Higher education and job creation in South Africa: institutional mentorship for employability

OPHELIE ROMANCE LAURE DANGBEGNON

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Higher education and job creation in South Africa: institutional mentorship for employability

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral research project to the Most High God, my Tower of strength. To you, El Deah, the source of my knowledge, inspiration, wisdom, and understanding. Abba Father, you have always been my wonderful Counselor and my Comforter, and it is only by Your grace that I have successfully completed this thesis. Receive my eternal gratitude.

Secondly, to my wonderful children, Enzo and Kayla Dangbégnon, who fill my life with joy and laughter. I pray that this thesis inspires you and motivates you to be passionate about the pursuit of knowledge.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Full names of the student: **OPHELIE ROMANCE LAURE DANGBEGNON**

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DECLARATION

1. I understand what plagiarism is, and am aware of the policy of University of Pretoria regarding plagiarism.

2. I declare that the dissertation titled **Higher education and job creation in South Africa: institutional mentorship for employability** is my work and that sources consulted have been fully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.

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Date: 16 February 2023

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Ethics Committee

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DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD
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Lefapha la Thuto

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, **OPHELIE ROMANCE LAURE DANGBEGNON**, declare that this dissertation, titled **Higher education and job creation in South Africa: institutional mentorship for employability**, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

OPHELIE ROMANCE LAURE DANGBEGNON

16 February 2023

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm my involvement in the academic editing, language control, text redaction, research methodology compatibility and technical compliance for the **Doctoral thesis** manuscript of **Mrs Ophelie Romance Laure Dangbegnon (Student Number: 11120968)** submitted to me for the above-cited service in respect of her fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree (Education Management, Law and Policy) registered with the University of Pretoria, and entitled:

Higher education and job creation in South Africa: Institutional mentorship for employability

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In compliance with expected ethical requirements in research, I have further undertaken to keep all aspects of **Mrs ORL Dangbegnon's** study confidential, and as her own individual initiative.

Sincerely.

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ABSTRACT

As postulated in human capital theory, education is a substantial investment with potential benefits and return rates for individuals and society. Over time, various studies have shown that the acquisition of a higher level of education ideally leads to better employment prospects, with employees earning relatively higher salaries, which directly impacts a country's economic advancement and human and social capital development. Despite the increasing numbers of graduates, the supply of suitable employment is not, due to factors such as education misalignment and lack of skills. Other studies suggest that graduate unemployment is also a factor of higher education institutions (HEIs) not always successfully preparing students to become influential labour market analysts. Paradoxically, the South African youth unemployment rate continues to rise quarterly despite increasing graduate numbers. It is against this background that this study aims to determine whether an institutional mentorship programme would significantly increase graduates' success in the labour market and equip them with the necessary innovative tools for contributing to job creation. For this purpose, Kram's mentorship theory was used to frame the philosophical grounding of this study. This theory is based fundamentally on the interaction between an older mentor who is experienced and a younger protégé who is still less experienced. During their interaction, the mentor is primarily tasked with developing the specific career needs of the protégé.

Through its evolution over time, Kram's mentorship theory has focused on the relational aspect that is embedded and developed within the context of the protégé's career. Together with a quantitative research design, the theory helps to broaden the understanding of the link between institutional mentorship and employability. Such an approach further helps explain whether this type of embedded relational mentorship could be viewed as a possible strategy to thwart the growing graduate unemployment rates. Accordingly, an electronic survey was administered to alumni of a South African higher education institution to determine the efficacy or otherwise of the relational mentorship approach as a mechanism to enhance graduate employability. Results from this study show that participation in institutional mentorship programmes can address the issue of skills mismatch and field of study misalignment, which are listed as some of the causal factors of unemployment in South Africa. Furthermore, data

show the efficacy of institutional mentorship in boosting institutional reputation, garnering loyalty, equipping participants with relevant employability skills, reducing job search periods, increasing job attainment likelihood, and promoting protégés personal well-being.

Keywords: graduate unemployment, employability, higher education, institutional mentorship

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
ETI	Employment Tax Incentive
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IICJICA	Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
JIPSA	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
NDP	National Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SAGDA	South African Graduates Development Association
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Discussions on higher education (HE) and higher education institutions (HEIs) have been profoundly challenging in the recent century due to the inherent difficulty of dealing with issues of institutional reputation, mentorship, graduate empowerment and employability (Cheng, Adekola, Albia & Cai, 2021). However, over the years, several definitions have been given to higher education (Kędra, 2018) (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020). For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines HE as "all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities" (UNESCO, 1998, p. 1). Such a definition presents higher education as the education which occurs at the tertiary level and includes research activities conducted at these institutions. Still, the mentoring role of HE is often overlooked.

On the other hand, higher education institutions are viewed as those tertiary places of learning created for those who can afford them (Dillahunt, Wang & Teasley, 2014). In countries worldwide, professionally oriented institutions, known as universities, educate, contribute to the upliftment of society, and/ or add to the existing body of knowledge, that is, conduct research (Institute for International Cooperation Japan International Cooperation Agency (IICJICA), 2003). In their primary role, HEIs such as universities and universities of technology have been known as places of learnership and advancement of upward social and occupational mobility (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Essentially, these institutions are designed to prepare and equip students with the skill sets needed to succeed in the work environment while also contributing to the existing pool of knowledge for the betterment of society (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2019, p. 3). In such a context, the purpose of HEIs is to train a skilled and versatile workforce that can contribute towards the country's development and achieve knowledge-driven economic growth, equality, and poverty reduction (Salmi, 2010). If HE plays such roles, it is unclear how these roles align with an institution's reputation in terms of quality and ensuring students are mentored and empowered to function well as members of society aside from being workers.

It is the expectation of students, parents, governments, and society in general for the institutions of higher learning also to produce exceptional cadres of health workