth graduates with knowledge in public administration and public services. In other words, this specific training programme is not only aimed at unemployed youth graduates with a public administration and management qualification or diploma but also consider all unemployed youth graduates in different fields of study. Furthermore, BB2E provides unemployed youth graduates with knowledge of how all the spheres of government operate as well as government entities such as Eskom (NSG, 2020).

According to the NSG (2020), BB2E as a training intervention existed due to the NSG and the EU public service training and capacity building programme initiative. Since 2010, the BB2E training programme has facilitated a total of 3440 unemployed youth graduates residing in different provinces across SA, including Limpopo, Free State, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng (NSG, 2020). According to the NSG (2020), the BB2E training intervention is also utilised to develop a tracking system that allows the NSG to report on the successful absorption of youth into the public service.

The NSG anticipated that the unemployed youth graduates might not be absorbed into the respective Public Service departments due to financial implications and a lack of funded vacant posts. Therefore, the programme was restructured in 2016 to enable and strengthen citizens' capacity for good citizenship and respect for the government and enhance the employment potential of unemployed youth graduates (NSG, 2020). The restructuring included integrating 23 NSG skill objectives into a 5-day training programme.

3.4.3.2 *Cadet Programme*

In June 2022, the NSG, in partnership with the DPSA, introduced a new training programme known as the Cadet Programme. According to the NSG (2022), the Cadet Programme is a training programme initiated in the National Youth Month and is aimed at preparing

unemployed youth graduates for careers in the public service and the professional work environment in general. According to Moodley (2022), the Cadet Programme also aims to provide unemployed youth graduates with knowledge and insight into social justice philosophies, participatory democracy, and adopting a citizen-centred approach to service delivery. This training programme targets young people, preferably those who already possess an NQF Level 7 qualification and would like to enhance and develop those qualifications through meaningful and structured workplace experience (Moodley, 2022).

The Cadet Programme consists of four modules, namely The Constitution and the Administration of the Public Sector, Ethics in the Public Service, Writing for Government, and Personal Mastery (NSG, 2022). According to Moodley (2022), the current Minister of the DPISA emphasised that the Personal Mastery component is critical to the programme, because it addresses other general employability skills that are required in both public and private sector workplaces. The Personal Mastery training intervention provides general employability abilities like communication, networking, emotional intelligence, self-management, and critical thinking and decision-making (NSG, 2022). The 18-month-long Cadet Programme seeks to deepen the understanding of unemployed youth graduates about the SA Public Service, covering issues in the broader social environment. According to the NSG (2022), all unemployed youth graduates who have completed this training programme should demonstrate the ethos and values required of good public servants.

The Cadet Programme furthermore focuses on providing unemployed youth graduates with skills. These skills include understanding the core functions of the department or organisation where the graduate is completing their internship programme and demonstrating the delivery of professional, ethical, efficient, and effective public services to South Africans. Another skill deals with solving problems and finding new innovative solutions towards challenges faced in the workplace. The Cadet Programme also aims to establish and maintain professional networks and to demonstrate high levels of proficiency in terms of emotional intelligence and effective communication (NSG, 2022).

According to Anjum (2020), the two training programmes offered to unemployed youth graduates on the NSG internship programme can provide growth and experience that complement their existing qualifications. Furthermore, the experience provided by the programmes can positively influence the programme participants' knowledge and skills in preparation for the formal job market (Moodley, 2022). Leary and Sherlock (2020) further indicate that the growth provided by training programmes can transfer skills and experience that can be used to address the scarce and critical skills deficit in the public service. The next

section of this chapter will look into the skills needed by unemployed youth graduates in the 21st century.

3.5 Twenty-First-Century Skills for Public Service Delivery

According to Mabeba (2019), millions of unemployed youth graduates continue to feel excluded from participating in and benefitting from the country's economic activities and the functions of the public service. As a result, many of these unemployed youth graduates feel marginalised and discouraged from developing new skills due to SA's high youth unemployment rate. This, therefore, indicates that most unemployed youth graduates are not accessing and gaining any new skills or experience needed to foster economic prosperity and entry into the public service. In the SA public service, the lack of skills and experience of these unemployed youth graduates has made prospective public service supervisors hesitant to hire them due to the required experience and skills needed in the public service.

The skills deficit in the SA public service is a significant challenge (Malambe, 2016). This challenge requires the SA Government to develop public servants' skills to execute and implement programmes to improve the country's socio-economic challenges (Mchunu and Mutereko, 2020). According to Moodley (2022), a well-structured internship programme can provide meaningful knowledge synthesis and skills in an environment that is naturally viewed as foreign by unemployed youth graduates. The knowledge acquired on an internship programme by unemployed youth graduates can be used to actively engage learning and complement their formal university or college education.

According to Takawira (2019), the shortage of skills in the SA public service has the potential of creating a serious problem for SA as a developing country. Therefore, for SA to deliver effective and efficient goods and services to citizens, public and private sector employees must possess much-needed skills and knowledge to develop their organisations and career (Moodley, 2022). In other words, the public service requires public servants to be trained in skills that will help enhance their work performance. Furthermore, regarding analysing what set of skills employers demand from potential employees, Malambe (2016) indicates that employers require three specific skills to determine a potential employable employee, namely conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills.

3.5.1 Conceptual skills

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023d), *conceptual skills* relate to a person's capacity for both abstract and sophisticated thought as well as their ability to think creatively about concepts. Employees with conceptual skills are better able to critically analyse and interpret abstract and complex concepts. According to Malambe (2016), employers evaluate

whether a potential employee's mental ability is stable enough to understand and view an organisation and its departments holistically. This comprehensive organisational overview gives prospective employees the tools they need to think strategically and make appropriate plans while working for an organisation.

These skills require potential employees to not just perform their duties effectively but also possess the ability to reason very well. According to Malambe (2016), these skills can be divided into two categories. One of these categories is the task management skill, which is used to help potential employees manage and prioritise each task in the workplace. The second category is the contingency management skill, which refers to the ability and capability of potential employees to recognise and manage irregularities in the work environment.

3.5.2 Interpersonal skills

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023e), *interpersonal skills* can be characterised as the capacity or aptitude that enables a person to collaborate well with others. The possession of interpersonal skills necessitates the capacity to communicate, solve issues, and inspire others to collaborate. As a skill, the ability to effectively communicate provides employers with employees who can exchange interpersonal information. According to Malambe (2016), employees who possess this type of skill have the ability to create a pleasant and creative working environment capable of harnessing talent and increasing productivity in the work environment. Furthermore, Johnson (2018) argues that interpersonal skills can help new employees cope and grow their knowledge in a new environment.

3.5.3 Technical skills

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023f) refers to *technical skills* as the ability of the individual to utilise their knowledge to achieve specific objectives. In other words, technical aspects of specific occupations in the public service require potential employees to possess this task skill to manage and remedy challenges in the public service work environment. According to Malambe (2016), employees with technical skill competencies can contribute to the successful operation of the organisation. Some technical skills, such as those possessed by professionals in public administration, education, and health, are essential for the survival of those particular professions.

According to Malambe (2016), middle, senior, and executive management in the public service require more employees with conceptual skills to be recruited to assist the public service with strategic planning for the future. However, Kunene (2020) indicates that the senior and executive management of the public service need to possess interpersonal,

conceptual, and technical skills to motivate and encourage their subordinates to perform at the best of their ability. Possession of these three skills by middle, senior, and executive management as supervisors assists organisations to plan and provide guidance to subordinates. Furthermore, these skills can be transferred to unemployed youth graduates to help guide their career development within a specific organisation, such as those in the public service. The public service requires public servants to possess these skills to deliver effective and efficient goods and services to citizens.

On this basis, unemployed youth graduates should be allowed to be placed on an internship programme as part of skills development initiatives or programmes to capacitate and prepare them for future work environments (Motene, 2017). These skills development initiatives or programmes are intended to enhance productivity, capability, and the individual's competitive potential by providing new skills. Skills development programmes in the public service, such as internship programmes, can positively impact the development of the country and its citizens. The next section of this chapter will cover the respective challenges affecting internship programmes in the SA public service.

3.6 Challenges Affecting South African Internship Programmes

In a study conducted by Mabebe (2019), the author indicates that internship programmes are implemented in the SA public service as a strategy to provide unemployed youth graduates with meaningful work experience, career development, and knowledge about how the public service works. However, Kunene (2020) indicates that various challenges continue to impact the effective implementation of the PSIP in SA. Mehlape (2018) further claims that for these challenges to be effectively addressed, they first need to be identified and acknowledged. This section discusses the challenges identified as issues currently confronting the PSIP in the SA public service.

3.6.1 Lack of effective mentoring and coaching

According to Mcilongo and Strydom (2021), supervisors have indicated lack of training as a challenge to public servants to effectively mentor and monitor unemployed youth graduates on the internship programmes. In other words, the designated mentors for unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP provide no motivation or constructive support for the unemployed youth graduates regarding performance management and career development. According to Motene (2017), the PSIP should provide performance rewards to motivate unemployed youth graduates and mentors to effectively work as a team to achieve performance targets. Gxavu (2019) indicates that it is essential for mentors and unemployed youth graduates to begin to

work as a team to eliminate the absence of performance monitoring and appraisal in the PSIP and its implementation.

3.6.2 Cheap labour

Another challenge affecting SA internship programmes, identified by Mehlape (2018), relates to the misconception that the PSIP provides cheap labour to employers for the duration of the interns' internship. According to Mabeba (2019), unemployed youth graduates are traumatised by the small stipend they receive during the programme. Other interns remain devastated by unpaid stipends from employers or service providers in the private sector (Mehlape, 2018). Motene (2017) clearly articulates that, even though the internship framework model for both private and public sectors may be identical, the remuneration provided to unemployed youth graduates as interns is different. According to Tom (2019), private sector internship programmes seem to compensate unemployed youth graduate interns an additional R4000 compared to the R3500 or R4000 provided by internship programmes in the SA public service. This indicates a clear imbalance between internship programmes in the private sector and those in the public service.

3.6.3 Late stipend payment

According to Mabebe (2019), late payments of intern stipends is another challenge faced by participants in the PSIP. Corruption and maladministration by employers and those tasked with payments of stipends often result in fruitless and wasteful expenditure, leading to most interns receiving their stipends either late or never at all (Mabebe, 2019). Minimal effort is made to address this challenge, as some interns never receive their back-dated payments. Thus, they find it difficult to continue working or even pay their bills, as most are renting and required to travel to and from the workplace.

3.7 Critical review of the statutory, legislative and regulatory framework for internship programmes and the institutions supporting internship programmes

Legislation is crucial in regulating that internship programmes in the SA public service provide fair treatment, prevent exploitation, and uphold legal standards when working with interns in the respective departments. It sets out clear guidelines on the working conditions, compensation, and the rights of interns, protecting them from potential abuse in the public service working environment. Legislation also promotes diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities within the internships. By providing a legal framework, the SA government helps departments and organisations to maintain ethical practices and contributes to a positive, transparent and accountable environment for both interns and employers.

Institutions that help support the implementation of internship programmes play a vital role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme in order to address unemployment in SA and the alignment with educational and professional goals set by the NDP vision 2030. These institutions contribute to quality control by assessing whether the internship programme meets the educational standards and provide valuable learning experiences to the graduate interns serving on the PSIP. These institutions can however, improve their monitoring of the PSIP. The improvement in monitoring will help to identify and address any issues effectively, and help departments to comply with regulations and ethical standards. An improvement in evaluation of the PSIP can help to optimize the impact of the internship programme on both the interns and the organizations involved. Institutions serve as guardians of quality, fostering a symbiotic relationship between academic learning and real-world experiences.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

SA's experience of the PSIP is highly guided by various codes of conduct, such as the Batho Pele principles and even the 1996 South African Constitution (Mehlape, 2018). These written legislatures provide a better understanding of how the public service ought to behave and conduct itself in terms of building a developmental state and sustainable service delivery. Central to the thrust of service delivery and the PSIP in SA is the South African Constitution, which provides regulations regarding the relationship between the three spheres of government and the three branches of government towards each other and the community and citizens they serve (Malambe, 2016). The strategies and characteristics taken by both the NSG and the SA public service to implement the PSIP and the two respective training programmes from the NSG remain imperative towards developing a developmental state in SA. However, implementing the PSIP remains a critical challenge for both the public service and unemployed youth graduates (Malambe, 2016).

According to Motene (2017), it remains pivotal that the mentoring and coaching programme in the PSIP be taken into critical evaluation. Designated supervisors for unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP need to be monitored and held responsible for providing motivation, work, and constructive support to the unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP (Mseleku, 2021). Furthermore, mentors (supervisors) and unemployed youth graduates must begin to work as a team to eliminate the inadequacy of performance monitoring of work done, skills transfer, and appraisal in the PSIP and its implementation in respective departments in the Public Service (Motene, 2017). Inasmuch as the internship programme is designed to attract new talent and introduce it to the work environment (Mabeba, 2019), the programme must be equally structured in a manner that promotes the absorption and

retention of the developed human capital skills. The next chapter will outline and explain the chosen research design and methodology used to evaluate the PSIP and its contribution to the FSPG.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 aims to outline and explain the study's chosen research approach and design. The study utilised a qualitative research approach with a descriptive case study design, which was used to investigate and better understand the challenges in implementing the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter will also address the population and sample size of the study. The focus of the study is on unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP and on supervisors working in the FSPG.

This chapter will also discuss the chosen research methodology for this research study and address the validity and reliability of the instruments used in the study. The chosen research methodology helped to analyse how participants perceived the implementation of the PSIP by the FSPG. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the data collected. The data analysis enabled the researcher to transfer data into information that can be used to explain the feedback provided by the research participants. Lastly, a conclusion is presented on the research methodology used in this research study. The next section of this chapter will focus on the chosen research approach and design.

4.2 Research Approach and Design

In this research study, a qualitative research approach with a descriptive case study design was used to investigate the state of implementation of the PSIP and its effectiveness in preparing unemployed youth graduates for future employment in the FSPG. The qualitative research approach was utilised to create a clear perspective with the interpretation and reconstructing of participants' views and perceptions on implementing the PSIP in the FSPG. According to Motene (2017), the researcher is able to produce precise findings based on the contextual and detailed data gathered from the participants thanks to the qualitative research approach, which focuses on how people experience, interpret, and understand the social world. The goal of a descriptive case study design is to provide a thorough explanation of a phenomenon, like the PSIP. Additionally, this design aided in improving comprehension of some of the underlying assumptions, viewpoints, and driving forces behind the PSIP's implementation, its effectiveness to unemployed youth graduates, and its nature in the FSPG (Table 1).

According to Maree et al. (2022), three types of research approaches can be used to conduct a research study, namely qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches. In a mixed-

methods study, researchers collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A qualitative research approach, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), can be defined as a method used to explore and conceptualize a clear understanding of how individuals or groups contribute to social or human development. Thomas (2015) further indicates that qualitative research studies emphasise the experiences of human behaviour. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), assumptions indicate that, the potential application of theoretical material, and the examination of research issues that impact the social behaviour and developmental stages of humans are the first steps in the qualitative research approach. Badenhorst (2017) further articulates that word-based data are the foundation of qualitative research, and researchers rely on the description to convey the data.

According to Maree et al. (2022), a research design can be defined as a plan, structure, and strategy utilised to investigate and obtain information to answer questions and control variance. Maree and Pietersen (2016) describe a research design as the choice made by a researcher on the processes to be followed when collecting and analysing information or data to answer the research questions being investigated by the research study. According to Etikan et al. (2016), another way to think of a research design is as a comprehensive, step-by-step plan that the researcher will use to achieve the goals of the study. Honwani (2018) states that a research design provides a precise data collection and analysis outline. Motene (2017) articulates that selecting a research design is a critical decision, as this choice or decision will help provide direction for the full research study and its findings. In other words, a research design is a framework or a master plan that can be used to plan, analyse, and implement a study. Furthermore, Motene (2017) indicates that there are five different types of research designs for the qualitative research approach. These include: biography design, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and descriptive case study design (Coulthard, 2016).

4.3 Population and Sample Size

According to Maree et al. (2022), the research population refers to the group of people who will be studied. The authors go on to explain that a population does not refer to the people living in a nation or state as a whole, but rather to the things, people, occasions, or even activities that a researcher wants to study in order to gain new knowledge. This view is confirmed by Maree and Pietersen (2016), who indicate that it is impossible to include an entire population in a study due to the two main restrictions: time and cost. For the purposes of this research study, two types of population groups were relevant.

The first population that was studied were the 115 unemployed youth graduates who were enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. The 115 unemployed youth graduates were involved in the following FSPG departments: Police, Roads and Transport; Social Development; Public Works; Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) , Free State Office of the Premier, Agriculture and Rural Development; and Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA). These departments were selected because they enrol unemployed youth graduates in the PSIP in the respective departments. The criterion for selection for the unemployed youth graduates was that they had to be graduates who entered the programme with an undergraduate degree qualification on NQF Level 7.

The second population that was studied were the 31 supervisors who served in the FSPG at the time of study. The 31 supervisors consisted of HRD practitioners, skills development facilitators (SDFs), and HRD managers from various departments in the FSPG. These departments include Police, Roads and Transport; Social Development; Public Works; Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation; COGTA; Free State Office of the Premier, Agriculture and Rural Development; and DESTEA. All these departments had unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP at the time of study.

A non-probability method and purposive sampling were utilised to identify the 31 supervisors who were appointed as HRD practitioners, SDFs, and HRD managers who served in the FSPG at the time of study. According to Klazema (2019), non-probability sampling is a sampling technique that involves gathering data from selected participants using non-randomised methods. In the current study, the Raosoft sample calculator was utilised to determine the correct sample size needed for the validity and reliability of the study. The Raosoft sample calculator determines the sample by using a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error in order to determine the accurate sample size (Raosoft, 2004). According to Klazema (2019), determining the number of observations or replicates to include in a statistical sample is the process of sample size determination. Therefore, 28 FSPG supervisors were selected as sample to participate in semi-structured interviews (Table 1).

A non-probability method and purposive sampling were used to identify the 115 unemployed youth graduates enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. According to Klazema (2019), purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of participants according to how well they can understand a particular theme or idea. In addition, Motene (2017) defines purposive sampling as the process used by the researcher to seek participants with specific traits or qualities needed for the research study. In this study,

purposive sampling was utilised to select unemployed youth graduates who served on a SETA-funded internship programme between the years 2018 and 2023. The sample size of the unemployed youth graduates was calculated at 89 participants, forming 8 focus groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Methodology outlined

	Research methodology					
Qualitative research approach Descriptive case study design	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International and national literature: - Journal articles, acts, regulations, and policies - News 				
	Response group	Population	n	Sample	n	Data capturing
	FGDs	PRT	15	PRT	12	Audio recording and transcriptions
		SD	18	SD	12	
		PW	15	PWI	10	
		SACR	15	SACR	12	
		COGTA	17	COGTA	11	
OTP		15	OTP	10		
Agric		10	Agric	10		
DESTEA	10	DESTEA	12			
	N = 115		N = 89			
Semi-structured interviews	HRD managers	5	HRD managers	5	Audio recording and transcriptions	
	SDFs	11	SDFs	11		
	HRD practitioners	15	practitioners	12		
	N = 31		N = 28			
	N = 146		N = 117			

PRT = Police, Roads and Transport; SD = Social Development; PW = Public Works; SACR = Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation; OTP = Office of the Premier, Agric = Agriculture and Rural Development. COGTA = Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; DESTEA = Department of Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

4.4 Method of Data Collection

Two methods of data collection were used, namely FGDs and semi-structured interviews. The type of questions asked related directly to the kind of training programmes utilised in the PSIP to transfer knowledge and experiential learning, and the challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG. The questions aimed to investigate the readiness of the unemployed youth graduates for permanent employment opportunities and whether any development or training programmes were provided to equip these graduates with skills to help alleviate the rapid increase of youth unemployment in SA. The questions also helped to analyse how participants viewed the implementation of the PSIP by the FSPG and to provide guidelines as to how best the PSIP in the FSPG can be improved. The questions were used to elicit data on the effectiveness and challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG.

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

For this research study, the semi-structured interviews were used to gain a comprehensive understanding of various viewpoints relating to the effectiveness of the PSIP in the FSPG and its objective in reducing graduate unemployment in the Free State. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2018), semi-structured interviews generally consist of a dialogue between researcher and participant. The two authors also state that a flexible interview protocol serves as a strong guide for the semi-structured interview method, which is typically enhanced by additional questions, comments, and input (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2018). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 supervisors serving in the FSPG. The questions asked in the interviews aimed to identify challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG. Maree et al. (2022) further show how this kind of approach enables the researcher to get open-ended data and gives the chance to investigate participants' opinions, attitudes, and ideas regarding a specific conversation or subject, like the PSIP.

To conduct the semi-structured interviews successfully, the researcher received the names of all HRD practitioners, SDFs, and HRD managers from various departments in the FSPG from the Free State Training and Development Institute (FSTDI) database of all provincial HRD officials serving in one of the provincial departments in the FSPG at the time of study. The researcher first called the officials to determine their availability to participate in the study. Officials who availed themselves were then sent emails inviting them to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. Once confirmation was received from the officials, the researcher went to the respective officials' offices to conduct the semi-structured interviews and collect the needed data. Each semi-structured interview was scheduled for an hour and was recorded. All participants were comfortable with the time allocated for the semi-structured interview and the recording of the interview.

For this study, an interview guide was utilised for the semi-structured interviews to collect data for the research study (see Attachment A). The interview schedule consisted of 3 sections and 16 questions. These three sections aimed to address open-ended questions, which required responses from the participants to address the research questions of this study. The three sections focused on the following: 1) biographic information of the participants; 2) training interventions provided to unemployed youth graduates while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG; and 3) the PSIP challenges confronting its effective implementation in the FSPG. The 16 questions were used to investigate responses from supervisor participants responsible for implementing the PSIP in the FSPG. The 16 questions were used to investigate who the participants were, which training interventions were provided to unemployed youth graduates while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG, what

challenges affected the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG, and what recommendations can be made to the FSPG to improve the implementation of the PSIP. English was used as the primary language of communication during every conversation with the participants.

4.4.2 Focus group discussions

The study also used FGDs as a data collection method for the unemployed youth graduates participating in the study. According to Maree et al. (2022), FGDs are employed as a qualitative method to aid in gaining a comprehensive understanding of social challenges. Nyumba et al. (2017) also emphasise that FGDs seek data from a specifically chosen sample of people rather than a statistically representative sample drawn from a larger population. Therefore, FGDs were used for this research study to obtain relevant information from a selected sample instead of generalising the findings from a larger population. The FGD method assisted in identifying challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG. FGDs were conducted with the 89 participating unemployed youth graduates and were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed afterwards.

To conduct the FGDs successfully, the researcher received the names of the unemployed youth graduate interns from the FSTDI database of graduate interns who were enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. The researcher called the SDFs of the various departments to arrange FGDs with 10 to 12 unemployed youth graduate interns per group. The researcher confirmed that all the unemployed youth graduate interns served on the PSIP in the FSPG sometime between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. The SDFs confirmed the availability of the graduate interns eager to participate in the research study and the FGDs. Once confirmation had been received from the officials, the researcher was assisted by the SDFs of the relevant departments to conduct the FGDs and collect the needed data. Each FGD was scheduled for an hour and was recorded. All unemployed youth graduate participants were comfortable with the time allocated for the FGDs and the recording of the FGDs.

For this study, the interview guide for the FGDs consisted of 3 sections and 12 questions (see Attachment B). These three sections addressed open-ended questions, which sought responses from the participants to address the research questions of this study. The three sections focused on the following: 1) biographic information of the participants; 2) training interventions provided to unemployed youth graduates while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG; and 3) the PSIP challenges confronting its effective implementation in the FSPG. The 12 questions were used to investigate who the participants were, which training interventions

they received while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG, what challenges they experienced while serving on the PSIP, and what recommendations can be made to the FSPG to improve the implementation of the PSIP.

In total, 36 invitations were sent to HRD practitioners, SDFs, and HRD managers in various departments in the FSPG to reply expressing their interest in or willingness to take part in the study. Of these, 28 were for the supervisors participating in the semi-structured interviews and 8 were for the SDFs responsible for arranging the FGDs with the unemployed youth graduates. All 28 supervisors involved in the semi-structured interviews were first contacted telephonically and asked if they would be interested in participating in the research study. Only supervisors interested in the research study were sent emails as invitations to confirm and approve dates for the semi-structured interviews. For the FGDs, SDFs from various departments were used as a point of entry. They were requested to help coordinate the process of bringing together or inviting 10 to 12 unemployed youth graduate interns per group to conduct 8 FGDs, with 89 interns agreeing and participating. Once an SDF had gathered a reasonable number (10 to 12) of interns to participate, emails were then sent to the SDF to confirm a date, time, and venue to conduct the FGD. Twenty-eight supervisors from various departments in the FSPG responded by indicating that they would participate in the data collection (Figure 8). All eight FGDs with interns were conducted through the coordination of the departments' SDFs (Figure 7).

4.5 Ensuring Instrument Validity and Reliability

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), all research needs to be both reliable and valid to be considered acceptable and to ensure the integrity of the study findings. This section of the research study will focus on proving how the study ensured that the qualitative data collection instruments used were valid and reliable.

4.5.1 Focus group discussions

According to Maree et al. (2022), qualitative researchers are concerned with the validity, credibility, honesty, and truthfulness and reliability of their research. Furthermore, Van der Westhuizen (2016) indicates that validity in a qualitative research study refers to the methods used by the researcher to confirm the accuracy of the findings. Therefore, to ensure validity of the research study, the researcher relies on three important approaches to validity in qualitative research. Among them are validation as inquiry, validation as dialogue, and validation as action (Van der Westhuizen, 2016).

To ensure validation as investigation in this research study, in the FGDs, the researcher only recruited interns who were enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30

March 2023. The prospective participants needed to serve in a provincial government department and possess an undergraduate degree qualification on NQF Level 7. Involving the unemployed youth graduate interns served the purpose of yielding insight as to what experiences they gained while serving on the PSIP.

According to Maree et al. (2022), verifying the veracity of knowledge claims made in a dialogue is known as communicative validity. Valid knowledge can be developed when conflicting knowledge or unknown information is argued and questioned in a dialogue. Therefore, to ensure validation in communication, the researcher engaged in dialogue with the FGD participants in order to investigate the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

Maree et al. (2022) define pragmatic validity, also known as validation as action, as the ability of an individual's knowledge belief to be supported by the results of their actions. Therefore, for the purposes of this research study, the researcher took action by conducting FGDs to produce the desired results of investigating what challenges affect the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG as well as what recommendations can be provided to the FSPG to improve the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

To ensure validity and reliability of the research study when conducting the FGDs, the researcher used well-established research methods, interview processes, and techniques and interview schedules that guided the research process. When analysing the data, the researcher generated themes based on the findings and this was supported through triangulation, whereby the researcher interviewed the supervisors who are responsible for the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. A literature review was also conducted to research the required questions and research methodology and research approaches relevant to the research study. This study utilised methodological triangulation by using different data collection instruments, namely semi-structured interviews and FGDs. In addition, the researcher conducted a literature review to inform which tools were to be utilised to conduct the research study as well as the design of the tools.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

According to Motene (2017), the term "reliability" refers to the method used to show that a researcher's methodology remains consistent across various projects and researchers. Dependability, or the extent to which a study can be repeated and still yield consistent results, is another aspect of research reliability. Therefore, to ensure reliability in this study, the same questions were asked to supervisor participants in the semi-structured interviews. These questions were used in the interviews to develop an understanding as to what the participants viewed as challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the

FSPG. Quinlan (2018) adds that the goal of qualitative research studies is to demonstrate the reliability and soundness of their findings. As such, the researcher has a right to the reliability and validity of this investigation. This can be attributed to the researcher's consideration of various factors during the research study, which involved the selection of participants based on their familiarity with HRD and the PSIP within the FSPG.

To ensure validity and reliability of the research study in conducting the semi-structured interviews, well-established research methods, interview processes, and techniques were used as well as interview schedules that guided the research process. When analysing the data, themes were generated based on the findings and this was supported through triangulation, where the researcher interviewed supervisors who are responsible for the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. The supervisors were relevant, as they consisted of HRD practitioners, HRD managers, and SDFs from various provincial government departments. The literature review was also conducted to inform the required questions and research methodology and research approaches relevant to the research study. This study utilised methodological triangulation by employing different data collection instruments, namely FGDs and semi-structured interviews.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

In research, ethical considerations are crucial. It safeguards the civil and human rights of research participants and keeps an eye on the researcher's behaviour. As a result, the researcher must conduct their research and write the chapters in accordance with ethical guidelines and professional standards (Louw, 2012). For this study, ethical considerations relating to the protection of participants through informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants were prioritised. According to Van der Westhuizen (2016), ethics are the rules and principles of conduct that serve as a guide for people's moral decisions, actions, and interpersonal interactions. Therefore, to conduct the research ethically, this research study did not falsify any information, facts, or other individual's work without acknowledging (plagiarising) or accurately reporting on the research study's findings.

4.6.1 Nature of participation (permission to conduct research study)

The researcher interviewed various stakeholders in HRD in the FSPG. Once permission was granted to conduct the study within the FSPG, written communication to the potential participants (unemployed youth graduates and supervisors) was prepared. Permission to conduct a scientific research study was requested from the Director-General's office of the FSPG (Attachment C). Permission clearance was needed to be able to collect and disclose transparently the information collected, analysed, and interpreted (Attachments C and D).

Furthermore, the participants participated voluntarily in the study and no pressure or force was used by the researcher to compel them to participate. The information collected from the participants is treated with anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, participation in the study was voluntary, and the researcher used no pressure or force to compel participants to participate. All participants were requested to complete a consent form (Attachment E and F).

4.6.2 Informed consent (benefits for taking part in the study)

According to Motene (2017), informed consent refers to the agreement and action that an individual takes in order to participate in a research study after having been extensively informed about the research study's procedures, risks, and potential benefits. In a study conducted by Kruger (2016), the author highlights the need for researchers to uphold the right that stipulates research participants must be fully informed about the goals of a study and the variables that could affect their decision to participate. Therefore, the researcher must provide full and accurate information to the participants about the processes and procedures the research will utilise. All unemployed youth graduates and supervisors participating in this study were requested to sign a consent form prepared by the researcher (Attachments E and F). The consent form explains the study's topic, aim, and research objectives. The consent form also indicates the benefits or advantages of doing this research study on the internship programme. The study will benefit participants by clarifying the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP and therefore seek to establish solutions to the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP in the FSPG.

4.6.3 Protection from harm (potential risks of taking part in this study)

According to Kruger (2016), it is essential that researchers understand the significance of not exposing their research respondents or participants to undue physical or even psychological harm. According to Maiketso (2015), the researcher should also ensure that the risks involved in participating in the research study do not outweigh the normal day-to-day risks faced by the participants to get to work and back home. Therefore, for this study, the researcher ensured that no participant was exposed to any form of stress, embarrassment, or even loss of self-esteem due to their involvement in this research study. The researcher ensured that all participants' identities are kept private and that the information they provided is not assigned to a specific participant's name. This was clearly communicated to all participants.

4.6.4 Rights to privacy (confidentiality)

According to Van der Westhuizen (2016), conducting a qualitative study requires ethical consideration to the right to privacy. For this research study, all responses and inputs from the participants through the interviews and FGDs remain anonymous. The researcher ensured that all comments, inputs, and proposals by the participants were not attributed to the respective participants. In other words, no comment, input, or proposal was linked to any participant or any specific department. Therefore, all participants' rights to privacy were respected. Participants were also given the assurance that all audio recordings would only be utilised for data analysis and transcription.

4.6.5 Storing and disposal of information

All data captured from participants were recorded on a tape recorder and in a notebook, which are kept in secret and are strictly confidential. The research data (hard copies) are kept in a safe locked filing cabinet which only the researcher knows about. The data and all hard copies will be stored for future research and academic purposes for five years. The computer that houses all other electronic data is password-protected. Any future use of the data that has been stored will require additional research ethics review and approval, if necessary. The researcher will only dispose of the data by deleting software information and burning hardcopies after the five years have lapsed. The final research report will be submitted to the University of the Free State's Department of Public Administration and Management and the FSPG.

4.6.6 Payment incentives to participants

There was no material or financial benefit for any individual participant in the research study because supervisors and young unemployed graduates who participated in it were volunteers.

4.7 Data Analysis

According to Maree et al. (2022), qualitative data analysis requires organising, accounting for, and making sense of the data collected regarding the participants' definition of the situation, themes, noting patterns, regularities, and categories. Motene (2017) describes the process of organising what a researcher has seen, heard, and read in order to make their experiences and knowledge meaningful. This is known as data analysis. Creswell and Creswell (2018) additionally note that in qualitative research studies, "data analysis" refers to the process of interpreting participant-provided text, audio, and image data. A researcher can choose from various qualitative analytic methods when conducting a qualitative research

study. A typical qualitative analytic method that can be used is the thematic content analysis method (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). According to Maiketso (2015), thematic content analysis refers to a data analytic strategy that involves the categorising strategy for qualitative data. When this method is employed, the collected data are reviewed and then sorted into different categories. According to Kruger (2016), thematic content analysis can lead to the discovery of themes and patterns that can be used from the collected data.

According to Klazema (2019), finding meaning patterns in a data set that address the research questions under consideration is the aim of thematic content analysis. According to Motene (2017), data familiarisation, data coding, theme development, and revision of the gathered information are used to find these patterns. Motene (2017) further indicates that there are six phases to the process of thematic content analysis. The first phase requires the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data collected, which involves organising and preparing the data for analysis. The second phase requires the researcher to read the data. The first and second phases involve data collection and reading and rereading the data collected to become familiar with the content or data. Table 2 below indicates the qualitative data analysis techniques utilised in this research study.

Table 2: Qualitative data analysis techniques

Phase	Data analysis technique	Description of the technique
1	Organising and preparation of data	Transcribing of focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journal material
2	Reading the data	Obtaining a general sense of the information gathered by reading and rereading through the responses. Further entries could be made in the journal.
3	Initial data analysis process	Coding the aforementioned transcribed material
4	Identification of themes and sub-themes	Combining codes into themes and sub-themes
5	Discussion of themes	Interpretation of responses
6	Interpretation of the data	Integrating the research findings by drawing on the theoretical framework of the study

Adopted from: Maree and Pietersen (2016) and Creswell and Creswell (2018:193–195)

The third phase of thematic content analysis involves coding, which includes generating labels or codes that identify important features of the data collected. In this process, codes can become the foundation for the researcher's themes. The fourth phase requires the researcher to search for themes, which involves code validation that the researcher will have to examine to identify broader patterns that can be used as potential themes. The fourth phase also relates to the reviewing of themes. This process involves verifying each theme against the research question to determine if it is narrating a specific context. The fifth phase regards defining and naming of themes. This process refers to the development of detailed research information, which is informed by the analysis of each theme (Table 2). The sixth

and last phase involves writing up the data. This process focuses on bringing together the analytic narrative and data extracts, which will help to analyse the data in relation to the existing literature. The table below provides clarity on the themes identified during this research study.

Table 3: Summary of themes identified through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews

Theme	Sub-theme	Source
Theme 1: Lack of effective mentoring and coaching	Mentors and supervisors are not trained	HRD 4 & 6 (n=2) SDF (n=0) FG (n=0)
	Public servants are not compensated to mentor or coach interns	HRD 11 & 5 (n=2) SDF 2; 6 & 8 (n=3) FG (n=0)
Theme 2: Late or no stipend payments	Service providers are not held accountable for paying interns	HRD (n=0) SDF 3; 7 & 9 (n=3) FG 3; 6 & 7 (n=30)
	Interns find it difficult to pay rent and transport and buy food due to stipend payment challenges	HRD 2; 3 & 6 (n=3) SDF (n=0) FG 3; 6 & 7 (n=30)
	Interns do not finish the PSIP due to low morale	HRD 1; 3 & 5 (n=3) SDF 1; 4 & 7 (n=3) FG (n=0)
Theme 3: Lack of tools of trade	No office space and equipment for interns to use	HRD (n=0) SDF (n=0) FG 1; 3; 4 & 7 (n=44)
	No funding to purchase tools of trade for interns	HRD 1; 4 & 6 (n=3) SDF 1; 3; 5; 6 & 9 (n=5) FG (n=0)
Theme 4: Lack of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP	No tangible conclusion can be reported regarding the implementation and output of the PSIP	HRD 2; 3; 4; 5; 6 & 7 (n=6) SDF (n=0) FG (n=0)
	No provincial internship policy	HRD 1; 3 & 4 (n=3) SDF (n=0) FG 2; 3; 5 & 6 (n=43)
	PSIP cancelled due to cost-containment practices and budget shifting	HRD 1; 2; 4 & 5 (n=4) SDF (n=0) FG (n=0)
	Reporting just done for compliance purposes	HRD 1; 5 & 7 (n=3) SDF (n=0) FG (n=0)
Theme 5: Lack of performance agreements and assessment	No performance assessment framework tools exist to measure interns' job performance	HRD 1; 2; 4 & 5 (n=4) SDF (n=0) FG 3; 6; 7 & 8 (n=42)
	Misplacement between interns'	HRD (n=0)

tools for interns	qualification and job placement	SDF (n=0) FG 1; 3; 6; 7 & 8 (n=54)
	No impact assessments are conducted in the PSIP	HRD 1; 3 & 6 (n=3) SDF (n=0) FG 2; 3 & 4 (n=34)
Theme 6: Lack of continuous training interventions	Lack of orientation for supervisors regarding what is expected of them and interns during the duration of the PSIP	HRD 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 & 6 (n=6) SDF (n=0) FG 1 & 3 (n=22)
	Interns finish the PSIP without attending training	HRD 3; 5 & 6 (n=3) SDF (n=0) FG 1; 2 & 4 (n=36)

There were six main themes, which included: Lack of effective mentoring and coaching, late or no stipend payments, lack of tools of trade, lack of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP, lack of performance agreements and assessment tools for interns, and lack of continuous training interventions (Table 3, column 1). From the 6 main themes, 16 sub-themes were identified. These sub-themes are: mentors and supervisors are not trained; public servants are not compensated to mentor or coach interns; service providers are not held accountable for paying interns; interns find it difficult to pay rent and transport and buy food due to stipend payment challenges; interns do not finish the PSIP due to low morale; no office space and equipment for interns to use; no funding to purchase tools of trade for interns; no tangible conclusion can be reported regarding the implementation and output of the PSIP; no provincial internship policy; PSIP cancelled due to cost-containment practices and budget shifting; reporting just done for compliance purposes; no performance assessment framework tools exist to measure interns' job performance; misplacement between interns' qualification and job placement; no impact assessments are conducted in the PSIP; lack of orientation for supervisors regarding what is expected of them and interns during the duration of the PSIP; and interns finish the PSIP without attending training.

According to Motene (2017), the benefit of using theme analysis in a research study is that it can be applied in various frameworks to address a wide range of research questions due to its theoretical flexibility. This approach was appropriate for the questions concerning the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the relevant individuals regarding the PSIP in the FSPG. This study, therefore, utilised thematic analysis to interpret the data collected from the 89 unemployed youth graduates using FGDs and 28 supervisors serving in the FSPG using semi-structured interviews.

According to Harding (2019), FGDs produce a lot of data that needs to be organised. According to Maree and Pietersen (2016), in order to meet the study's goals and get rid of

information that isn't needed or relevant, the interpretation of FGDs needs to be categorised. Thus, as recommended by Motene (2017), the analysis should be systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous in order to minimise any potential bias in the interpretation and analysis of the FGD data. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) contend that analysis should follow a continuum, starting with gathering raw data from the selected participants and moving on to describing the data obtained from them, interpreting the data, and drawing recommendations and conclusions. As a result, the researcher in this study asked a supervisor or SDF to help with the FGDs. While the supervisor or SDF assisted with hand observation and FGD recording, the researcher conducted the FGDs and took observational notes during them. In addition to recording the participant session and taking observational notes, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews.

4.8 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the qualitative research approach with descriptive case study design that was adopted in the research study to capture the ideal human experience of the PSIP was clearly articulated and their benefits elaborated. Purposive sampling was utilised to obtain reasonable data from the chosen participants participating in the PSIP in the FSPG. Eighty-nine unemployed youth graduates were selected and placed into FGDs to clearly articulate the impact, implementation, and challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG. Additionally, information was gathered from 28 supervisors who were on the FSPG at the time of the study through semi-structured interviews.

The FSPG was consulted for permission to conduct the study, and all ethical guidelines were followed throughout. The researcher asked each research participant to sign a consent form indicating their agreement to the study. Subjects gave their informed consent to participate in the study; the researcher did not use any coercion or force. Participants' information is kept private and anonymous, both during submission and collection. The following chapter will present and discuss the research results captured during the FGDs.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH GRADUATE INTERNS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis of the research findings from the FGDs conducted with unemployed youth graduates serving as interns on the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter will identify challenges in implementing the PSIP in the FSPG. Chapter 5 will also be utilised to interpret the responses from the FGDs on how the PSIP can be improved to reduce the high level of unemployment among youth graduates in the Free State province.

This chapter will cover six sections. The first section will demarcate the biographic information of the participants in the FGDs. The second section will focus on the various training programmes provided to unemployed youth graduate interns serving in the FSPG. The third section will focus on the provision of mentoring to the unemployed youth graduate interns. The fourth section will analyse the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Section 5 will focus on the recommendations provided by the participants on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Lastly, Section 6 will conclude the research findings from the FGDs.

5.2 Biographic Information of the Focus Group Participants

Section A of the FGD schedule focused on the biographic data of the 89 unemployed youth graduate interns who participated in the research study. Section A consisted of three questions (Attachment B). The purpose of this section was to determine the participants' gender, workplace in the various FSPG departments, and age. This information is essential, as it indicates the current biographic profile and may inform future intake regarding gender etc. Furthermore, this information allowed the researcher to determine the age ranges of the participants and, finally, provided a glance of the intern distribution among the various FSPG departments.

The targeted population of the research study for the FGDs were 115 unemployed youth graduate interns enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG between 1 April 2018 and 30 March 2023. The sample consisted of 89 of the 115 interns, with all 89 participants participating in the research study, yielding a 100% response rate. The 89 unemployed youth graduate interns were divided into 8 focus groups of 10 to 12 participants per group. Of the 89 participants,

31 (35%) were male and 58 (65%) female. The data indicate a need to incorporate more males into the PSIP in the FSPG in future. Figure 7 below indicates the workplace distribution of the FGD participants.

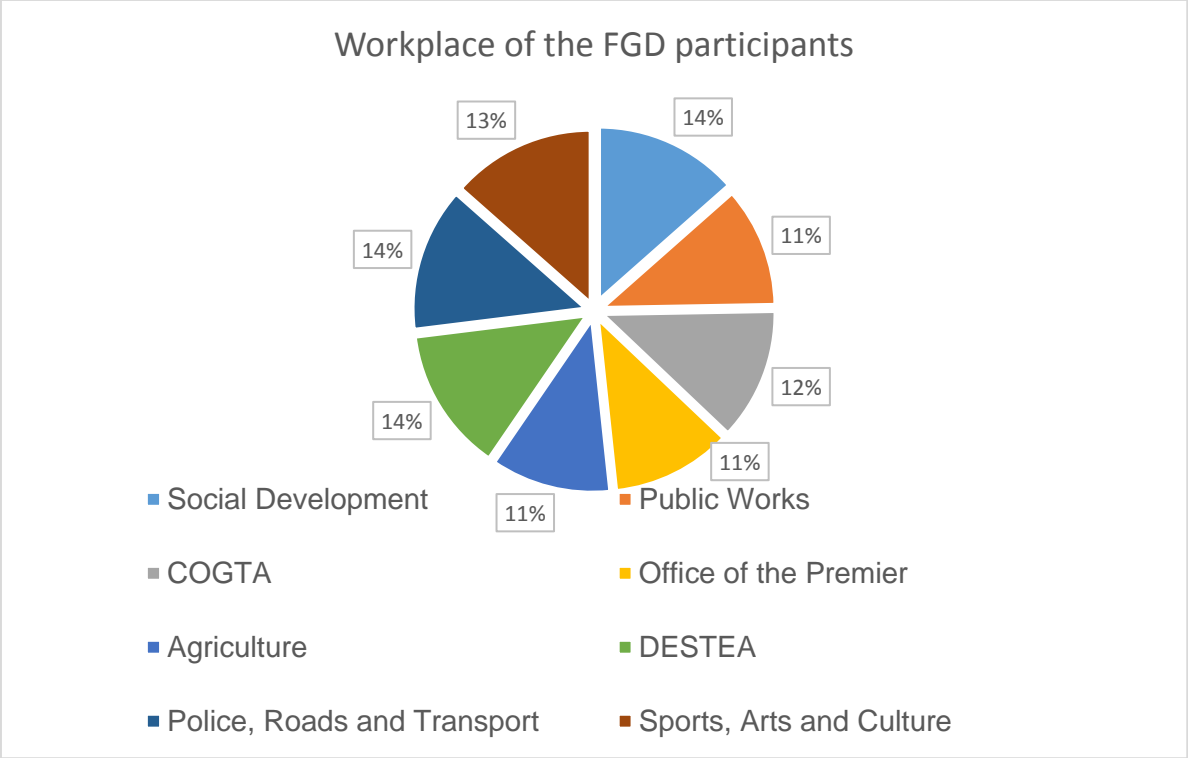


Figure 7: Distribution of focus group participants according to workplace

The data above show that 10 (11%) FGD participants respectively worked in the departments of Public Works, Office of the Premier, and COGTA (n = 30). Furthermore, 11 (12%) participants were from Agriculture (n = 11) and 12 (14%) respectively from Social Development; DESTEA; Police, Roads and Transport; and Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation (n = 48) (Figure 7). The data indicate an even distribution of participants among the eight departments. This does not imply that the other FSPG departments are not involved in the implementation of the PSIP. It is significant to note that the other relevant FSPG departments were not available to participate in the research study at the time of the study.

Regarding the ages of the FGD participants, 53 (60%) of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 years and 36 (40%) were between the ages of 30 and 39 years. No FGD participants were in the age range of 50 years and older. It is evident from the data that the majority of the participants fell in the youth category (18 to 35 years). The average age of first time graduates or length of time first time graduates complete their qualifications seems to be between the ages of 18 to 35 years (DHET, 2023).

Furthermore, 58 (65%) of the participants in the FGDs were females who were between 18 to 29 years old. Most female participants were from the Department of Police, Roads and Transport. Conversely, 31 (35%) of the FGD participants were male. It appears that more young females are applying for and enrolling in the PSIP to acquire work experience. It seems that more effort needs to be taken to balance the equation between the two genders and to provide more males aged 18 to 29 years with the opportunity to enrol in the PSIP in the FSPG.

5.3 Training Received by the Unemployed Youth Graduate Interns

Section B of the FGD schedule (Attachment B) comprised three questions. The questions focused on the training interventions provided to the unemployed youth graduate interns and whether the PSIP helped to develop their conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills. The researcher briefly explained the aim of these training interventions. The focus was to investigate whether unemployed youth graduate interns are being provided with training interventions on how work in the public service is executed and shared to achieve the transfer of much-needed skills to the PSIP participants.

5.3.1 Training interventions provided to the unemployed youth graduate interns

Question 4 of the FGD schedule (Section B, Attachment B) asked participants about the training interventions rolled out by the FSPG to enhance unemployed youth graduate interns' skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding working in the public service. This question aimed to investigate whether the participants were provided with training interventions while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. During the FGDs, 67 (75%) participants indicated that they received training while serving on the PSIP, of which 43 (48%) indicated that they received BB2E training and 33 (37%) indicated that they received training on the Cadet Programme. Furthermore, 76 (85%) participants mentioned that the content of these two training interventions (BB2E and the Cadet Programme) focused on providing general information to the interns about how administrative processes and procedures are implemented and utilised within the public service. According to them, these training interventions are critical to their understanding and knowledge of how to conduct themselves in the workplace. According to Anjum (2020), the training programmes offered to unemployed youth graduates on the internship programme by the NSG help to provide first-hand experience on how work is executed and shared to produce an objective in the public service.

One participant stated: *"I possess a qualification in communications; training interventions such as BB2E made me understand how the public service operates and which legislations govern the work I do in supply chain management."* Another participant stated: *"BB2E*

introduced me to the idea of entrepreneurship and self-management, a concept that I really didn't understand much." The participants in the fourth FGD mentioned that they received training in Personal Development and Workplace Relations Building. It was noted that training in the latter was highly beneficial for their career development and work relationships with others in the workplace. One participant stated: *"I have learned to control my emotions and manage my relationships better in the workplace."* Furthermore, participants in the sixth and seventh FGDs mentioned that their work relations with others were improved, as they now knew how to articulate issues or provide input on critical government issues and processes, especially to their supervisors. It was also mentioned that the NSG provided these two training interventions (Personal Development and Workplace Relations Building) as part of their funding from the EU. One participant stated: *"if it wasn't for the funded training interventions from the NSG, I would not have managed to attend any training intervention, as my department does not have funding to take me through training interventions."*

Another training intervention mentioned by participants in the fourth focus group was Basic Computer Skills training. Two (2%) participants indicated that the Basic Computer Skills training was beneficial and insightful for those who had to do a lot of data capturing and consolidation of reports. One participant indicated that: *"despite the fact that I possess an NQF Level 7 qualification, I was never provided with the opportunity to work on Microsoft Excel, an opportunity that the Basic Computer Skills training managed to provide me with."* Although it was observed that most of the individuals involved did receive training interventions, it was unfortunate that participants in the third and eighth FGDs indicated they were yet to receive any training intervention from their respective departments. One participant stated that: *"even for the past financial year of 2021 and 2022, no training interventions had been conducted for my department."* Three participants (3%) further indicated that they had been informed that training interventions were only for permanent staff in the department.

Concluding on Question 4 (Section B, Attachment B), it appears that although the FGD participants possessed an NQF Level 7 qualification, not all of them had the opportunity to work on Microsoft Excel, an opportunity that the Basic Computer Skills training managed to provide them with. The FSPG needs to prioritise training on computer literacy, as public service delivery will become more dependent on public servants who possess this skill in the future. The participants also indicated that these training interventions (BB2E and the Cadet Programme) are critical to their understanding of leading themselves and others and how to conduct themselves in the public workplace. It is concluded, then, that the content of BB2E and the Cadet Programme addresses the interns' skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding the public service. Unfortunately, considering that the PSIP runs over 12 to 24 months, it can

happen that some participants will finish their PSIP without having attended any training interventions. It is therefore important that the FSPG provides more training interventions to unemployed youth graduate interns. The statement is supported by Leary and Sherlock (2020) who indicate that the growth provided by training programmes can transfer skills and experience that can be used to address the scarce and critical skills deficit in the public service.

5.3.2 The development of conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills

Question 5 of the FGD schedule (Attachment B) enquired of FGD participants whether they thought the PSIP as implemented by the FSPG imparted conceptual skills to unemployed youth graduates or graduate interns. The purpose of the question was to find out if prospective workers could reason clearly in addition to carrying out their tasks efficiently. According to Motene (2017), this skill can be divided into two categories. The first is task management, which helps prospective workers prioritise and organise all of the tasks that need to be done at work. The second skill category is contingency management, which describes prospective employees' capacity to identify and handle anomalies in the workplace.

In the first, second, fourth, and fifth FGDs, the participants indicated that they felt their respective departments did not help develop their conceptual skills. Sixty-three (70%) of the participants in the FGDs argued that they are subjected to duties to complete tasks and duties that their supervisors assign them. Twenty-six (29%) of the participants agreed that they were given complex tasks or duties to fulfil, and it required them to develop creative and innovative solutions or techniques to complete those tasks. The findings indicate that the majority of the participants did not feel like their respective departments helped to develop their conceptual skills. Malambe (2016) notes that employers need to evaluate whether a potential employee's mental ability is stable enough to understand and view an organisation and its departments holistically. The findings of this study indicate that graduate interns in the PSIP are not often provided with tasks that develop their conceptual skills in the workplace. Therefore, many of the FGD participants were in disbelief of the ability of the PSIP to transfer conceptual skills to interns while serving in the FSPG. It is important to note that the FSPG needs to inquire if potential employees not only perform their duties effectively but also possess the ability to reason very well.

Question 6 of the FGD schedule (Attachment B) aimed to determine if the PSIP helped to develop the participants' interpersonal and technical skills while serving in the FSPG. In all the FGDs, 69 (77%) of the participants mentioned that the PSIP managed to develop their interpersonal skills, since most of the work done in the public service requires coordination

and cooperation of effective teams for work to be done in the public service. The participants further indicated that the PSIP, as implemented by the FSPG, assisted them in building working relationships with other employees. These working relationships assisted them to be more open and transparent about their issues and challenges. Participants in the fifth and sixth FGDs further indicated that these relationships helped them to develop the ability to ask for help from others, especially when they were not certain about what needed to be done to complete certain tasks. However, 20 (23%) of the participants in the FGDs indicated that the PSIP did not help them to develop interpersonal skills. They mentioned that as they were still new and afraid to raise their voices and provide their opinions in their respective departments, they were told that they are just interns and not permanent staff. Furthermore, a few participants believed that the PSIP did not help in imparting technical skills in whichever job they were doing in their respective departments. This raises the question whether the internship programme does not perhaps require job performance agreements and assessments. According to Malembe (2016) skills development initiatives or programmes are intended to enhance productivity, capability, and the individual's competitive potential by providing new skills. Therefore, if graduate interns do not feel like they are learning while on the PSIP, they need to be moved to more challenging tasks or duties.

The participants in the fourth and eighth FGDs also indicated that when they started their internship programmes, they had no idea of the tasks or duties they would be obligated to complete. However, as time went on, they were introduced to and assisted in completing new tasks and duties that helped to develop their technical skills for the work they were doing in their departments. Participants in the fourth FGD further indicated that, with these technical skills, they were treated better and made to feel valuable and part of the organisation since they could help their supervisors or units complete certain tasks or duties in the workplace. The participants also showed much satisfaction with the tasks and duties that they were expected to do. None of the participants indicated dissatisfaction with the work that they were expected to do in their respective departments.

From Question 6, it is deduced that participants did develop interpersonal and technical skills. Concluding on the question, findings indicate that the FSPG needs to help unemployed youth graduate interns develop conceptual skills while serving on the PSIP. The PSIP and the FSPG need to help unemployed youth graduate interns learn management skills (manage and prioritise tasks) and contingency management skills, which will help them recognise and manage irregularities in the work environment.

5.4 Challenges Confronting the Implementation of the PSIP

Section C of the FGD schedule comprised six questions (questions 7–12, Attachment B). This section aimed to identify the challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Potential challenges are an essential aspect that needs to be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of the internship programmes on an organisation and the unemployed youth graduate interns. The section also aimed to investigate whether graduate interns are provided with a mentor at the beginning of the PSIP and if mentors are assigned and whether they possess the right skills to effectively help graduate interns in their day-to-day duties and career development. Question 6 probed on recommendations that the unemployed youth graduate interns could make to the FSPG to make the PSIP more effective and prepare interns for future employment opportunities.

5.4.1 Challenges identified by the focus group discussion participants

Question 7 was posed to all eight focus groups as a strategy to identify challenges affecting the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. The challenges identified in the FGDs are outlined below.

5.4.1.1 *Poor financial management*

The participants in the fourth, fifth, and sixth focus groups highlighted the issue of late stipend payments or, in some extreme cases, no stipend payments made during the duration of their internship programme. The participants indicated that, due to the challenges of service providers being appointed to make stipend payments on behalf of SETAs and some of the provincial departments, the graduate interns sometimes do not receive their monthly stipends on time or, in some extreme cases, never receive it. The statement was further supported by one participant stating that: *“I have started my PSIP in January 2022; I have only received eight payments since the beginning of the programme.”* The participants in the sixth focus group further indicated that due to the challenge of late or no stipend payments, they sometimes could not afford to pay rent, buy groceries, and even travel to work and back home daily. The participants indicated that this challenge negatively affected their performance at work, as most of them come from poor family backgrounds and cannot afford to borrow funds to utilise for transport and food. This was further supported by one participant stating that: *“I have to borrow money from home and other family members in order to access my workplace, buy food, and pay for my rent.”* Participants in the sixth FGD further indicated that the challenge of late stipend payments also constitutes low morale for the graduate interns as they continue to face challenges outside the workplace. This requires their stipends to be paid on time. One participant indicated that: *“I don’t want to drop out of*

the PSIP, but if I am still not paid by the end of June, I'm going to have to leave the PSIP."

The participants further indicated that this challenge leads to absenteeism from the workplace, which also affects their overall performance on the PSIP. According to Mabebe (2019), corruption and maladministration by employers and those tasked with payments of stipends often result in fruitless and wasteful expenditure, leading to most interns receiving their stipends either late or never at all.

It seems that service providers are not held accountable for the late payment of stipends and, in most cases, service providers' contracts are just terminated, without back-paying the unpaid stipends to the graduate interns. It was also evident from the data collected that graduate interns sometimes have to borrow money and explain to their parents that they are working for the public service as interns and are not getting paid for their work. This is an issue that most parents seem to not understand or tolerate, and are therefore, encouraging their children to quit the PSIP and move back home. This is a clear indication that due to the late payment of stipends to unemployed youth graduate interns, the public service loses qualified future public servants that could assist the SA public service in achieving its objective of the NDP Vision 2030 for the country to become a professional, development-oriented, and capable state.

The participants in the second and third focus groups indicated that the FSPG needs to improve its budget regarding the implementation of the PSIP. The participants indicated that improvement of the budget would help to address the lack of the required tools of trade, such as office furniture and desktop and laptop computers highly required by the graduate interns to perform their tasks and duties effectively. Furthermore, 49 (55%) of the participants indicated that improvement of the budget will also allow the FSPG to spend more money on training and developing the graduate interns, instead of waiting for funded training interventions from the NSG. According to the participants, improvement of the budget will help to ensure that all graduate interns are trained before termination of their internship in the FSPG. It appears that the challenge of budget and resources will continue to have a negative effect on the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. It is important that the FSPG and its stakeholders improve the budget for the PSIP and allow departments to take control in administering the PSIP and making payments to the graduate interns.

5.4.1.2 *Ineffective recruitment and placement*

The research study also found that graduate interns are sometimes not provided with any tools of trade (such as office space or desktop or laptop computers) to perform tasks and duties in the workplace. This issue makes it very difficult for the graduate interns to be productive and optimise their performance and experience of the PSIP. In this regard, one of

the participants indicated that: *“I have never been provided with a computer or laptop, and I am supposed to assist in data capturing for my department.”* The participants indicated that due to a lack of these resources, the PSIP becomes useless to them as they cannot properly learn the functions and duties they need to perform. This results in them not gaining any practical work experience and quitting the PSIP before the end of their internship. It was also found that due to this challenge, the graduate interns end up resenting working for the public service in future.

The participants in the first and third focus groups also mentioned that not having any access to office space, furniture, and computers is seen as a challenge. One participant indicated: *“I am about to finish my PSIP, but I have never been provided with an office; instead, we share offices with our supervisors. And I am still yet to do my work relating to my qualification, which is a quantity surveyor.”* The participants also indicated that lack of effective recruitment and placement affected their performance at work. Because of this, they cannot practise what they are qualified for and, in most cases, due to lack of tools of trade, they cannot write submissions, capture any data, or learn functions such as utilising systems such as Logis or Persal and effectively coordinating meetings. One participant indicated: *“I have to assist my supervisor in doing requests and writing submissions. I am forced to use his laptop to complete some of these documents, and yet I am a qualified mechanical engineer.”* The FSPG and its stakeholders need to strategise around acquiring additional funding to purchase tools of trade for unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. They also need to plan effectively for the interns’ work placement and alignment of their qualifications with their work placement.

5.4.1.3 Ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP

It appears as if the PSIP needs to be effectively monitored. The participants in the second, fourth, and seventh focus groups indicated that the PSIP is not effectively monitored and evaluated to address challenges of misplacement of interns in different departments. In regard to monitoring, they implied that the PSIP is only monitored when interns need to be replaced or if supervisors complain about an intern’s conduct or absenteeism. One of the participants indicated that due to a lack of monitoring of the programme, senior management is not concerned with the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Instead, they only take into consideration monitoring the number of graduate interns that they have enrolled in the PSIP in their department every financial year for reporting purposes and compliance.

Regarding evaluation, it was understood from the participants that after being placed for their internship programme in a specific department, no evaluation is done to assess whether the intern is rightfully placed, experiencing challenges, and provided with meaningful work

experience. The participants in the eighth focus group indicated that they were just placed in a department and unit that does not complement their qualifications. One of the participants in the third FGD indicated that *“without monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP in the FSPG, challenges that affect graduate interns’ experiential learning are not identified nor addressed”*.

Eighty-two (92%) FGD participants indicated that the FSPG needs to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP. The participants indicated that the FSPG needs to develop performance assessment tools that can be used to monitor and evaluate an intern’s performance and development during the duration of the PSIP. The participants indicated that their performance assessments can be utilised as progress reports that can help measure the progress made by the graduate interns during the duration of the PSIP. The research study findings indicate that it is important that the FSPG provides graduate interns with duties that align with their acquired qualifications. It is also important to ensure that continuous monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP is conducted quarterly to identify and address challenges experienced during the duration of the programme.

5.4.1.4 Lack of performance agreements and assessments

Seventy-three (82%) of the participants in the FGDs mentioned that the FSPG does not provide interns with performance agreements or assessments when they start their PSIP in the FSPG departments. A performance agreement can be used to clearly illustrate the tasks, duties, and roles that the interns are expected to fulfil. One of the participants argued that *“due to this challenge, graduate interns are not effectively developed and efficiently utilised while serving on the PSIP”*. Eleven (12%) of the participants indicated that instead of receiving experiential learning from the PSIP, they are expected to run errands and perform personal favours for their supervisors. Seven (7%) participants indicated that due to this challenge, they are expected to perform permanent employee work, especially when the department or unit they are serving under is understaffed. In other instances, two (2%) participants in the fourth FGD indicated that due to this challenge, the interns are utilised as personal assistants who make coffee and photocopies and do other administrative work such as being a messenger, where some of these duties and tasks are not aligned to the interns’ qualifications.

It is recommended that the FSPG needs to develop and implement performance agreements that can be used to help monitor the performance of the graduate interns and identify performance gaps that they still need to develop. In addition to performance agreements, performance assessments need to be developed in order to measure the performance of the graduate interns on the PSIP. Performance agreements and assessments will help graduate

interns to understand the roles and responsibilities that they need to fulfil when enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG. It will further assist mentors and supervisors (managers) in understanding what duties interns need to do and will safeguard interns from being asked to do tasks not relevant to their work or even qualifications. Development of these performance assessments will protect graduate interns from performing personal favours for supervisors and help align their tasks and duties to their acquired qualification.

5.4.1.5 Lack of continuous training interventions

The participants indicated that the PSIP lacks continuous or consistent training interventions. Sixty-seven (75%) of the participants indicated that they were nominated to attend some form of training since the start of their internship in the FSPG. They were informed about the training interventions usually provided to the interns through the NSG. However, according to 22 (24%) of the participants, they were told to await funding from the NSG for the training programmes to be conducted. One of the participants indicated that: *“I started my PSIP in June 2022; I was told by my supervisor to wait for the NSG to provide funding for training interventions that I can attend, since I am not a permanent employee.”* Only 22 (24%) participants indicated they had not been provided with training in the unit standards provided by the NSG and FSTDI, such as BB2E, Customer Care, Report Writing and Minute Taking, and Personal Mastery. Nine (10%) of the participants indicated that their PSIP contract was about to end and they had not even received one formal training programme or attended a workshop or work seminar.

One of the participants indicated that: *“My PSIP contract ends in August; due to cost-containment issues, I have not attended any training interventions to improve my skills.”* It is therefore recommended that the FSPG and its stakeholders need to strategise around acquiring additional funding to train unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. Although the unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP already possess an NQF Level 7 qualification, not all of their qualifications relate to the public service and its mandate to provide effective and efficient services to local communities. Therefore, more training interventions need to be made available to unemployed youth graduates to obtain the much-needed knowledge on how the public service operates. Although it appears as if the majority are exposed to training interventions, the PSIP needs to be structured in a way that all graduate interns attend training interventions.

The research study findings indicate that some of the FGD participants felt marginalised because they were still interns and not permanent staff members. However, the findings also indicate that some participants had not been provided with any training interventions since their internship started. Furthermore, some of the graduate interns' contracts end without

them having attended any training. Considering that the PSIP is a programme with a duration period of 12 to 24 months, it is clear that some participants will finish their PSIP without having attended even one of the above-mentioned training interventions.

5.4.2 What the FSPG and other stakeholders can do to address the PSIP challenges

Question 8 (Attachment B) aimed to solicit participants' opinions on what could be done by the FSPG and other stakeholders to address the PSIP challenges facing the respective departments. Participants in the FGDs indicated that the FSPG and other stakeholders need to prioritise the challenge of late or no stipend payments. The participants indicated that this challenge remained critical as unemployed youth graduate interns cannot access their workplace or pay rent due to late or no stipend payments while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. The participants also indicated that the FSPG and its different stakeholders need to bring effective mentoring and coaching programmes to the PSIP. The participants in the first FGD indicated that supervisors are only appointed to provide them with day-to-day functions and operations. However, no form of career guidance or development is provided through the PSIP. Two (2%) of the participants indicated that the lack of tools of trade results in a lack of learning during the PSIP, as most work that needs to be done in the public service requires a desktop or laptop computer. Therefore, the findings indicate that the unemployed youth graduate interns cannot fulfil their daily tasks and duties due to this challenge.

The participants also recommended that the FSPG and other stakeholders need to prioritise the challenges that affect the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. The findings also clearly indicate that if the FSPG and other stakeholders do not prioritise addressing these challenges, the PSIP will not be able to transfer experiential learning to the unemployed youth graduate interns. Thirty-seven (41%) of the FGD participants also recommended that supervisors need be inducted on the roles and responsibilities of being a supervisor and how they can support unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP.

5.4.3 Mentorship allocation for PSIP participants

Question 9 of the FGD schedule (Attachment B) aimed at investigating whether unemployed youth graduate interns are assigned a mentor or supervisor at the beginning of their internship term. Sixty-five (73%) of the FGD participants indicated that they had not been allocated a mentor to assist them with their career development and guidance. Only 24 (26%) of the participants indicated they were provided with a mentor or supervisor at the beginning of their internship. However, three participants indicated that the mentors or coaches are not usually available to assist them or meet up with them on a regular basis to address some of the challenges they are experiencing. Seven (7%) participants indicated

that the mentors do not really understand what their roles and responsibilities are towards them. It was evident that (i) the majority of the participants were not assigned to a mentor or supervisor and (ii) the few that were provided with mentors felt that they did not benefit from their mentor or supervisor. It was also evident that mentors or supervisors do not understand what their roles and responsibilities are towards the graduate interns and towards the PSIP. It is therefore recommended that supervisors need mentorship to be included in their performance agreements and assessments in order to effectively supervise and mentor graduate interns on the PSIP.

Question 10 (Attachment B) further probed whether mentors or supervisors are appointed based on their competency and experience. The question was posed to the FGD participants because of the relationship between competent mentors and the effectiveness of the PSIP in providing experiential learning to the unemployed youth graduate interns. According to 65 (73%) of the participants, they were only provided with a supervisor, who provided them with work to do and monitored their attendance during the duration of the internship. The 65 participants indicated that the supervisors did possess the right competencies and skills in the workplace, but would not share or transfer knowledge, as they would be subjected to running personal errands for the supervisors. Only 24 (26%) of the participants indicated that their supervisors did not have the right skills to manage unemployed youth graduate interns. Thirty (33%) of the participants indicated that their supervisors did not seem to know what they were supposed to do with them, especially since they were not permanent employees. Four (4%) of the participants indicated that their supervisors were only happy when they saw them around the office, but they never gave them any work to do besides running errands for them.

It is evident from the research study that most participants did not have a dedicated and competent mentor but were merely placed under a supervisor (any public servant) who would monitor their day-to-day functions and duties at the workplace. However, these supervisors are not in the position to guide interns in career development or help address the challenges that affect them while serving on the PSIP. These supervisors further do not possess the right skills and competencies to mentor unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. Thirteen (14%) FGD participants recommended that mentorship and coaching training for supervisors should be implemented by the FSPG to assist the mentors or supervisors on how to guide unemployed youth graduate interns on career development and how to deal with difficult situations in the workplace.

Question 11 on the FGD schedule (Attachment B) asked the participants: In your opinion, do you think mentors are sufficiently trained to mentor unemployed youth graduate interns on

the PSIP? Seventeen (19%) of the participants indicated that the mentors were not trained on what they ought to do to assist the graduate interns in acquiring experiential learning. Eight (8%) participants indicated that their supervisors just gave them work that they did not want to do themselves, like making photocopies, delivering documents, filling, and retrieving documents. The eight participants also indicated that they felt like they were not learning anything valuable from the PSIP and that their qualifications were not effectively utilised. The eight participants indicated that when they engaged their supervisors about this challenge, they were told that mentors are not paid for mentoring graduates, as this function is not part of their performance agreements and assessments.

In the FGDs, 77 (86%) of the participants recommended that sufficient training is required to assist supervisors or mentors in becoming more knowledgeable on the roles and responsibilities that need to be incorporated when implementing the PSIP. Forty-three (48%) of the participants indicated that their supervisors need to know how to be more emotionally available to address some of the challenges they experience in the workplace. The above notion clearly indicates the importance of training mentors and supervisors in the public service.

5.4.4 Recommendations towards improving the implementation of the PSIP

Question 12 of the FGD schedule (Attachment B) aimed to investigate which recommendations can be made to address the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Some of the recommendations made by the FGD participants are captured in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Intern recommendations to address the PSIP challenges

Poor financial management
1. Improve budget for PSIP implementation
2. Develop clear communication between stakeholders
Ineffective recruitment and placement
3. Align qualifications with placement
4. Develop performance agreements and assessments for PSIP participants
Ineffective monitoring and evaluation
5. Develop monitoring and evaluation for the PSIP
Lack of performance agreements and assessments
6. Develop performance agreements and assessments with mentors and graduate interns
Lack of continuous training interventions
7. Train and develop supervisors to be mentors
8. Train unemployed youth graduates in Public Service programmes

5.4.4.1 Improve financial management

The participants in the second and third FGDs indicated that the FSPG needs to improve its budget for the PSIP (Table 4). Two (2%) participants indicated that the FSPG and its stakeholders need to improve their budget allocation towards the PSIP for the departments to be able to afford their stipends for a full 24 months. Eleven (12%) participants further indicated that the PSIP is a wonderful programme to provide experience and gain new skills required in the formal job market. They also felt that it is important that more funding is provided and the budget increased for the programme so that more graduates can gain work experience.

Thirty-three (37%) participants also indicated that improvement of the budget will also help to address the challenge of lack of tools of trade, such as office furniture and desktop and laptop computers, that they as graduate interns highly require to perform their tasks and duties effectively. Furthermore, 49 (55%) of the participants indicated that the budget improvement will also allow the FSPG to spend more money on training and developing the graduate interns, instead of waiting for funded training interventions from the NSG. According to three (3%) participants, the increase in budget can be used to help them acquire insight as to how systems such as Persal and Logis work and what contribution they can bring in using and improving the systems. According to the participants, the improvement of the budget will help to ensure that all graduate interns are trained before the end of their internship in the FSPG.

Forty-six (51%) of the participants in the FGDs also emphasised the importance of improving communication between the different stakeholders involved in the payment of stipends to the graduate interns. One (1%) participant indicated that: *“The FSPG and its stakeholders need to be more transparent with our stipends in order for us to make arrangements in time.”* The participant continued: *“Our landlords don’t believe us anymore when we tell them that we have not received our stipends.”* Twenty-six (29%) of the participants in the FGDs recommended that the FSPG, SETAs, and service providers need to be more transparent and open about the challenges that any of the stakeholders has regarding mismanagement, fraud, and corruption of stipend payments to the graduate interns (Table 4). Eleven (12%) participants suggested that they need to be informed in time regarding the late payment of their stipends to allow them the opportunity to make arrangements, and that a formal letter needs to be provided to them to provide to their landlords. Fifty-one (57%) of the participants insisted that improving communication between the stakeholders will help address other concerns and challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG.

The research study findings indicate that the FSPG, SETAs, and service providers need to be more transparent and open about the challenges that any of the stakeholders has regarding mismanagement, fraud, and corruption of stipend payments to the unemployed youth graduate interns. Forty-six (51%) of the participants insisted that improving communication between the various stakeholders will help address other concerns and challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG. The participants further indicated that transparency will help them to make arrangements with debtors in time. FGD participants recommended that communication be improved for their challenges to be effectively addressed.

5.4.4.2 *Develop effective recruitment and placement*

Among the difficulties mentioned by the participants was a lack of synergy between their qualifications and their placement in the FSPG departments. Eight (8%) of the participants indicated that they were not learning anything valuable from the PSIP due to their qualifications not being effectively utilised by the departments. It was therefore recommended that unemployed youth graduate interns be placed in departments or sub-directorates that complement their qualifications.

It was also recommended that the FSPG should develop performance agreements and assessments that will help graduate interns understand the roles and responsibilities that they need to fulfil when enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG. The participants indicated that these performance agreements and assessments will assist mentors and supervisors (managers) in understanding what duties interns need to do and will safeguard interns from being asked to do tasks not relevant to their work or even qualifications. A further recommendation was that the FSPG needs to develop and implement performance agreements that can be used to help monitor the performance of the graduate interns and identify performance gaps that they still need to develop.

5.4.4.3 *Develop effective monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP*

Another recommendation made by the third, seventh, and eighth focus group participants indicates the importance of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG (Table 4). The participants indicated that monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG needs to be done regularly to help identify the challenges affecting its successful implementation and to provide remedial actions in time before other graduate interns exit the programme. Seven (7%) Participants admitted to having difficulties during the PSIP, but they said they were never able to talk to anyone about these difficulties. Fifty-seven (64%) of the 89 participants also indicated that when monitoring and evaluation is done every month, challenges experienced in the programme, such as the

misplacement of graduate interns or the lack of gaining experiential learning, will be effectively addressed if continuous reporting is done on the PSIP. One (1%) of the participants said that: *“I am about to finish my PSIP in two months; since the beginning of the programme, I have been complaining about being placed in the wrong unit.”* Three (3%) participants also recommended that strategic operations units need to be designated in various departments to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the PSIP to provide reports on the PSIP in the FSPG.

The recommendation made by the third, seventh, and eighth FGD participants emphasises the importance of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. The findings indicate that monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG needs to be done regularly to help identify the challenges affecting the successful implementation of the PSIP and to provide remedial actions in time, before other graduate interns exit the programme. The research study also indicated that when monitoring and evaluation is done on a monthly basis, challenges experienced in the programme, such as the misplacement of graduate interns or the lack of gaining experiential learning, will be effectively addressed if continuous reporting is done on the PSIP. It was also recommended that strategic operations units need to be designated in various departments to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the PSIP to provide reports on the PSIP in the FSPG.

5.4.4.4 *Develop performance agreements and assessments for PSIP participants*

Seventy-eight (87%) of the FGD participants indicated the importance of creating performance agreements and assessments that can help monitor the performance of the graduate interns and identify performance gaps that they still need to fill (Table 4). Three (3%) of the participants indicated that they did not really know what was expected of them in terms of performance. The three participants further indicated that the departments do not hire graduate interns, saying that they have not yet developed. According to the participants, the development of these performance agreements and assessments can help them to understand the roles and responsibilities that they need to fulfil when enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG. Twenty-nine (32%) of the participants indicated that these performance agreements and assessments could help protect the graduate interns from performing personal favours for supervisors and help align their tasks and duties to their qualifications. One (1%) of the participants indicated that: *“these performance agreements can help supervisors understand which kind of work to give us and which tasks they can expect us to fulfil while on duty.”*

The research study findings clearly indicate that the FSPG needs to prioritise creating performance agreements and assessments that can help monitor the performance of the

graduate interns and identify performance gaps that they still need to fill. The research study further indicated that the development of these performance agreements and assessments can help them to understand their roles and responsibilities that they need to fulfil when enrolled in the PSIP in the FSPG. Development of these performance agreements and assessments can therefore help protect the graduate interns from performing personal favours for supervisors and help align their tasks and duties to their qualifications.

5.4.4.5 *Develop continuous training interventions*

Participants also recommended that the NSG and FSPG implement mentorship and coaching training programmes for supervisors to assist them on how to guide unemployed youth graduate interns on career development and how to deal with difficult situations in the workplace. Thirteen (14%) FGD participants indicated that the mentorship and coaching training for supervisors would also assist them to be more career-development oriented when dealing with graduate interns (Table 4). According to the DPSA guide (South Africa, 2006), supervisors need to be trained to become mentors so that they can be qualified in mentorship and meet the DPSA criteria that are established for mentorship and coaching. The DPSA guide (South Africa, 2006) further indicates that supervisors need to be experienced individuals in the field of the public service and must be able to share knowledge, skills, and attributes that the graduate interns need to become professionals. Therefore, the FSPG will need to train more supervisors in mentoring and coaching for the PSIP to achieve its ultimate objective of transferring experiential learning to unemployed youth graduate interns. Sufficient training is required to assist supervisors or mentors in becoming more knowledgeable on the roles and responsibilities that need to be incorporated when implementing the PSIP.

It was also recommended that the FSPG and its stakeholders need to strategise around acquiring additional funding to train unemployed youth graduates serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. More training interventions such as BB2E, Customer Care, Basic Computer Skills, and Personal Mastery need to be made available to unemployed youth graduates for them to obtain the much-needed knowledge on how the public service operates. The content of BB2E and the Cadet Programme addresses the skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding the public service, knowledge which unemployed youth graduate interns can utilise in preparing for a career in the public service.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter covered the analysis of the data and research conclusions from the focus group discussions with intern participants. The chapter aimed to interpret some of the research

findings collected from the research study participants through FGDs. The chapter included a discussion of the biographic information of the participants, indicating that more females form part of the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter also outlined the training interventions received by the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. Training programmes such as BB2E and the Cadet Programme are being rolled out to the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP.

The chapter also sought to look into a few of the issues influencing the PSIP's implementation in the FSPG. Specific difficulties hampering the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG were identified. Furthermore, a few recommendations were made towards addressing the challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH THE SUPERVISORS

6.1 Introduction

The research results from the semi-structured interviews will be presented in this chapter. The results indicate information that was conducted with the 28 supervisors responsible for HRD and supervision of the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter will provide feedback on the research study's findings on training programmes that are utilised to provide skills to unemployed youth graduate interns in the FSPG. Furthermore, this chapter will identify challenges relating to the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG according to the supervisor participants. Chapter 6 will also discuss research findings from the semi-structured interview participants on how the PSIP can be improved to reduce the high level of unemployed youth graduates in the Free State province.

This chapter will cover five sections. The first section will provide the biographic information of the participants in the semi-structured interviews. The second section will discuss the various training programmes provided to unemployed youth graduate interns serving in the FSPG through the perception of the semi-structured interview participants. The section will continue to investigate the mentorship and coaching programme for unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. The third section will analyse the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG according to the semi-structured interview participants. Section 4 will focus on the recommendations provided by the interview participants on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Lastly, Section 5 will conclude the research findings from the semi-structured interviews.

6.2 Biographic Information of Semi-Structured Interview Participants

Section A of the semi-structured interview schedule (Attachment A) focused on the biographic data of the 28 supervisors who participated in the research. Section A consisted of seven questions. The purpose of this section was to collect data and document the participants' gender, workplace in the various FSPG departments, age, highest level of education, salary level, position occupied in the public service, and number of years in the position at the time of study. The information provides insight into the level of experience and

education of the public servants or supervisors involved in the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

The population of the research for the semi-structured interviews were 31 supervisors who served as public servants in the FSPG at the time of study. The sample consisted of 28 supervisors who were HRD practitioners (n = 13), SDFs (n = 9), and HRD managers (n = 6) from eight departments (Public Works; Office of the Premier; Agriculture; COGTA; Social Development; DESTEA; Police, Roads and Transport; and Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation) in the FSPG. Only 7 (25%) of the participants in the semi-structured interviews were male and 21 (75%) were female. Figure 8 demonstrates the distribution of participants according to department in which they served.

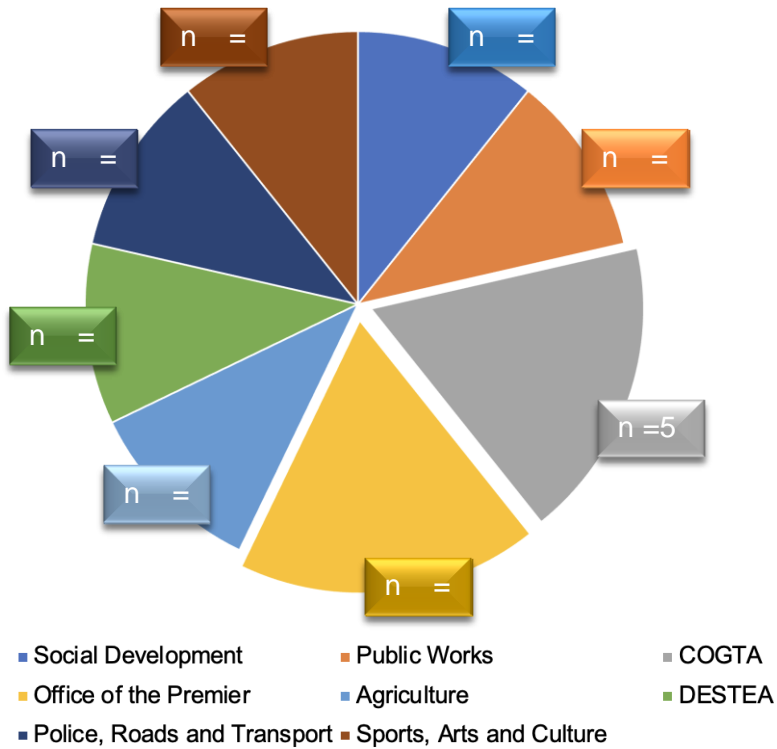


Figure 8: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to workplace

As seen in Figure 8, of the 28 supervisor participants, 5 (17%) participants respectively were from COGTA and the Office of the Premier. Furthermore, three (10%) respectively were from the other six departments (i.e., Agriculture; DESTEA; Police, Roads and Transport; Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation; Social Development; and Public Works). The research study findings clearly indicate an even distribution of participants among the departments. The eight departments were involved due to the availability and knowledge of the participants regarding the PSIP. It is recommended that more departments avail themselves in future for

such research studies to understand the perception and experience of employees when implementing the PSIP in their departments. Figure 9 presents the age distribution of the interview participants.

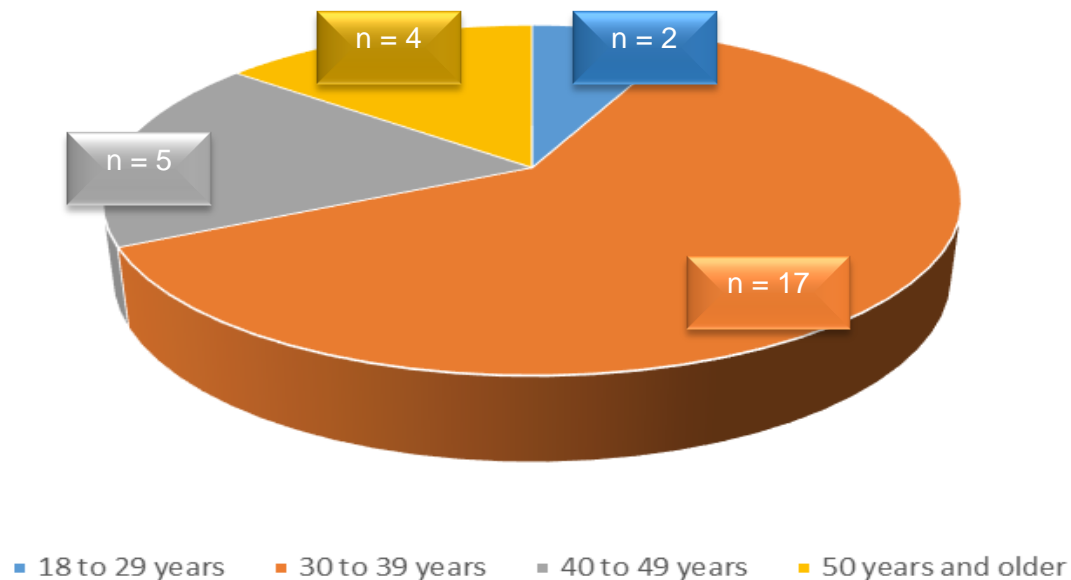


Figure 9: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to age

Figure 9 shows that the participants' ages ranged from 18 to 50 years and older. The age category 18 to 29 years had the least participants, that is 2 (7%), while the category 30 to 39 years had the most participants, that is 17 (60%). Furthermore, five (17%) of the participants were between the ages of 40 and 49 years, while 4 (14%) were 50 years and older. Since the majority of the participants (60%) were between the ages of 30 and 39 years, it can be recommended that the public service begins to employ more public servants aged 18 to 29 years.

Figure 10 presents the distribution of interview participants according to their highest level of education. As seen in the figure, 14 (50%) of the participants possessed a BTech or bachelor's degree (NQF Level 7) and 5 (17%) possessed a national diploma (NQF Level 6). Furthermore, 2 (7%) participants respectively possessed a matric certificate (NQF Level 4), a higher certificate qualification (NQF Level 5), and an honours degree or postgraduate qualification (NQF Level 8). The remaining three (10%) participants possessed a master's degree (NQF Level 9). None of the supervisors who participated in this research study possessed a doctorate qualification (PhD) (NQF Level 10). Altogether, 19 (67%) of the participants possessed a BTech or bachelor's degree or higher qualification. It is recommended that the remaining 9 (32%) supervisors further their studies to at least an NQF Level 7 qualification.

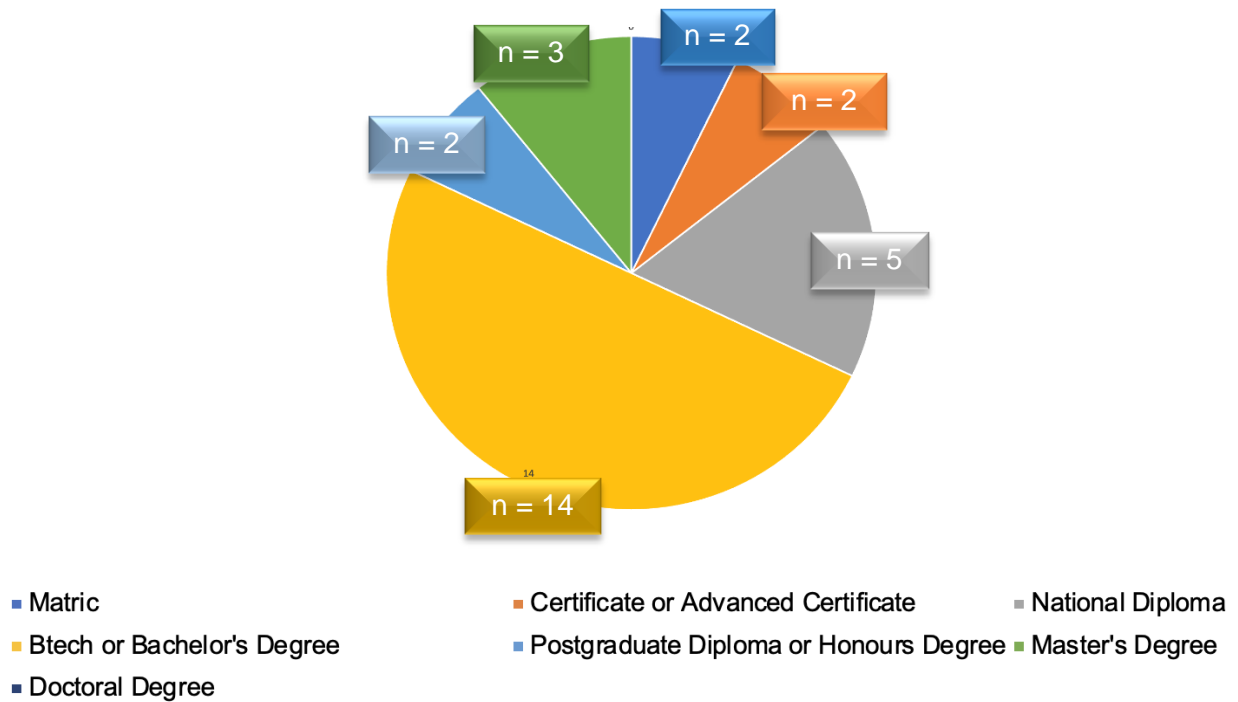


Figure 10: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to highest level of education

Concerning the income and salary level of the participants, it was noted that nine (32%) participants were on salary levels 9 and 10 and eight (28%) on salary level 6 and below. Furthermore, five (17%) participants were on salary levels 7 and 8, while three (10%) were on salary levels 11 and 12. The last three (10%) participants were on salary level 13 and higher. The 28 participants served in the FSPG at the time of study. The results show that 15 (53%) participants were on salary level 9 and higher. This means that most of the participants were managers serving in various departments of HRD sub-directorates. It is recommended that future studies incorporate more participants on salary level 6 and below to also understand their perspectives of the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. Figure 11 indicates the positions occupied by the 28 supervisors who participated in the research study.

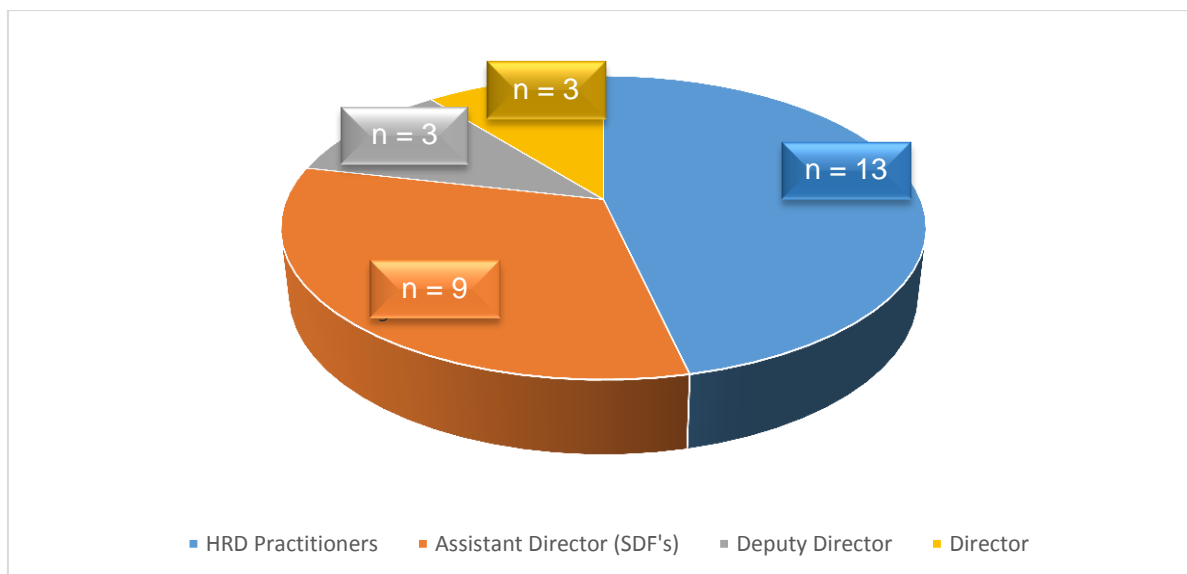


Figure 11: Distribution of semi-structured interview participants according to position occupied

The figure demonstrates that 13 (46%) of the participants were HRD practitioners who worked in the 8 departments in the FSPG at the time of study. Furthermore, nine (32%) participants were assistant directors and SDFs, while three (10%) respectively were deputy directors and directors serving in the FSPG. It is recommended that more HRD practitioners participate in similar research studies in future. Table 5 (Column 4) indicates the number of years interview participants had been in service of the FSPG at the time of study.

Table 5: Years in current position in the FSPG

Column 1 Department	Column 2 Salary level	Column 3 Position	Column 4 Years in current position
Office of the Premier (n = 5)	9 and 10 (n = 9)	HRD practitioner (n = 13)	5 or less (n = 12)
COGTA (n = 5)	6 and below (n = 8)	Assistant director (SDF) (n = 9)	6 to 10 (n = 6)
Social Development (n = 3)	7 and 8 (n = 5)	Deputy director (n = 3)	10 to 15 (n = 4)
Police, Roads and Transport (n = 3)	11 and 12 (n = 3)	Director (n = 3)	15 years and more (n = 6)
Public Works (n = 3)	13 and above (n = 3)		
Agriculture (n = 3)			
Sports, Arts and Culture (n = 3)			
DESTEA (n = 3)			
N = 28	N = 28	N = 28	N = 28

Column 4 (Table 5) shows that 12 (42%) of the interview participants had been serving for 5 years or less in their position in the FSPG at the time of study. Column 4 also indicates that six (21%) of the participants had six to ten years of experience in their position. Furthermore, 4 (14%) of the participants had 10 to 15 years of experience in their position and 6 (21%) had 15 and more years of experience in their position in the FSPG. Therefore, most of the participants in the semi-structured interviews had vast experience as public servants working in the FSPG. It is recommended that the FSPG utilises officials with more than six years' experience to mentor or supervise unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG.

The aforementioned information has a major bearing on the study's conclusion for the purposes of this investigation. These participants had a direct hand in the PSIP's implementation as part of the FSPG's HRD and skill development initiatives. Moreover, the data suggest that most of the participants had extensive experience and knowledge in the field of public service. It is therefore recommended that the supervisors with vast experience in the public service begin to mentor and coach unemployed youth graduate interns in order to transfer and share best practices with the future public servants.

6.3 Supervisory Feedback on the Training Received by the Unemployed Youth Graduates Interns on the PSIP

Section B of the semi-structured interview schedule (Attachment A) comprised three questions. The questions focused on the training interventions provided to the unemployed youth graduate interns. The section aimed to investigate whether the PSIP helps to impart conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills to the unemployed youth graduate interns and how skills are transferred using different training interventions. The effectiveness of the PSIP in imparting and developing conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills was also investigated.

6.3.1 Training interventions provided to unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP in the FSPG

Question 8 of the interview schedule (Attachment A) investigated whether training interventions are rolled out to the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. Seventeen (60%) interview participants indicated that their departments provided training to the graduate interns serving on the PSIP. Eleven (39%) participants indicated that the graduate interns were provided training in BB2E, the Cadet Programme, and Personal Mastery. One of the participants indicated that: *"I have enrolled 27 of the interns serving in our department in training and development interventions such as BB2E and Basic Computer*

Skills training.” Three (10%) participants also indicated that training interventions such as BB2E have assisted interns in their department to be more knowledgeable on how the public service is structured and what the code of conduct in the public service entails for them as future public servants.

The participants further indicated that the BB2E training programme is used to induct the new graduate interns and introduce them to the public service, the appropriate code of conduct, and knowledge of how departmental units are interconnected and interdependent. It was mentioned that these training interventions are critical to the graduate interns’ understanding and knowledge of how to conduct themselves in the workplace. One of the participants further indicated that “*the content of these three training interventions focused on providing general information to the interns about how administrative processes and procedures are implemented and utilised within the public service*”.

Six (21%) participants in the semi-structured interviews further mentioned that the graduate interns received training programmes such as Advanced Excel, Code of Conduct, Records Management, and Emotional Intelligence. The same six participants also indicated that training interventions such as Emotional Intelligence and Advanced Excel have assisted the graduate interns to be more professional in terms of their conduct at work. It has also made them more productive, as most of the graduate interns can now write submissions, consolidate reports, and perform other administrative functions required in their workplace. The participants indicated that the training interventions were provided by the FSTDI. One participant mentioned that: “*Training interventions in emotional intelligence has helped our interns to be more aware of their behaviour and emotions in the workplace.*” The participant continued: “*Some of the interns did not understand protocol and the lines of communication when one has challenges in the workplace.*”

However, the six (21%) above participants indicated that not all graduate interns are allowed to undergo training. Three (10%) of the participants indicated that: “*It is sad that not all of our interns can be taken to training interventions due to costs.*” They mentioned that since funding for graduate intern training is usually provided by the NSG, some respective departments were not allowed to nominate their department’s graduate interns for any training programme due to lack of funding. Three (10%) of the participants further mentioned that some of their graduate interns were doing their second or third internship programme and that some had received training in their previous internship programme. These interns, therefore, do not receive more training based on the perception that they had attended training interventions in their previous internships.

Most participants in the semi-structured interviews (Attachment A) suggested that their respective departments rolled out training interventions to graduate interns. The participants emphasised that their departments provided graduate interns with training in BB2E, the Cadet Programme, Personal Mastery, Records Management, Emotional Intelligence, and Code of Conduct. The participants indicated that these training interventions assist the graduate interns in developing knowledge on how to conduct themselves in the workplace. Furthermore, the participants indicated that the content of these training programmes provides general information on the public service administrative processes and procedures.

It is recommended that the FSPG and the NSG increase their budget relating to the implementation of the PSIP. This will help address the challenge of limited resources by the departments, which limits how many graduate interns can undergo training. It is evident that the challenge of limited resources creates an environment in the departments where some graduate interns complete the PSIP without having attended training interventions. It is also recommended that the NSG provides more funded training interventions for graduate interns on the PSIP.

6.3.2 Development of conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills

Question 9 of the interview schedule (Attachment A) asked the supervisors whether the PSIP helps to impart conceptual skills to the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP. Twenty-three (82%) semi-structured interview participants indicated that conceptual skills are imparted to unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. One of the participants mentioned: *“yes, in my opinion, the PSIP does impart conceptual skills, because the interns are provided with knowledgeable and experienced supervisors to assist them during the duration of the PSIP.”*

The participants further indicated that the PSIP provides the graduate interns with the opportunity to receive first-hand experience of the work environment. Two (7%) participants indicated that the PSIP helps unemployed graduates to understand the demands of the formal job market and to learn while on the job. Fourteen (50%) participants also indicated that the PSIP allows graduate interns to develop their cognitive thinking (conceptual skills) and helps them deal with challenging workplace situations. The 14 participants further indicated that the development and usage of cognitive thinking make the graduate interns more employable in the public service and their respective departments and units. This is because it helps interns to be more understanding of the processes and procedures that the government utilises to administer the delivery of goods and services to communities. It was mentioned that some graduate interns are naturally curious, allowing them to question processes and even sometimes simplify administrative processes.

Only three (10%) of the participants disagreed with the notion that the PSIP imparts conceptual skills. The three participants indicated that it is challenging to measure whether conceptual skills are transferred to graduate interns through the PSIP. One of the participants indicated: *“I cannot tell whether conceptual skills have been transferred or not because we do not evaluate the interns’ performance while on the PSIP. We only start to do it when they are moved to contractual employment after the PSIP.”* They further indicated that no framework or assessment tools is used to evaluate the transfer of skills or to measure if learning has taken place. The participants indicated that the graduate interns are sometimes not allowed to solve challenges and develop creative-thinking and problem-solving skills because their input and opinions are not considered. One of the participants indicated: *“Opinions of the interns is seldom taken into consideration because we sometimes cannot implement the strategies they have due to the public service policies and regulations.”* The three participants further indicated that due to the misplacement of graduate interns in the various department sub-directorates, their qualifications are not aligned with the sub-directorate that they are placed in and no precise observation of their progress is reported in their duration of the PSIP. Lastly, 11 (39%) participants indicated that the development of graduate interns’ skills cannot be effectively managed and proven. One participant mentioned: *“graduate interns need to be monitored when doing work, as some of them don’t understand what needs to be done.”*

The findings from the research indicate that the majority of the participants agreed that the PSIP helps to impart conceptual skills to graduate interns. The participants indicated that the PSIP assists the graduate interns in developing cognitive thinking skills, which makes the graduate interns more employable in the public service. However, few of the participants disagreed with the notion that the PSIP imparts conceptual skills to graduate interns. It is recommended that the FSPG develops performance agreement and assessment plans that can be utilised to measure the performance and development of conceptual skills of the graduate interns.

Question 10 of the interview schedule (Attachment A) aimed to investigate whether the PSIP helps to develop unemployed youth graduate interns’ interpersonal and technical skills while serving on the PSIP. Seventeen (60%) participants indicated that the PSIP does help to develop the graduate interns’ interpersonal skills. The participants indicated that the PSIP allows graduate interns to understand the work environment’s code of conduct and how to interact with other co-workers. The 17 participants indicated that training interventions such as Emotional Intelligence and the Cadet Programme assist the graduate interns in developing their emotions to deal with the work environment and its adversities. One of the participants indicated: *“Some interns arrive shy and sceptical to talk and ask questions, but*

after being in the public service for a while, some of the interns learn to interact well with others.” Eleven (39%) participants indicated that the graduate interns can be more transparent and helpful towards others, a characteristic that makes them willing to learn new things. One of the participants said: *“In my opinion, introverts usually find it difficult to engage and construct their ideas to others, which makes it difficult to work with officials who seem to be scared of the environment [rather] than embrace it.”* The participants also indicated that technical skills are developed well when the graduate interns are provided with knowledgeable and open-minded supervisors who are willing to share their knowledge and experience of the public service.

Seven (25%) participants indicated that the PSIP does not help to develop interpersonal and technical skills for the graduate interns. The seven participants indicated that graduate interns are sometimes placed in non-functional work environments. One of the participants indicated that *“graduate interns complain of being placed in environments that are hostile and that do not allow graduate interns to ask questions, raise concerns or their point of view”*.

Relating to interpersonal and technical skills, the majority of the participants (i.e., 17 [60%]) agreed that the PSIP does help to develop these skills for graduate interns. The participants indicated that the PSIP assists graduate interns to learn how to interact with other co-workers and share best practices on how to make work easier or faster. The participants indicated that some graduates can even interact transparently and honestly with their supervisors. However, some of the participants (i.e., 7 [25%]) disagreed and indicated that hostile work environments do not allow the development of these skills, as graduate interns cannot raise their concerns openly in such environments. Seven (25%) participants also indicated that these skills cannot be measured or developed without effective and clear observations of the graduate interns’ performance during the duration of the internship. It is therefore recommended that the FSPG supervisors be trained in understanding the roles and responsibilities that they have towards the PSIP and unemployed youth graduate interns.

6.4 PSIP Challenges Confronting its Effective Implementation in the Free State Provincial Government

In Section C of the interview schedule (Attachment A), six questions were posed to the participants. The aim of this section was to identify which challenges hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG according to the supervisors serving in the FSPG. The researcher was able to assess the impact of the internship programmes on the organisation and the unemployed young graduate interns with the help of these responses. It was important to determine whether the supervisors provide graduate interns with mentors at the beginning of the PSIP. The section concluded with recommendations that the supervisors

could make to the FSPG to make the PSIP more effective at transferring skills and experience.

Question 11 (Attachment A) investigated the challenges experienced by the department during the implementation of the PSIP. The question was posed to all 28 semi-structured interview participants. The following responses were received and identified as challenges confronting the PSIP in the Free State province according to the 28 supervisors.

6.4.1 Late or no stipend payments

Eighteen (64%) participants indicated the issue of late or, in some cases, no stipend payments to the graduate interns. Three (10%) participants indicated that one of the pressing challenges affecting them as a department is late stipend payments, which demoralises their interns for the duration of the internship. The interview participants indicated that some internship programmes are funded and stipends are paid by the Services SETA. However, they highlighted that the SETAs usually appoint a service provider to make placement and administer the PSIP on their behalf. Challenges occur during the duration of the programme when service provider contracts are cancelled and stipends are sometimes paid late or never paid. Three (10%) participants indicated that the graduate interns tend to feel neglected and unprotected from this maladministration. One of the participants explained that *"interns are affected negatively by this challenge and sometimes they even drop out as they cannot finance coming to work on a daily basis"*. The three participants further indicated that the graduate interns tend to lose their commitment to the internship programme, an issue that leads to low morale and graduate interns dropping out during the implementation of the PSIP.

The challenge of late or no stipend payments to the graduate interns relates to a challenge which was identified by the FGD participants. The participants indicated that this challenge leads to graduate interns losing morale and experiencing a decrease in performance and commitment to the PSIP and the duties provided to them. It was thus noted by both participant groups that the challenge of late or no stipend payment leads to graduate interns losing morale and dropping out of the PSIP. It is therefore recommended that the SETAs develop better financial management systems that can help ensure that stipends are paid to graduate interns on time for the full duration of the PSIP. The FSPG also needs to help the SETAs in addressing the challenges that affect the stipend payments of unemployed youth graduate interns.

6.4.2 Lack of mentorship and coaching

During the semi-structured interviews, 11 (39%) participants indicated that graduate interns are often not provided with mentors and coaches at the beginning of their internship. The reason for this is that departments do not provide training to supervisors in mentorship and coaching. Two (7%) of the participants indicated that they had not been inducted or trained in mentorship and coaching. One of the participants also indicated that some of the officials in the FSPG are reluctant to take additional responsibility in the department due to past unresolved tensions and issues, which makes it very difficult to allocate a mentor for the interns. The participants further said: *“The best I can do is to allocate a supervisor to them, which is someone who will provide the intern with work to do in the department and sign their logbook.”*

Eight (28%) of the participants also indicated that training in mentorship and coaching is not provided to supervisors who want to assist unemployed youth graduate interns with mentorship and coaching during the duration of their internship. Therefore, the graduate interns on the PSIP are usually just provided with supervisors who guide their day-to-day functions and duties.

Only nine (32%) participants indicated that public servants are reluctant to assist in mentoring and coaching because they are not compensated to mentor or coach graduate interns. However, according to the DPSA guide (South Africa, 2006), heads of HRD, mentors, supervisors, managers, and relevant staff members should take on the role of PSIP coordinator. According to one of the participants, *“some public servants [have] tried to assist in mentorship and coaching, but they complain about the lack of commitment the interns show during the duration of the PSIP.”* The nine (32%) participants further indicated that some graduate interns are reluctant to follow instructions and guidance when supervisors try to coach and mentor them during their internship.

It is recommended that the FSPG and the NSG incorporate more training in mentorship and coaching to make the PSIP more effective for graduate interns. It is also recommended that supervisors willing and able to mentor and coach unemployed youth graduates are inducted on what their roles and responsibilities will be regarding the PSIP.

6.4.3 Lack of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP

Six (21%) participants in the semi-structured interviews indicated that the PSIP does not provide effective assessment tools or frameworks that can be utilised to measure the graduate interns' performance or analyse the transfer of skills. Two (7%) participants indicated that interns are normally just provided day-to-day functions, but that they as

supervisors do not have any formal job agreement or assessment that they can utilise to monitor the interns' performance and evaluate their development. The six (21%) participants also indicated that the development of the graduate interns cannot be effectively assessed and that some graduate interns are on their second or third internship due to job scarcity. The participants indicated that this challenge that has occurred during the programme implementation could have been avoided if the graduate interns in various departments were regularly monitored and evaluated. Eleven (39%) of the interview participants also indicated that no monitoring is done at the end of the internship. One of the participants said that: *"I cannot evaluate their performance at the end of the PSIP. I also cannot force them to provide an exit report at the end of their PSIP."* The 11 participants further indicated that lack of monitoring and evaluation affects the expected outputs from the graduate interns, as they are also unaware of their expected performance level. According to the DPSA guide (South Africa, 2006), departments are expected to develop and implement a system for monitoring and evaluation that can support the internship programmes. The findings also indicate that exit reports cannot be compiled, as effective monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP is not done during the duration of the programme.

It further appears that the PSIP does not provide effective assessment tools or frameworks that can be utilised to measure graduate interns' performance or development. The participants also indicated that without effective assessment tools, graduate interns are not aware of the level of performance they are expected to achieve. This challenge is similar to the challenge experienced by the FGD participants. It is therefore recommended that the FSPG departments develop an assessment framework that can be utilised to assess the performance of graduate interns during the duration of the PSIP. It is recommended that monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP be improved to avoid graduate interns enrolling for their second or third internship due to job scarcity and lack of monitoring of the PSIP and its graduate interns in the FSPG.

6.4.4 Lack of tools of trade

During the semi-structured interviews, 14 (50%) of the participants indicated that graduate interns are normally not provided with adequate tools of trade such as office space, stationery, and desktop or laptop computers that can assist them in performing the administrative tasks and duties expected of them. One of the participants indicated that: *"Our department does not have enough resources such as office space, desktops, and laptops and even stationery that interns can utilise to perform some of their tasks."* The 14 (50%) participants also indicated that departments fail to effectively plan for the implementation of the internship programme in which graduate interns will be placed at various departments.

Departments do not do any evaluation of whether office space and equipment are available to be utilised by the graduate interns. Seventeen (60%) of the participants also indicated that the lack of funding to purchase tools of trade also becomes a challenge when trying to effectively implement the PSIP in the FSPG.

The findings indicate that graduate interns are not able to perform administrative tasks such as capturing data on databases due to unavailability of computers and office space. It is also important to note that the participants reflected on the challenge of limited resources by the departments, which limits how many graduate interns can be provided with office space and computers. It is evident that the challenge of limited resources creates an environment in the departments where some graduate interns complete their internship utilising their supervisors' resources. Again, it is recommended that the SETAs and the FSPG increase funding for the implementation of the PSIP. This challenge seems to be a pressing challenge that affects both the graduate interns and supervisors.

6.5 Recommendations towards Improving the Implementation of the PSIP

Question 12 of the semi-structured interview schedule (Attachment A) asked the participants: What could be done by the FSPG and other stakeholders to address the challenges affecting the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG? Some recommendations made by the participants are listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Supervisor recommendations to address the PSIP challenges

Financial management
1. Increase funding for the PSIP
Recruitment and placement
2. Develop an induction programme for the PSIP in the FSPG
Monitoring and evaluation
3. Train and develop supervisors to be mentors
4. Develop performance agreements and assessments for interns

6.5.1 Increase funding for the PSIP

Fourteen (50%) of the participants in the semi-structured interviews indicated that the FSPG, the DPSA, and the SETAs need to increase funding for the PSIP (Table 6). The 14 participants indicated that additional funding for the PSIP is required to purchase laptops and office furniture and increase the stipend payments for interns serving on the PSIP. One of the participants explained that the SETAs and the FSPG need to increase funding as a strategy

to address the challenge of late stipend payments and the lack of tools of trade such as desktops, which interns need to formulate simple documents such as submissions and quarterly reports.

Three (10%) participants indicated that the increase in funding for the PSIP will help address the challenge of a lack of tools of trade in the workplace and boost the morale of the interns to work harder while serving on the PSIP. The three participants further indicated that with additional funding more interns can be sent to training interventions, which can help develop new skills for the interns. One of the participants also indicated that *“increasing the stipend payments of the interns on the PSIP can help address some of the challenges raised by the interns during the duration of the PSIP”*. According to Motene (2017), the departments should investigate whether it has sufficient resources at its disposal to implement the PSIP.

Findings from the research study indicate that the FSPG and the SETAs need to increase funding for the PSIP in order to address the issue of late stipend payments and the lack of required tools of trade, such as office space, furniture, and computers. These tools of trade are highly required by graduate interns to perform their tasks and duties effectively. Improvement of the PSIP budget can therefore also assist graduate interns to not terminate their internship due to financial challenges.

6.5.2 Develop an induction programme for the PSIP

Nineteen (67%) of the semi-structured interview participants indicated that it is important that every intern is taken through an induction programme which will introduce what is expected of them. The 19 participants indicated that this induction programme can be used to outline the PSIP policy, the stipends to be provided during the duration of the PSIP, contract agreements, and performance expectations and communication channels that the interns can use to raise concerns and issues experienced in the programme. One of the participants further indicated that *“this induction programme will assist interns to understand their roles and responsibilities while serving on the PSIP in the FSPG”*.

The findings indicate the importance that an induction programme needs to be developed by the FSPG to enable effective communication between stakeholders as to what is expected of them during the duration of the PSIP. The research findings clearly indicate that the development of such a programme will assist the FSPG and the unemployed youth graduate interns in understanding their contract agreements, performance expectations, and communication channels that they can use to raise concerns and issues experienced during the duration of their internship.

6.5.3 Train supervisors in mentorship and coaching

Twelve (42%) of the semi-structured interview participants recommended that the FSPG must coordinate more training interventions in mentorship and coaching for the FSPG personnel (Table 6). One of the participants explained that: *“more public servants need to be given the opportunity to develop their skills in mentorship and coaching before we can assign them as mentors to the interns.”* The 12 (42%) participants indicated that more FSPG personnel need training in mentorship to understand how they can support interns during the duration of their internship. The 12 participants further indicated that training FSPG personnel in coaching will help to create a work environment where interns can be open and transparent about what they want to achieve within their PSIP term. Furthermore, three (10%) participants indicated that the FSPG personnel will be able to address some of the challenges experienced by interns when they understand mentorship and coaching and its impact in developing future public servants. Two (7%) of the participants further indicated that the FSPG should make mentorship and coaching part of supervisors’ performance agreements to ensure that the transfer of knowledge is taking place between mentor and mentee. According to Mcilongo and Strydom (2021), supervisors have indicated lack of training as a challenge to public servants to effectively mentor and monitor unemployed youth graduates on the internship programmes.

The research study findings clearly indicate that more training interventions in coaching and mentorship need to be made available to the FSPG officials before the officials can be assigned unemployed youth graduate interns to mentor. It is also evident from the research study that the development of officials in coaching and mentorship will help to address some of the pressing challenges that unemployed youth graduate interns face during the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG.

6.5.4 Develop performance assessment tools for the interns

During the semi-structured interviews, 13 (46%) of the participants indicated that it is important to develop performance agreements and regular assessments of the graduate interns’ performance (Table 6). The 13 participants also indicated that the performance assessments need to be conducted on a quarterly basis to project whether an intern is developing and is being productive in their respective placement. Two (7%) of the participants insisted that interns need to know what is expected of them during the duration of the PSIP and that making coffee and running errands for their supervisors will not transfer skills that will make them employable in the public service. The 13 (46%) participants indicated that these performance assessments can be used to develop an exit report that will be used to report on interns’ overall performance during the duration of the PSIP. The two

above participants further mentioned that the performance assessments can be used for an internship graduation ceremony in which the interns' excellent performance during the PSIP duration can be acknowledged and rewarded. The participants indicated that the recognition of excellent performance of interns during the duration of the PSIP can help motivate others to work harder during the programme.

The findings clearly indicate that performance agreements and assessments can be used to monitor and evaluate the unemployed youth graduate interns' performance during the duration of the PSIP. It can also help to develop exit reports that can be utilised to report on graduate interns' overall performance during their internship. Performance assessments can be used for an internship graduation ceremony if the FSPG improves its monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP, which is a significant finding of the research study. Excellent performance of the graduate interns during the duration of the PSIP can thereby be acknowledged and rewarded. The improvement of monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP by the FSPG can help assist the FSPG and its respective departments to allocate graduate interns who have successfully completed the PSIP and counter the challenge of graduate interns enrolling for an internship more than once.

6.5.5 Mentorship allocation for the PSIP

In this same section, Question 13 was also asked the participants: Do you think the mentorship programme is effective? Please explain your answer. The question was asked to the participants to investigate whether the mentorship programme in the PSIP is effectively conducted. Three (10%) participants indicated that due to the non-functional work environments, the mentorship programme is not effective. The three participants indicated that unemployed youth graduate interns are only provided with supervision to conduct their work and monitor their whereabouts. Two (7%) participants indicated that the mentorship would be effective if they had skilled and accredited mentors within their departments. They further mentioned that due to lack of incentives for coaching and mentorship, most public servants are not interested in it. One of the interview participants indicated that "*the discontinuation of performance bonuses also demotivated public servants to do extra additional tasks like mentoring and coaching interns*".

It is evident from the research findings that the mentorship programme in the FSPG is not effective and does not assist in the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. The research study findings indicate that public servants are not motivated to engage in the mentorship programme since it bears no incentives for them. The mentorship programme is only seen as a hobby by those public servants who are interested in mentoring young people. According

to Motene (2017), the PSIP should provide performance rewards to motivate unemployed youth graduates and mentors to effectively work as a team to achieve performance targets.

Question 14 in this session asked the semi-structured interview participants the question: Do you think mentors are appointed based on their competency and experience? Explain your answer. The question was posed to the participants as a strategy to investigate whether, where mentors were assigned, the mentors possessed the right competencies and experience to mentor and transfer knowledge to the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP.

Twenty-six (92%) participants indicated that supervisors are appointed as mentors for the unemployed youth graduate interns based on their experience, knowledge of public service, and their position in the organisation. Nine of the participants (32%) indicated that more training interventions in coaching and mentorship need to be provided to public servants. Two (7%) participants indicated that they had supervisors who were eager to learn in mentorship and coaching, but the training intervention was still not yet funded by the NSG for their officials to attend the training programme. The participants further indicated that more funding needs to be provided for the initiative of coaching and mentorship. According to the participants, public servants do not want to mentor and coach unemployed youth graduate interns because some of them develop negative attitudes towards the public service and its challenges. In addition, owing to a lack of effective mentorship and coaching, the graduate interns do not learn any technical skills. They are subjected to performing essential functions of administration, such as making photocopies, filling documents, typing minutes, and running personal errands for their supervisors.

It is evident from the research study that more public servants want to be developed in mentorship and coaching. They are still waiting for the opportunity to be made available by the NSG through its fully funded course programme that officials can attend for free. It is therefore recommended that the NSG makes the coaching and mentorship training programme available to more public servants, especially those who want to help mentor and coach unemployed youth graduate interns, in order to make mentorship in the PSIP more effective. It is evident from the findings that due to a lack of willing public servants to engage in the mentorship programme, the programme is still not effective in assisting unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP.

Question 15 in this session asked the semi-structured interview participants: In your opinion, do you think mentors are sufficiently trained to mentor unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP? The question was posed to the participants to investigate whether, where interns were provided with mentors, the mentors possessed the right competencies and experience

to mentor and transfer knowledge to the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. During the semi-structured interviews, all 28 supervisors felt that mentors are not sufficiently trained. Three (10%) participants emphasised that supervisors are not even trained in mentorship and coaching. Furthermore, 11 (39%) participants indicated that the NSG used to provide training interventions in mentorship and coaching, but it seemed like funding had stopped. Three (10%) participants indicated they had certificates from the NSG in coaching and mentorship. The three participants indicated that they acquired funding from their departments to undergo training interventions in coaching and mentorship.

It is evident from the research study findings that supervisors who act as mentors to the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG are not sufficiently trained in mentorship and coaching. Only three (10%) of the participating supervisors possessed a certificate from the NSG in coaching and mentorship, a clear indication that more supervisors need to acquire these skills through the training interventions provided by the NSG.

The last question in this session, Question 16, asked the semi-structured interview participants: In your opinion, is the PSIP implemented effectively by the FSPG? Please explain your answer. The question was posed to the participants to investigate whether they believed the PSIP helps to transfer knowledge and develop experiential learning for the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. Three (10%) participants indicated that due to no thorough observation of the unemployed youth graduate interns' progress in the PSIP, the transfer of skills and experiential learning cannot be measured. Seven (25%) of the participants indicated that the PSIP could do more to monitor and evaluate the PSIP and its effectiveness in addressing the transfer of skills. Furthermore, three (10%) participants mentioned that their departments had absorbed some interns into permanent posts due to the competencies and skills shown during the duration of their internship. Two (7%) participants explained that due to a lack of office space, most supervisors cannot take unemployed youth graduate interns into their departments. One participant further said that: *"if the PSIP can be effectively implemented, job creation can be a reality in the Free State province."*

It is evident from the findings that due to a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the transfer of skills and experiential learning or the development and performance of the graduate interns cannot be effectively measured or reported on. In addition, if monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP can be achieved, more unemployed youth graduate interns can be absorbed into permanent posts in the FSPG departments.

Furthermore, if the PSIP can be effectively monitored, more employment opportunities can be provided to the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter dealt with data interpretation and research findings from the semi-structured interview participants. It included a description of the biographic information of the supervisor participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews, and outlined the training interventions received by the unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter also discussed some of the challenges affecting the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG according to the supervisors' point of view. Furthermore, the chapter outlined recommendations by the participants towards addressing the challenges of the PSIP in the FSPG. The chapter also discussed the research findings made through interpretation of the semi-structured interviews.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 addresses the last objective of the research study, namely to provide recommendations to the FSPG on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP to reduce the rate of unemployed youth graduates and prepare them for employment opportunities through experiential learning. This chapter therefore aims to provide recommendations to the FSPG on how to implement the PSIP effectively.

This chapter will cover three main sections. The first section will consist of an introduction. The second section will provide recommendations for the research study and the third will conclude the study.

7.2 Recommendations

This study aimed to identify challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the PSIP among unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG. The period under investigation was the 2018 to 2023 intake of unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP in the FSPG. In this section, recommendations will be given to the FSPG on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP to make it more effective in terms of addressing the challenges that currently affect its implementation in the FSPG. The study's conclusions about the obstacles to the PSIP's successful implementation in the FSPG are taken into account when making the following recommendations.

7.2.1 Recommendations based on the literature review on internship programmes

Kolb's theory on experiential learning has provided more insight into how the PSIP can help bridge the gap between graduate-acquired theoretical learning (required at an institution of higher learning) and practical work experience that teaches graduates how to conduct themselves and re-learn new knowledge based on the work they are doing during the duration of their PSIP. The literature indicates that experiential learning is the most effective tool in developing unemployed youth graduates' learned theory and skills into required job-market-related competencies and the much-needed experience. It is therefore recommended that the PSIP is implemented as a programme that will aim to bridge theoretical knowledge acquired through a university qualification by an unemployed youth graduate and practical work experience provided by the SA Public Service departments.

7.2.2 Recommendations from the literature review on the South African perspective on internship programmes

Performance agreements: Currently, unemployed youth graduate interns in the FSPG are not provided with performance agreements when they begin their PSIP. The lack of performance agreements and assessments creates other challenges that affect the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG. In this regard, there are two recommendations.

First, the FSPG needs to develop performance agreements and assessments for unemployed youth graduate interns to be allocated specific duties and tasks that are related to their qualifications and career development, not just the administrative duties that they are currently doing (Figure 12). In order to address the rising unemployment rate in South Africa, the PSIP will be more relevant and effective if tasks are properly assigned to unemployed youth graduate interns.

Second, performance agreement and assessment frameworks must be utilised to conduct exit reports for each of the unemployed youth graduate interns leaving the PSIP. Managers who supported and participated in the PSIP can have their contributions recognised in the performance management systems by using the exit reports.

DoL: The DPSA, FSPG, and DoL need to build a solid collaborative relationship as key implementers of the PSIP to effectively address the growing concern of unemployment in SA, more so the unemployment among youth graduates of the Free State province.

DPSA: The DPSA prescribes that supervisors need to be trained to become mentors and coaches to unemployed youth graduate interns serving on the PSIP. The DPSA also emphasises that departments should consider implementing an induction programme for their line managers, mentors, and supervisors who work with the PSIP. There are therefore two recommendations for the DPSA.

First, the DPSA and the NSG must assist the FSPG in providing training to public servants in coaching and mentorship (Figure 12). This will allow the public servants who are appointed as supervisors to understand their roles and responsibilities when mentoring or coaching an unemployed youth graduate intern on the PSIP. It is important to note that funding will be required for these training interventions to be rolled out.

Second, the DPSA needs to assist the FSPG in developing an induction programme for supervisors and the unemployed youth graduate interns (Figure 12). The induction programme can be used to outline important aspects. These include the internship programme policy, stipend payments, contract agreements, performance expectations, communication channels, and which training interventions can be provided by the NSG

during the financial year to unemployed youth graduate interns who are starting their PSIP in the FSPG.

FSPG: The FSPG must train supervisors in mentorship and coaching for the supervisors to understand how they can support graduate interns with career development and the transfer of knowledge and institutional memory while they are on the PSIP (Figure 12). It is also important to note that the mentorship and coaching process within the PSIP can constitute an essential part of the graduate interns' learning experience. In other words, qualified supervisors can help transfer knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to assist graduate interns to be professionals. The transfer of skills and attributes from supervisors can help make graduate interns more employable in the public service.

It is therefore recommended that, first, training interventions for the PSIP should focus on mentorship and coaching and the development of conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills for the unemployed youth graduate interns. Implementation of this recommendation will help assist the transfer of experiential learning and best practices between supervisors and unemployed youth graduate interns.

Second, the FSPG and the NSG need to work together in providing more training interventions to unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP (Figure 12). More training interventions for unemployed youth graduates can help develop key competencies and skills that can assist in making them more employable in the public service. Training interventions such as the Cadet Programme should be made compulsory for all unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. It is important that the FSPG and the NSG form a collaboration to train public servants in mentorship and coaching to enable effective communication between stakeholders (public servants, unemployed youth graduates, FSPG, and SETAs) as to what is expected of them during the duration of the PSIP.

SETAs: Results from the research indicate that one of the pressing challenges to the PSIP in the FSPG regards late or no stipend payments to the unemployed youth graduate interns. The participants indicated that this challenge leads to graduate interns losing morale, thereby dropping performance and commitment to the PSIP and the duties provided to them. To counter this, two recommendations are made.

First, the SETAs must assist the FSPG and the public service to increase their budget estimations and allocation for the PSIP, which will allow the PSIP to be effectively implemented and beneficial to unemployed youth graduates (Figure 12). It is important to note that this increase in budget for the PSIP has the ability to deal with some of the challenges faced by unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP in the FSPG.

Second, the SETAs must assist the FSPG and its departments in addressing the challenge of late or no stipend payments more robustly by increasing funding and improving the management of funds for the effective implementation of the PSIP. The SETAs, FSPG, and its service providers need to be more transparent with regards to challenges that hamper the effective payment of stipends to the unemployed youth graduate interns. The FSPG needs to improve its communication with the graduate interns so that some of the challenges facing the PSIP can be aired and addressed in time.

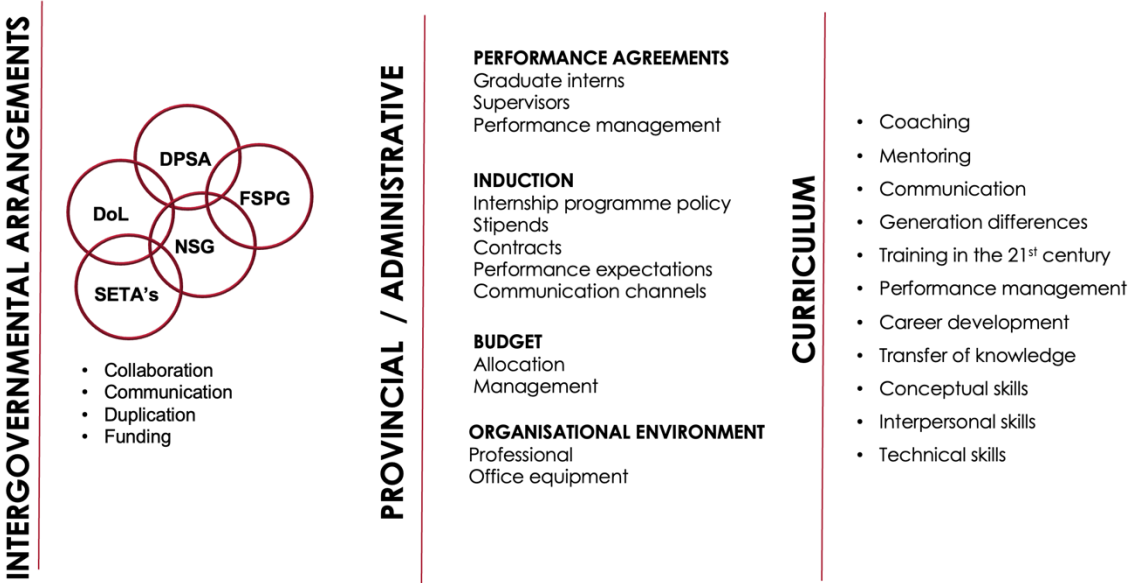


Figure 12: Internship Model for the Free State Government

Figure 12 indicates the collaboration and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the PSIP in the SA public service. The figure also demonstrates some of the elements required in the implementation of the PSIP and what departments need to consider before implementing the PSIP. The figure also indicates some of the development frameworks that departments would need to consider such as Coaching, Career Development, Communication and the skills transfer that departments can consider when implementing the PSIP.

7.2.3 Recommendations to improve skills for public service delivery

The majority of the participants agreed that the PSIP helps to impart conceptual skills (cognitive thinking skills) to graduate interns (Figure 12). The participants also believed that the PSIP assists the graduate interns in developing conceptual skills, which makes them more employable in the public service. However, the participants indicated that hostile work environments do not allow them to speak freely and openly about how they are feeling and what challenges they are experiencing during the duration of the PSIP.

In order to foster interpersonal skills among the unemployed youth graduate interns, it is advised that the FSPG first allow them to express themselves and voice their opinions and viewpoints in the workplace. The FSPG, through the PSIP, can implement this recommendation by teaching graduate interns how to interact with other co-workers and share best practices on how to make work easier or faster. This can be achieved by conducting regular meetings between the unemployed youth graduate interns and their supervisors.

Second, the FSPG departments can also conduct quarterly reviews on the performance, satisfaction, and behaviour of the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. This will help graduate interns perform their duties effectively and to possess the ability to reason very well when working with other officials. Unemployed youth graduate interns will have the chance to consider their experience in the PSIP and what they would like to see improved in terms of PSIP implementation through regular meetings and performance reviews. The quarterly reports can be used to articulate whether graduate interns are still satisfied with their work placement or not. It is therefore important to note that the quarterly reports can help address this specific challenge, as the reports will be compiled by graduate interns and their supervisors.

7.2.4 Recommendations for the challenges affecting public service internship programmes

It is important to note that none of the participants involved in this research study shared the perception of the PSIP being cheap labour (Figure 12). Instead, the participants in the FGDs were excited and grateful for the opportunity provided to them through the PSIP. Some participants believed that the PSIP would benefit all graduates who aspire to work in the public service in future.

With this in mind, an important recommendation is that the FSPG and SETAs need to provide more unemployed youth graduates the opportunity to enrol in a PSIP. The FSPG and SETAs can achieve this by, again, allocating more funding for the implementation of the PSIP (Figure 12), especially if more unemployed youth graduates are interested in serving in the public service. This recommendation can also help the public service to achieve its NDP Vision 2030 objective for the country to become a professional and development-oriented state, as more qualified professionals will want to serve in the public service after completion of the PSIP.

7.2.5 Recommendations from the focus group participants

The participants in the FGDs indicated that they were sometimes not paid on time. They also indicated that they were not provided with adequate tools of trade, such as desktop and laptop computers, stationery, and office space.

First, funding for the PSIP must be increased to provide the unemployed youth graduate interns with the relevant tools of trade, such as desktop and laptop computers, stationery, and office space (Figure 12). The improvement of funding and budgeting for the PSIP by the FSPG can help address the challenge of late or no stipend payments to graduate interns. Improvement of the budget will enable more graduate interns to complete the 24-month programme and to develop skills that can make them employable in the public service.

Second, the FSPG, NSG, and SETAs need to improve their communication with the unemployed youth graduate interns on the PSIP. They can do this by hosting regular stakeholder engagements to address growing challenges and potential risks that can affect the implementation of the PSIP. In addition, quarterly meetings can be hosted to reflect on the implementation of the programme and discuss areas that can be improved.

7.2.6 Recommendations from the semi-structured interview participants

Notably, the findings of the research study indicate that the FSPG needs to improve monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP in the FSPG. In this regard, it is recommended that the FSPG improves the monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG needs to be done regularly to identify the challenges affecting the successful implementation of the PSIP and provide remedial actions in time before the challenges cause graduate interns to drop out of the PSIP.

Second, monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP should be done by the monitoring and evaluation units in various departments to provide effective quarterly reports of the PSIP in the FSPG. These reports can be utilised as a strategy to develop performance agreement and assessment tools that can help evaluate graduate interns' performance during the duration of the PSIP. These performance agreements and assessments can also be monitored and evaluated to develop exit reports that can be utilised to report on a graduate intern's overall performance during the duration of the PSIP (Figure 12).

Third, the FSPG can utilise performance assessments for the purpose of organising and hosting an internship graduation ceremony, where excellent performance of the graduate interns during the duration of the PSIP can be acknowledged and rewarded. Improvement of the monitoring and evaluation of the PSIP by the FSPG can help assist the FSPG and its

respective departments to allocate graduate interns who have successfully completed the PSIP and counter the challenge of graduate interns enrolling for a PSIP more than once.

The semi-structured interview participants also recommended that the graduate interns be provided with a mentor or coach at the beginning of their internship. They further recommended that if mentors or coaches are not available in the respective unit or department, supervisors be provided with training in mentorship and coaching to help develop the PSIP participants with skills that can make them employable in the public service.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Due to the findings observed during this research study, it is recommended that future research studies regarding the PSIP, evaluates the development of Performance Agreements for the PSIP with the DPSA and the NSG. The research and development of a Performance Agreement with Interns can help departments to better monitor and evaluate the performance of graduate interns serving on the PSIP. As stated above, these Performance Agreements can also be utilized to implement an Internship Graduation Ceremony, which will make it easier for the departments to identify interns who have successfully completed the programme.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this chapter was to offer suggestions to the FSPG regarding how to enhance the PSIP's implementation in order to lower the high percentage of young graduates without jobs and better prepare them for job opportunities. The chapter made some suggestions that could be put into practise to deal with the issues preventing the PSIP from being implemented in the FSPG. Specific challenges hampering the effective implementation of the PSIP in the FSPG and possible remedies were identified. The chapter also discussed the significance of monitoring and assessment as a tactic to increase the PSIP's efficacy in addressing unemployment in the province of the Free State.

List of References

- Anjum, S. 2020. Impact of internship programs on professional and personal development of business students: A case study from Pakistan. *Future Business Journal*, 6(1):2-106.
- Badenhorst, A. 2017. Management practices to mitigate barriers in reverse logistics. *Entrepreneurship, supply chain, transport, tourism and logistics management*, 14:1–29.
- Barnwell, S. 2016. *Relationship between internships and employment competencies of degreed professionals who completed a college internship* (PhD dissertation). Minnesota: Walden University.
- Business Tech. 2022, January 18. *Shortage of skilled workers a major risk in South Africa*. Available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/551336/shortage-of-skilled-workers-a-major-risk-in-south-africa/> [Accessed 17 October 2022].
- Campbell, K. 2016. *The meaningfulness of internships: A sense making approach* (Master's thesis). Indiana: Purdue University.
- Celio, C.I, Durlak, J. and Dymnicki, A. 2011. A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2):164–181.
- Chan, C.K.Y. 2012. Exploring an experiential learning project through Kolb's learning theory using a qualitative research method. *Taylor and Francis Online*, 37(4):405–415.
- Chapman, A. 2013. *Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory: Connection to Honey and Mumford's model*. Available at: <https://www.businessballs.com/self-awareness/kolbs-learning-styles/> [Accessed 5 September 2021].
- Chen, T.L. and Shen C.C. 2012. Today's intern, tomorrow's practitioner: The influence of internship programmes on students' career development in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 11:29–40.
- Cherry, K. 2020. The experiential learning theory of David Kolb. *Very Well Mind*. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/experiential-learning-2795154> [Accessed 29 March 2023].
- Coulthard, G. 2016. *A descriptive case study: Investigating the implementation of web based, automated grading and tutorial software in a freshman computer literacy course* (PhD thesis). Purdue University, West Lafayette.
- Cowan, N., 2015. Working memory underpins cognitive development, learning, and education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 26(2):197–223.

- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. London: Sage.
- Cwele, F. 2019. *Towards an inclusive, green growth path: A review of South Africa's National Development Plan's approach to economic growth* (Master's thesis). South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- DeJonckheere, M. and Vaughn, L. 2018. Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, 7(2):e000057.
- DHET, 2023. The Department of Higher Education and Training.,
<http://https://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202021.pdf>, 2023/10/29.
- Engelbrecht, M., Shaw, L. and Van Niekerk, L. 2017. A literature review on work transitioning of youth with disabilities into competitive employment. *African Journal of Disability*, 6:298-301.
- Etikan I., Musa, S.A. and Alkassim, R.S. 2016. Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1):1–4.
- Ewseta, (2021) Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority,
<http://https://ewseta.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Presentation-SDF-Roadshows-2022.pdf>, 2022/07/22.
- Gager, A. 2022. *Challenge of success and retention in the teaching profession in England* (PhD thesis). England: University of Cumbria.
- Genesis, A., 2016. *South Africa: Calculating the skills development levy*. Available at:
<https://mrpayroll.co.za/calculating-the-skills-development-levy/> [Accessed 1 August 2021].
- Gobeil, J. 2022. *The investigation and development of experiential learning theory in primary and secondary education* (PhD thesis). University of Saskatchewan. Available at:
<https://harvest.usask.ca/handle/10388/13740> [Accessed 10 February 2023].
- Goodman, S. and Tredway, G. 2016. Antecedents of perceived graduate employability: A study of student volunteers in a community-based organisation. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 42(1):a13-15.

- Govender, L. 2019. *A case study analysis of human resource management systems in selected higher education institutions in South Africa* (PhD thesis). South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- Graham, L. and Patel, L. 2020, June 15. South Africa has taken steps to help young jobless people. Here's what works. *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/south-africa-has-taken-steps-to-help-young-jobless-people-heres-whats-working-140666> [Accessed 17 October 2021].
- Gxavu, N. 2019. *Implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) with special reference to the Department of Correctional Services* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of the Western Cape.
- Harding, J. 2019. *Qualitative data analysis: From start to finish*. London: Sage.
- Hargraves, V. 2021, March 17. Piaget's theory of education. *The Education Hub*. Available at: <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/piagets-theory-of-education/> [Accessed 7 July 2022].
- Hénard, F. 2012. *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: Policies and practices*. 1st ed. Geneva, Switzerland: IMHE Institutional Management in Higher Education.
- Henneberry, S.R. and Radmehr, R. 2020. Quantifying impacts of internships in an international agriculture degree program. *PLOS ONE*, 15(8):1–28.
- Hills, C.A. 2017. *Developing a law and policy framework to regulate cyber bullying in South African schools* (PhD thesis). South Africa: University of South Africa.
- Honwani, K. 2018. *Assessing intern's satisfaction within the South African public service internship programme* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: Tshwane University of Technology.
- Hora, M.T., Lee, C., Chen, Z. and Hernandez, A. 2021. *Exploring online internships amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021*. USA: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.
- Hora, M.T., Wolfgram, M. and Thompson, S. 2017. *What do we know about the impact of internships on student outcomes? Results from a preliminary review of the scholarly and practitioner literatures*. Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, Research Brief #2. University of Wisconsin. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=6866815&site=ehost-live> [Accessed 17 October 2019].

- ILO (International Labour Organisation). 2015. *Global employment trends for youth 2015: Scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_412015.pdf [Accessed 17 October 2020].
- Ismail, Z. 2018. Benefits of Internships for Interns and Host Organisations. K4D Helpdesk Report. UK: University of Birmingham.
- Javed, B. 2019. *Impact of succession planning on employee retention* (Master's dissertation). Sweden: Jonkoping University.
- Johnson, S. 2018. *The development and use of interpersonal competencies by evaluators* (PhD thesis). USA: University of Minnesota.11-87.
- Jung, J. and Lee, S. 2016. Impact of internship on job performance among university graduates in South Korea. *International Journal of Chinese Education*, 5(2):250–284.
- Kgwete, E.M. and Malatji, K.S. 2021. Problem-solving as teaching strategy: Promoting active learning in a South African university of technology. *Sabinet African Journals*, 19(2):3–28.
- Kivunja, C. 2018. Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework: A systematic review of lessons from the field. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(6):44–52.
- Klazema, A. 2019. *The importance of knowledge: Understanding knowledge and its transfer*. Available at: <https://blog.udemy.com/importance-of-knowledge/> [Accessed 2 June 2019].
- Kolb, Alice Y. and Kolb, David A. 2017. Experiential Learning Theory as a Guide for Experiential Educators in Higher Education. *Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education*: 1(1). <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/elthe/vol1/iss1/7>
- Kruger, F. 2016. *Education, training, and technology transfer projects that contribute to human resource development*. Arizona: Tucson.
- Kruger, M. 2020. *Placement factors contributing to the wellbeing of social work interns in a government setting* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: North-West University.
- Kunene, Z. 2020. *Transitioning from graduation to employment: Unemployed graduate's experiences of finding employment* (Master's research report). South Africa: University of the Witwatersrand.

- Kurt, S. 2020. Kolb's experiential learning theory and learning styles. *Educational Technology*. Available at: <https://educationaltechnology.net/kolbs-experiential-learning-theory-learning-styles/> [Accessed 30 July 2021].
- Leary, M. and Sherlock, L. 2020. Service-learning or internship. A mixed-methods evaluation of experiential learning pedagogies. *Education Research Journal*, 2020:1683270.
- Louw, V.N. 2012. From public administration to governance: Science or ideology? *Journal of Public Administration*, 47(1):88–101.
- Lues, L. 2023. Public Service Leaders, Samaritans or Levites. Inauguration address, South Africa: University of the Free State.
- Mabeba, S. 2019. *The Impact of internship programme on skills development in the South African public institutions: Are internships still relevant?* The 4th Annual International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives, 03–05 July 2019, Southern Sun Hotel, OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, South Africa. Available at: http://ulspace.ul.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10386/2688/mabeba_impact_2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed 17 March 2021].
- Mabope, N. 2018. *Strategies and practices for effective talent management in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: Central University of Technology.
- Macharia, J. 2023. Kenya's unemployment crisis: The sad numbers. *Nation*. Available at: <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/kenya-s-unemployment-crisis-the-sad-numbers-4155350> [Accessed 24 April 2023].
- Madubela, A. 2022, March 29. Another record high as 7.9-million people remain jobless in South Africa. *Mail & Guardian*. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/business/2022-03-29-another-record-high-as-7-9-million-people-remain-jobless-in-south-africa/> [Accessed 17 October 2022].
- Maiketso, K. 2015. *The level of compliance with Public Finance Management Act in procurement: A case of North West Parks and Tourism Board* (Master's dissertation). North West University, Mafikeng Campus.
- Makoe, M., Tirivanhu, P., Alubafi, M.A. and Mkwanazi, N. 2021. *National youth policy, 2020–2030 draft: A decade to accelerate positive youth development outcomes*. Commissioned by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

- (DWYPD). Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/15877> [Accessed 17 October 2022].
- Malambe, L. 2016. *Exploring skills development within the interface of public and private sectors* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of Cape Town.
- Maree, K. and Pietersen, J. 2016. Sampling. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (2nd ed.; pp. 192–202). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Maree, K., Creswell, J.W., Ebersöhn, L., Eloff, I., Ferreira, R., Ivankova, N.V., Jansen, J.D., Nieuwenhuis, J., Pietersen, J. and Plano Clark, V.L. 2022. *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Marinas, C., Goia, S., Igret, R.S. and Marinas, L.E. 2018. Predictors of quality internship programs: The case of Romanian business and administration university education. *Sustainability*, 10(12):42-87.
- McIlongo, M. and Strydom, K., 2021. The significance of mentorship in supporting the career advancement of women in the public sector. *Heliyon*, 7(6):21-73.
- McLeod, S. 2017. Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle. *The Experiential Learning Theory*, 3(2):1–24.
- Mehlape, M. 2018. *The effects of political leadership on public administration*. The 3rd Annual International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (pp. 326–331), 04–06 July 2018, South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023a. *Effective*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/effective> [Accessed 8 May 2023].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023b. *Skill*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/skill> [Accessed 20 January 2023].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023c. *Theory*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theory> [Accessed 20 January 2023].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023d. *Conceptual skills*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceptual%20skills> [Accessed 20 January 2023].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023e. *Interpersonal skills*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interpersonal%20skills> [Accessed 20 January 2023].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2023f. *Technical skills*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/technical%20skills> [Accessed 20 January 2023].

- Moodley, R. 2022, June 13. Departments invited to enrol youth in career programmes. SA News. Available at: <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/departments-invited-enrol-youth-career-programmes> [Accessed 17 October 2022].
- Motene, K. 2017. *Employability of graduates on the Public Service Internship Programme: The case of the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET), South Africa* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of Limpopo.
- Mpya, M. 2020. *The implementation of the National Development Plan and its impact on the provision of sustainable human settlements: The case of Gauteng province* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of South Africa.
- Mthlane, M. 2020. *Unemployed youths' awareness of the National Youth Policy and the National Youth Development Agency and strategies used to find employment in Mphomeni Township, KwaZulu-Natal* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mchunu, N. and Mutereko, S. 2020. Internship as a tool to enhance employability in the public sector : a case study of government communication and information system in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. *African Journal of Gender, Society and Development*, (9): 59-77.
- Muetzel, A.M. 2015. *Experiential learning and engagement: The role of professional development and engagement in the graduate assistant experience* (PhD dissertation). USA: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.
- Muller, J. 2020, March 27. 'Now, I'm unemployed': How coronavirus killed off the Capitol Hill Internship. *Politico*. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/27/coronavirus-capitol-hill-internship-151162> [Accessed 17 October 2020].
- Munzhedzi, P.H. 2016. Fostering public accountability in South Africa: A reflection on challenges and successes. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 12(1):a339-361.
- Mseleku, Z. 2021. "Local Government Internship and Youth Graduate Employability: Perspectives of Interns, Mentors and HR Managers". *Commonwealth Youth and Development*, 19(2):1-16.

- Naidoo, K., Van Wyk, J. and Adhikari, M. 2017. The learning environment of paediatric interns in South Africa. *BMC Medical Education*, 17:111-235.
- NSG (National School of Government). 2020. *National School of Government facilitates breaking barriers to entry interns, 11 to 13 Jun*. Available at: https://www.gov.za/speeches/national-school-government-facilitates-breaking-barriers-entry-interns-11-13-jun-11-jun?qclid=Cj0KCQjwuL_8BRCXARIsAGiC51CxbogrB57hxfv2jULwreTRXVojM1ihYvsuo2HVvs4mrXVcEzANT_tMaAvxcEALw_wcB . [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- NSG (National School of Government). 2022. *Course directory*. Available at: <https://www.thensg.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Course-Directory.pdf> [Accessed 30 June 2022].
- Nyumba, S., Wilson J., Derrick, L. and Mukherje, M. 2017. *Human resource development: Learning and training individuals and organisations*. London: Kogan Page.
- O’Higgins, N. and Pinedo, L. 2018. *Interns and outcomes: Just how effective are internships as a bridge to stable employment?* Employment Working Paper No. 241. International Labour Organization. Available at: www.researchgate.net/institution/International_Labour_Organization [Accessed 17 October 2021].
- Odendaal, D. 2018. *A framework for using experiential learning theory to develop game-based learning* (Master’s dissertation). South Africa: University of Stellenbosch.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2013. *Local strategies for youth employment: Learning from practice*. OECD. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/employment/leed/Local%20Strategies%20for%20Youth%20Employment%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf> [Accessed 1 June 2021].
- Oxford English Dictionary. 2023. *What is a theory*. OED. Available at: <https://www.oed.com/> [Accessed 29 March 2023].
- Parliamentary Monitoring Group. 2007. *Umsobomvu Youth Fund and National Youth Commission: Briefings on progress*. Available at: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/8086/> [Accessed 19 July 2018].
- Pietersen, J.M. and Malatjie, I. 2022. *Efficacy of the internship programme in the South African public service with a particular focus on the national school of government*, *Sabinet African Journals*, 20(2):1-9.

- PSC (Public Service Commission). 2018. *Annual report 2017/2018: Public Service Commission*. Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201810/public-service-commission-annual-report.pdf [Accessed 14 August 2019].
- Quinlan C. 2018. *Business research methods*. Andover, Hampshire, UK: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Radebe, L.D. 2018. Personal communication. 27 August 2018, Bloemfontein.
- Raosoft. 2004. *Sample size calculator*. Available at: <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html> [Accessed 31 January 2019].
- Schwartz, M. 2013. Opportunity costs: The true price of internships. *Dissent*. Available at: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/opportunity-costs-the-true-price-of-internships/> [Accessed 17 October 2018].
- Schwartz, R., 2010. Experiential Learning. A Potential framework for an Internship learning program In *Sport Management*, 2, 12-23.
- Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2013. *Research methods for business*. 6th ed. USA: John Wiley and Sons.
- Services SETA. 2020. Grants. Available at: https://static.pmg.org.za/Minister_of_DHET_DSI_Services_SETA_Strategic_Plan_Final_REPLACEMENT.pdf. [Accessed 12 March 2021].
- Shilumani, R. 2020. *An evaluation of the implementation of disciplinary codes and procedures at Nkhensani Hospital* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- South Africa. 1995. *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service*. Notice 1227 of 1995, November 15, 1995. Ministry for the Public Service and Administration. Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/168380.pdf
- South Africa. 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)*. Statutes of the Republic of South Africa—Constitutional Law, December 18, 1996. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa. 1997. *White Paper on Human Resource Management for the Public Service*. Government Gazette No. 18594, December 31, 1997. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa. 1998. *Skills Development Act (97 of 1998)*. Government Gazette No. 401(19420), November 2, 1998. Pretoria: Government Printer.

- South Africa. 1999. *Skills Development Levies Act (9 of 1999)*. Government Gazette No. 406(19984), April 30, 1999. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa. 2001. *Public Service Regulations, 2001*. Government Notice No. R, January 5, 2001. Available at:
https://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/acts®ulations/regulations1999/PSRegulations_13_07_2012.pdf
- South Africa. Department of Public Service and Administration 2016. *Public Service Regulations, 2016*. Government Gazette No. 40167, July 27, 2016. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa. DPLG (Department of Provincial and Local Government). 2017. *National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government*. Available at: <http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/policy/090701capacitybuildingframework.pdf> [Accessed 18 February 2018].
- South Africa. DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration). 2006. *The Public Service Internship Programme: Step by step guide*. Available at:
https://www.dpsa.gov.za/dpsa2g/documents/hrd/DPSA_Internship.pdf [Accessed 5 June 2018].
- South Africa. DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration). 2013. *Annual Report 2012/13*. Available at:
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/dpsaannualreport2012-2013fulldoc.pdf [Accessed 4 August 2019].
- South African Government. 2021, March 02. *Premier Sisi Ntombela: Free State, State of the Province Address of 2021*. Available at: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/fs-sopa-2-mar-2021-0000>. [Accessed 3 April 2021].
- StatsSA. 2021. South Africa's youth continues to bear the burden of unemployment. Available at: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?s=youth%20unemployment>. [Accessed 13 January 2022].
- StatsSA. 2023. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Available at: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02112ndQuarter2023.pdf>. [Accessed 10 October 2023].

- Strehlenert, H. 2017. *From policy to practice: Exploring the implementation of a national policy for improving health and social care* (PhD thesis). Sweden: Karolinska Institutet.
- Takawira, M. 2019. *Addressing skills shortages in the South African residential construction industry through automation* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: University of the Witwatersrand.
- Tebele, M. 2016. *Problems and challenges related to public policy implementation within the South African democratic dispensation: A theoretical exploration* (Master's dissertation). South Africa: North-West University.
- Thomas, R. 2015. *Employee performance: The challenge for managers in the Free State public service* (PhD thesis). South Africa: University of the Free State.
- Tom, S. 2019, September 24. The average intern's salary is R3 940 per month: Why is it so low? News24. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/south-africa/the-average-interns-salary-is-r3-940-per-month-why-is-it-so-low-20190924> [Accessed 13 July 2021].
- Tomkins, L. and Ulus, E. 2015. 'Oh, was that "experiential learning"?!' Spaces, synergies and surprises with Kolb's learning cycle. *Management Learning*, 47(2):158–178.
- Van der Westhuizen, E.J. 2016. *Human resource management in government: A South African perspective on theories, politics and processes*. Cape Town: Juta and Company.
- Viemont, J. 2016. *Internships: One more advantage of college in Europe*. 2nd ed. Madrid: William Morrow Paperbacks.
- Vulekamali. 2021. *Higher Education and Training National Department Budget for 2020–21*. Available at: <https://vulekamali.gov.za/2020-21/national/departments/higher-education-and-training/> [Accessed 1 March 2021].
- Waxman, O.B. 2018, July 25. How internships replaced the entry-level job. *TIME*. Available at: <https://time.com/5342599/history-of-interns-internships/> [Accessed 3 May 2021].
- Wilkinson, A., Pettifor, A., Rosenberg, M., Halpern, C.T., Thirumurthy, H., Collinson, M.A., and Kahn, K. 2017. The employment environment for youth in rural South Africa: A mixed-method study. *Development Southern Africa*, 34(1):17–32.
- World Economic Forum. 2019. *Global risks report*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Zehr, S.M. 2016. *Student internship experiences and learning opportunities: A mixed methods study* (PhD dissertation). USA: University of Illinois.

Attachment A: Interview Schedule: Semi-Structured Interviews

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: For Staff Members responsible for the implementation of the Unemployed Youth Graduate Internship Programme in their respective Provincial Government Department in the Free State Province. (Human Resource Development Managers, Practitioners and Skills Development Facilitators (SDF's). For the purpose of this study, participants are not forced to provide any information that conflicts their interests.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Mark with an

X

1. Gender ratio:	Male	
	Female	
	Other	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

2. Workplace:	Social Development	
	Public Works	
	COGTA	
	Office of the Premier	
	Agriculture Department	
	DESTEA	
	Police, Roads and Transport	
	Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

3. Age:	18-29	
	30-39	
	40-49	
	50 and older	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

4. Highest level of education:	Matric/Grade 12 (NQF 4)	
	Certificate or Advance Certificate (NQF 5)	

	National Diploma (NQF 6)	
	BTech/Bachelor's Degree (NQF 7)	
	Postgraduate Diploma/Honours Degree (NQF 8)	
	Master's Degree (NQF 9)	
	Doctoral degree (NQF 10)	
	Other (please specify)	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

5. Salary level:	Below level 6	
	Levels 7 and 8	
	Levels 9 and 10	
	Level 11 and 12	
	Level 13 and Higher	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

6. Position occupied at present:	Human resource development practitioner	
	Assistant Director (SDF)	
	Deputy Director (HRD Manager)	
	Director (HRD Manager)	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

7. Years in your current	Five years and less	
	6-10 years	
	10 years -15 years	
	15 years and more	
Observation:		

SECTION B: FOCUSING ON THE TRAINING RECEIVED SO FAR BY THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH GRADUATES.

The following section will focus on the effectiveness of either the BB2E or the new Cadet training programmes in developing conceptual, interpersonal and technical skills for unemployed youth graduates in the public service.

Explanation: The training programs provided to unemployed youth Interns on the internship programme, provide first-hand experience on how work is executed and shared to produce an objective. The shared learning and shared doing experience, possess a deep impact on unemployed youth graduates who may be considered as future employees of the organization. The shared learning and doing experience assists unemployed youth graduates to better understand where their education and experience fits into the real world. In this study, training involves someone with specific skills working with other employees to transfer the skills that are required to improve in their employment positions. Organizations can provide training internally and externally. This internal training could be on-the-job within the organization premises with the employee attending presentations or demonstrations. While the external training which could be done by different training companies, universities and colleges which have expertise in the identified area.

8. Which training interventions have been rolled out by the FSPG to enhance the unemployed youth graduates' skills, knowledge and attitude with regards to the public service?

Observation by Researcher:

9. In your opinion, do you think the PSIP as implemented by FSPG imparts conceptual skills to Unemployed Youth Graduates? If the answer is Yes or No, please explain.

Observation by Researcher:

10. Do you think the PSIP helps to develop Interpersonal and Technical skills to Unemployed Youth Graduates? Please explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

SECTION C: PSIP Challenges confronting its effective implementation in the Free State Provincial Government.

In the following section the focus will be to determine the PSIP challenges that unemployed youth graduate interns, Mentors and Supervisors (Managers) face during their implementation of the internship programme.

Explanation: Potential challenges are another important aspect that needs to be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of internship programmes on an organization and the unemployed youth graduate interns. Various challenges continue to have an impact on the effective implementation of the PSIP in the SA public service. In order for these challenges to be addressed, these challenges first need to be identified and acknowledged in order for them to be effectively addressed. It is further noted that unemployed youth graduate interns which possess the ability to manage work environment challenges, possess a far better chance at employment opportunities after acquiring experience.

11. What are the challenges experienced by the Department during the implementation of the PSIP?

Observation by Researcher:

12. What could be done by the FSPG and other stakeholders to address the PSIP challenges facing your department?

Observation by Researcher:

13. Do you think the Mentorship programme is effective? Please explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

14. Do you think Mentors are appointed based on their competency and experience? Explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

15. In your opinion, do you think Mentors are sufficiently trained to mentor

unemployed youth graduate Interns on the PSIP?

Observation by Researcher:

16. In your opinion, is the PSIP implemented effectively by the FSPG? Please explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

Attachment B: Interview Schedule: Focus Group Discussions

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: For all Unemployed Youth Graduates Interns serving in an Internship Programme in the Free State Provincial Government. For the purpose of this study, participants are not forced to provide any information that conflicts their interests.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Mark with an X

1. Gender ratio:	Male	
	Female	
	Other	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

2. Workplace:	Social Development	
	Public Works	
	COGTA	
	Office of the Premier	
	Agriculture Department	
	DESTEA	
	Police, Roads and Transport	
	Sports, Arts and Culture and Recreation	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

3. Age:	18-29	
	30-39	
	40-49	
	50 and older	
Observation:		

Mark with an X

SECTION B: FOCUSING ON THE TRAINING RECEIVED SO FAR BY THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH GRADUATES.

The following section will focus on the effectiveness of either the BB2E or the new Cadet training programmes in developing conceptual, interpersonal and technical skills for unemployed youth graduates in the public service.

Explanation: The training programs provided to unemployed youth Interns on the internship programme, provide first-hand experience on how work is executed and shared to produce an objective. The shared learning and shared doing experience, possess a deep impact on unemployed youth graduates who may be considered as future employees of the organization. The shared learning and doing experience assists unemployed youth graduates to better understand where their education and experience fits into the real world. In this study, training involves someone with specific skills working with other employees to transfer the skills that are required to improve in their employment positions. Organizations can provide training internally and externally. This internal training could be on-the-job within the organization premises with the employee attending presentations or demonstrations. While the external training which could be done by different training companies, universities and colleges which have expertise in the identified area.

4. Which training interventions have been rolled out by the FSPG to enhance unemployed youth graduates' interns skills, knowledge and attitudes with regards to the public service?

Observation by Researcher:

5. In your opinion, do you think the PSIP as implemented by the FSPG, imparts Conceptual skills to unemployed youth graduates? If the answer is Yes or No, Please explain.

Observation by Researcher:

6. Do you think the PSIP helps to develop Interpersonal and Technical skills? Please explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

SECTION C: PSIP Challenges confronting its effective implementation in the Free State Provincial Government.

In the following section the focus will be to determine the PSIP challenges that unemployed youth graduate interns, Mentors and Supervisors (Managers) face during their implementation of the internship programme.

Explanation: Potential challenges are another important aspect that needs to be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of internship programmes on an organization and the unemployed youth graduate interns. Various challenges continue to have an impact on the effective implementation of the PSIP in the SA public service. In order for these challenges to be addressed, these challenges first need to be identified and acknowledged in order for them to be effectively addressed. It is further noted that unemployed youth graduate interns which possess the ability to manage work environment challenges, possess a far better chance at employment opportunities after acquiring experience.

7. What are the challenges experienced by the Department during the implementation of the PSIP?

Observation by Researcher:

8. What could be done by the FSPG and other stakeholders to address the PSIP challenges facing your department?

Observation by Researcher:

9. Were you given a Mentor at the beginning of the program?

Observation by Researcher:

10. Do you think Mentors are appointed based on their competency and experience? Explain your answer.

Observation by Researcher:

11. In your opinion, do you think Mentors are sufficiently trained to mentor unemployed youth graduate Interns on the PSIP?

Observation by Researcher:

12. In your opinion, what recommendations can you make to the FSPG on how to improve the implementation of the PSIP?

Observation by Researcher:

Attachment C: Letter of Approval by the FSPG



Office of the Premier
4th Floor, OR Tambo Building
Cnr St Andrew & Markgraaf Streets
Bloemfontein, 9300

Mr Thabo Donald Litsoane
University of the Free State
Economic and Management Sciences
Public Administration and Management
Bloemfontein, 9301

Dear Mr Thabo Donald Litsoane

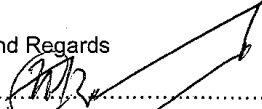
RE: Request permission to conduct an Academic Research Study in the Office of the Premier and the respective Provincial Departments in the Free State Provincial Government.

1. This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted for Mr Thabo Donald Litsoane, a Master's degree student at the University of the Free State who is currently employed in the Office of the Premier in the Free State Provincial Government, to conduct an academic research study on "Evaluation of Internship Programmes of the Free State Provincial Government".
2. It is important to note that the Office of the Premier and respective Heads of Departments in the Free State Province cannot decree to its officials or stakeholders whether or not to partake in your study. The onus rests with the researcher to acquire voluntary participation in the study and ensure consent from the officials.
3. This letter also serves to confirm that permission to access to the contact details of the relevant Human Resource Development (HRD) Managers and unemployed youth graduates in the Free State Provincial Government (FSPG) is provided to the

researcher. Proper arrangements will need to be negotiated in advance with the respondents as the research will be conducted during working hours.

4. Information obtained during the research study (through questionnaires, interviews, records and documentation) must be used exclusively for this study and treated with utmost confidentiality, whether in the storage of data, analysis and publication process.
5. Office of the Premier and the respective Provincial Departments in the Free State Province will not provide any funding or remuneration for officials participating in the academic study at any given stage.
6. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources.
7. Upon completing the study, the researcher must supply the Office of the Premier and the respective Provincial Departments in the Free State Province with the completed Thesis study.

Kind Regards



.....

Kopung Ralikotaane

Director General: Free State Provincial Government

Date: 25/08/2022

Attachment D: Letter of Approval by the University of the Free State



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (CHREC)

11-Jan-2023

Dear Mr Thabo Litsoane

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

An internship model for the Free State Provincial Government

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/1908/23

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive
Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa

P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: +27 (0)51 401 9337
Adri.duP@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



Attachment E: Research Study Information Leaflet and Consent Form

DATE

September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

An internship model for the Free State Provincial Government.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER (S) NAMES(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane 2010005896 074 928 5440

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
Public Administration and Management

STUDY LEADERS (S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER

Prof. L. Lues: 051 401 2886

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research can be defined as an original and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to gain knowledge and understanding of a concept or phenomenon. Research can also be defined as a journey that leads to the discovery of new knowledge, theories and even concepts. For the purpose of this study, research will be defined as a careful, patient and systematic investigation in some field of knowledge.

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The Free State Provincial Government (FSPG) has taken extensive measures at reducing the high level of youth unemployment in the Free State Province. Measures such as allocating unemployed youth graduates into Learnerships, Artisan programmes, and the Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP). However, despite the positive enthusiasm by the FSPG to incorporate the PSIP into its departments, challenges continue to negatively impact the effective implementation of the PSIP. The aim of this study is to conduct an evaluation of the internship model in the Free State Provincial Government (FSPG) focusing on unemployed youth graduates from the year 2018 to 2023.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The study is conducted by Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane, a Master's Degree student at the University of the Free State (UFS) who is currently working in the Office of the Premier, Free State Province at the Free State Training and Development Institute (FSTDI).

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee at UFS. Permission to conduct the study has also been granted from Office of the Premier in the Free State Provincial Government. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD 2022/1908/23

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are invited to participate in this study because we believe that with your capacity as a Human resource development manager/ Skills development facilitator and Human resource development practitioner, you understand and have the necessary knowledge of the PSIP in your department and the public service. Thus you can contribute valuable insight regarding the current challenges in implementing the PSIP in the FSPG from the year 2018 to 2023. You have been purposively sampled based on your knowledge of human resource and development practices and their contribution to service delivery and the eradication of high youth unemployment in the Free State Province. Approximately (11) Skills development facilitators; (5) Human resource development managers; (12) Human resource development practitioners have been sampled.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY?

The contact details of these supervisors will be attained from the various Human Resource Development sub-directorates in the FSPG and the officials will be requested to participate voluntarily to the research study. The permission to conduct a scientific research study will be requested from the Director-General's office of the FSPG. The permission clearance is needed to be able to collect and disclose transparently the information collected, analysed and interpreted. Furthermore, the respondents will participate voluntarily on the study and no pressure or force will be used by the researcher to compel respondents to participate. The information provided and collected from the respondents will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality.

CAN A PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You do not have to participate in the research if you do not wish to do so. Hence you may choose to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

The researcher will provide full and accurate information to the respondents about the processes and procedures the research will utilize. All respondents participating in this study will be requested to give consent to the study by signing a consent form that will be prepared by the researcher. The study will benefit respondents by clarifying the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP and therefore seek to establish solutions to the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP in the FSPG. The researcher will make every effort to ensure that respondents will not be connected to the information shared during the interviews or focus group discussions.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher will ensure that the risks involved in participating in this research study, does not outweigh the normal day-to-day risk involved by the respondents to get to work and back home. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, loss of work time is a potential risk for participants involved in this research study. However, the risk will be mitigated through acquiring permission first from the Director-General, to release staff that will be participating in the study. Proper arrangements will be made in advanced in order to allow the participants to make time available for the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews. The researcher will ensure that no respondent or participant is exposed to any form of stress, embarrassment or even loss of self-esteem due to their involvement in this research study.

The researcher will ensure the above-mentioned by keeping all respondents' identities private and not assign any respondents information to the data collected and utilizing crime-free environments like the use of the FSPG boardrooms and offices. This will be clearly communicated to all respondents.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

There is a possibility that you might share personal viewpoints during the interview or that you might feel uneasy discussing some topics. You do not have to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

For the purpose of this research study, all responses and inputs from the participants through interviews, questions in the focus group discussions will remain anonymous. The researcher will ensure that all comments, inputs and proposals from the participants or respondents will not be attributed to the participants or respondents' identity. In other words, the researcher will not link any comment, input or proposal to any respondent or any specific department. Therefore, all respondents' rights to privacy will be respected. Also, respondents will be given assurance that all audio recordings collected will only be used to transcribe and analyse the data.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

All data captured from respondents will be recorded on a tape recorder and in a note book, which will be kept in secret and strictly confidential. The research data (hard copies) will be kept in a safe locked filing cabinet of which only the researcher will know about. The data and all hard copies will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years at 124 Brahman Building, Nelson Mandela Drive, Bloemfontein for future research and academic purposes. All other electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The researcher will only dispose the data through means of deleting software information and burning hardcopies after the 5 years have lapsed. The final research report will be submitted to the Department of Public Administration and Management at the University of the Free State and the Free State Provincial Government.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Since participation to the research study remains voluntary to the unemployed youth graduates and the supervisors, there will be no material or financial benefit for individual respondents in this study.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane mobile: 074 928 5440 email: donaldlitsoane@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings will be anonymously processed into my research report, journal publications, and /or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recordings of the semi-structured interview.
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent form.

Full name of participant: _____
Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to [name of the respondent]. He or she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English. (If applicable: An interpreter was at hand to assist.)

Full name of researcher: _____
Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Attachment F: Research Study Information Leaflet and Consent Form

DATE

September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

An internship model for the Free State Provincial Government.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER (S) NAMES(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane 2010005896 074 928 5440

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
Public Administration and Management

STUDY LEADERS (S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER

Prof. L. Lues: 051 401 2886

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

Research can be defined as an original and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to gain knowledge and understanding of a concept or phenomenon. Research can also be defined as a journey that leads to the discovery of new knowledge, theories and even concepts. For the purpose of this study, research will be defined as a careful, patient and systematic investigation in some field of knowledge.

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The Free State Provincial Government (FSPG) has taken extensive measures at reducing the high level of youth unemployment in the Free State Province. Measures such as allocating unemployed youth graduates into Learnerships, Artisan programmes, and the Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP). However, despite the positive enthusiasm by the FSPG to incorporate the PSIP into its departments, challenges continue to negatively impact the effective implementation of the PSIP. The aim of this study is to conduct an evaluation of the internship model in the Free State Provincial Government (FSPG) focusing on unemployed youth graduates from the year 2018 to 2023.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The study is conducted by Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane, a Master's Degree student at the University of the Free State (UFS) who is currently working in the Office of the Premier, Free State Province at the Free State Training and Development Institute (FSTDI).

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee at UFS. Permission to conduct the study has been granted from Office of the Premier in the Free State Provincial Government. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: UFS-HSD 2022/1908/23

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are invited to participate in this study because we believe that with your capacity as a Human resource development manager/ Skills development facilitator and Human resource development practitioner, you understand and have the necessary knowledge of the PSIP in your department and the public service. Thus you can contribute valuable insight regarding the current challenges in implementing the PSIP in the FSPG from the year 2018 to 2023. You have been purposively sampled based on your knowledge of human resource and development practices and their contribution to service delivery and the eradication of high youth unemployment in the Free State Province. Approximately (89) unemployed youth graduates in the FSPG have been sampled for this study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY?

The contact details of the unemployed youth graduates will be extracted from the placement database that is captured by the Office of the Premier under the Skills development sub-directorate. The permission to conduct a scientific research study will be requested from the Director-General's office of the FSPG. The permission clearance is needed to be able to collect and disclose transparently the information collected, analysed and interpreted. Furthermore, the respondents will participate voluntarily in the study and no pressure or force will be used by the researcher to compel respondents to participate. The information provided and collected from the respondents will be treated with anonymity and confidentiality.

CAN A PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You do not have to participate in the research if you do not wish to do so. Hence you may choose to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

The researcher will provide full and accurate information to the respondents about the processes and procedures the research will utilize. All respondents participating in this study will be requested to give consent to the study by signing a consent form that will be prepared by the researcher. The study will benefit respondents by clarifying the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP and therefore seek to establish solutions to the challenges experienced by unemployed youth graduates on the PSIP in the FSPG. The researcher will make every effort to ensure that respondents will not be connected to the information shared during the interviews or focus group discussions.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The researcher will ensure that the risks involved in participating in this research study, does not outweigh the normal day-to-day risk involved by the respondents to get to work and back home. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, loss of work time is a potential risk for participants involved in this research study. However, the risk will be mitigated through acquiring permission first from the Director-General, to release unemployed youth graduates that will be participating in the study. Proper arrangements will be made in advanced in order to allow the participants to make time available for the researcher to conduct the focus group discussions. The researcher will ensure that no respondent or participant is exposed to any form of stress, embarrassment or even loss of self-esteem due to their involvement in this research study. The researcher will ensure the above-mentioned by keeping all respondents' identities private and not assign any respondents information to the data collected and

utilizing crime-free environments like the use of the FSPG boardrooms and offices. This will be clearly communicated to all respondents.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

There is a possibility that you might share personal viewpoints during the interview or that you might feel uneasy discussing some topics. You do not have to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

For the purpose of this research study, all responses and inputs from the participants through interviews, questions in the focus group discussions will remain anonymous. The researcher will ensure that all comments, inputs and proposals from the participants or respondents will not be attributed to the participants or respondents' identity. In other words, the researcher will not link any comment, input or proposal to any respondent or any specific department. Therefore, all respondents' rights to privacy will be respected. Also, respondents will be given assurance that all audio recordings collected will only be used to transcribe and analyse the data.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

All data captured from respondents will be recorded on a tape recorder and in a note book, which will be kept in secret and strictly confidential. The research data (hard copies) will be kept in a safe locked filing cabinet of which only the researcher will know about. The data and all hard copies will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years at 124 Brahman Building, Nelson Mandela Drive, Bloemfontein for future research and academic purposes. All other electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. The researcher will only dispose the data through means of deleting software information and burning hardcopies after the 5 years have lapsed. The final research report will be submitted to the Department of Public Administration and Management at the University of the Free State and the Free State Provincial Government.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Since participation to the research study remains voluntary to the unemployed youth graduates and the supervisors, there will be no material or financial benefit for individual respondents in this study.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Thabo Donald Litsoane mobile: 074 928 5440 email: donaldlitsoane@gmail.com.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings will be anonymously processed into my research report, journal publications, and /or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recordings of the focus group discussions.
I have received a signed copy of the informed consent form.

Full name of participant: _____
Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to [name of the respondent]. He or she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English. (If applicable: An interpreter was at hand to assist.)

Full name of researcher: _____
Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Attachment G: Declaration by Language Editor



17 Fallopus Street, Bloemfontein

+(27) 076 081 0730

info@rephraseit.co.za



22 November 2023

Student: Thabo Donald Litsokane

Student number: 2010005896

I declare that I language edited the master's dissertation titled, *An Internship Model for the Free State Provincial Government*

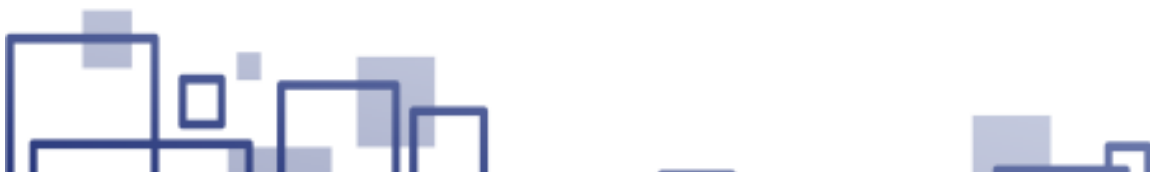
During the editing process, I looked for and corrected spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraph and syntax errors. Where I noticed inconsistencies or unclarity in the text, I made comments to draw the author's attention to the inconsistency or unclarity. I also made suggestions where changes could be made. Lastly, I double-checked the references in-text and in the reference list to make sure that they are consistent throughout. Where sources or source information were still missing, I indicated such to the author so that he could locate and add the missing information.

Disclaimer: The ultimate responsibility for accepting or rejecting the changes and recommendations rests with the student and I cannot be held responsible for any layout or language issues that might have emerged as a result of subsequent amendments to the text.

Yours sincerely

Johannes Pieter Odendaal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Odendaal".



Attachment H: Plagiarism report

Draft			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
9%	8%	2%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	scholar.ufs.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
2	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	1%	
3	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
4	repository.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	
5	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	
6	cdn.inst-fs-sin-prod.inscloudgate.net Internet Source	<1%	
7	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	
8	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%	
9	scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	

10	www.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %
11	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper	<1 %
12	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	<1 %
13	Submitted to Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Student Paper	<1 %
14	ujcontent.uj.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
15	Submitted to University of the Free State Student Paper	<1 %
16	static.pmg.org.za Internet Source	<1 %
17	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
18	southafricagazette.com Internet Source	<1 %
19	www.psc.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %
20	univendspace.univen.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
21	scholarcommons.sc.edu	

	Internet Source	<1 %
22	Submitted to 2U Baylor University EDU Student Paper	<1 %
23	Submitted to University of Venda Student Paper	<1 %
24	Mun Fie Tsoi. "Chapter 39 Supporting Productive Integration of Web 2.0-Mediated Collaboration", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2010 Publication	<1 %
25	servicesseta.org.za Internet Source	<1 %
26	Submitted to Regenesys Business School Student Paper	<1 %
27	www.westerncape.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %
28	Amy Richmond Krakowka. "Field Trips as Valuable Learning Experiences in Geography Courses", Journal of Geography, 2012 Publication	<1 %
29	Submitted to Sheffield Hallam University Student Paper	<1 %
30	erepository.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source	<1 %

31	Submitted to Jose Rizal University Student Paper	<1 %
32	Mo'men Hani Mahmoud, Rosly Othman. "Effects of New Public Management Reforms on Human Resource Practices: A Case Study in Jordan", Management and Labour Studies, 2023 Publication	<1 %
33	Submitted to University of Stellenbosch, South Africa Student Paper	<1 %
34	link.springer.com Internet Source	<1 %
35	ijrcm.org.in Internet Source	<1 %
36	scholars.indstate.edu Internet Source	<1 %
37	www.g200youthforum.org Internet Source	<1 %
38	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1 %
39	Cassandra Sue Ellen Jamison, Jacob Fuher, Annie Wang, Aileen Huang-Saad. "Experiential learning implementation in undergraduate engineering education: a systematic search	<1 %

and review", European Journal of Engineering Education, 2022

Publication

40	Willig, Carla. "EBOOK: Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology", EBOOK: Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2013 Publication	<1 %
41	Submitted to Murray State University Student Paper	<1 %
42	Submitted to Singapore Institute of Technology Student Paper	<1 %
43	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1 %
44	Submitted to University of Newcastle upon Tyne Student Paper	<1 %
45	www.mdpi.com Internet Source	<1 %
46	Submitted to University of Witwatersrand Student Paper	<1 %
47	schools-study.com Internet Source	<1 %
48	www.agriseta.co.za Internet Source	<1 %

49	www.greengazette.co.za Internet Source	<1 %
50	Submitted to University of Cape Town Student Paper	<1 %
51	www.coursehero.com Internet Source	<1 %
52	Submitted to University of Pretoria Student Paper	<1 %
53	oialearninghub.blogspot.ch Internet Source	<1 %
54	www.gpwonline.co.za Internet Source	<1 %
55	Submitted to Nottingham Trent University Student Paper	<1 %
56	open.uct.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
57	openaccess.library.uitm.edu.my Internet Source	<1 %
58	www.matjhabeng.fs.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %
59	Submitted to National University of Ireland, Galway Student Paper	<1 %
60	Submitted to Stadio Holdings	

	Student Paper	<1 %
61	Submitted to University of Paisley Student Paper	<1 %
62	www2.csudh.edu Internet Source	<1 %
63	Submitted to University of Surrey Student Paper	<1 %
64	Submitted to Chiang Mai University Student Paper	<1 %
65	Submitted to Pacific University Student Paper	<1 %
66	Submitted to Mindanao State University Student Paper	<1 %
67	Submitted to Monash University Student Paper	<1 %
68	Submitted to University of South Africa (UNISA) Student Paper	<1 %
69	libguides.lib.uct.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
70	ro.uow.edu.au Internet Source	<1 %
71	openresearch.lsbu.ac.uk Internet Source	

		<1 %
72	www.dsm.org.cy Internet Source	<1 %
73	Submitted to Technological University Dublin Student Paper	<1 %
74	Submitted to University of East London Student Paper	<1 %
75	www.ros-test.hw.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
76	Celestin Mayombe. "Vocational Education and Training in Sub-Saharan Africa", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2021 Publication	<1 %
77	Kwadwo Ayeh Obiri, Bassam Bjeirmi, Prince Boateng. "A System Thinking Approach to Human Resource Development in the Oil Industry", Journal of Energy Research and Reviews, 2020 Publication	<1 %
78	Submitted to University of Johannesburg Student Paper	<1 %
79	erl.ucc.edu.gh:8080 Internet Source	<1 %
80	www.polity.org.za Internet Source	

		<1 %
81	www.sun.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
82	Joshua Dumisani Lushaba, Cecile Naomi Gerwel Proches. "chapter 5 Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Skills Development Programmes for Teachers in the Ehlanzeni District, South Africa", IGI Global, 2022 Publication	<1 %
83	Jung Eun Hong. "Promoting Teacher Adoption of GIS Using Teacher-Centered and Teacher-Friendly Design", Journal of Geography, 2014 Publication	<1 %
84	Linda Jansen van Rensburg, Wim Naudé. "Human rights and development: the case of local government transformation in South Africa", Public Administration and Development, 2007 Publication	<1 %
85	Sibulelo Qhogwana, Puleng Segalo. "Women offenders' experiences of rehabilitation in a South African correctional centre", Journal of Psychology in Africa, 2022 Publication	<1 %
86	Submitted to University of Wales Swansea Student Paper	<1 %

87	aaajournals.org Internet Source	<1 %
88	archive.org Internet Source	<1 %
89	businessdocbox.com Internet Source	<1 %
90	docplayer.net Internet Source	<1 %
91	etd.uum.edu.my Internet Source	<1 %
92	ir.cut.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
93	mcgill.ca Internet Source	<1 %
94	pure.coventry.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
95	ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
96	www.dhet.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %
97	www.mobt3ath.com Internet Source	<1 %
98	Clark, Tom, Foster, Liam, Sloan, Luke. "Bryman's Social Research Methods 6E XE",	<1 %

Bryman's Social Research Methods 6E XE,
2022

Publication

99	Dinesh C. Jinabhai. "New Challenges for South African Development and Training — Linkages to Empirical Research", Public Personnel Management, 2005 Publication	<1 %
100	Edgard B. Cornacchione Jr. "Fidelity and game-based technology in management education", BAR - Brazilian Administration Review, 2012 Publication	<1 %
101	digitalcommons.lsu.edu Internet Source	<1 %
102	fdocuments.net Internet Source	<1 %
103	pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu Internet Source	<1 %
104	ritsumei.repo.nii.ac.jp Internet Source	<1 %
105	udsm.ac.tz Internet Source	<1 %
106	www.treasury.gov.za Internet Source	<1 %

107 Didier Mutter, Francesco Rubino, Michele Simone Guy Temporal, Jacques Marescaux. "Surgical education and Internet-based simulation: The World Virtual University", Minimally Invasive Therapy & Allied Technologies, 2009 <1 %
Publication

108 Keady, John. "Reconsidering Neighbourhoods and Living with Dementia: Spaces, Places, and People", Reconsidering Neighbourhoods and Living with Dementia: Spaces, Places, and People, 2023 <1 %
Publication

Exclude quotes On
Exclude bibliography On

Exclude matches < 5 words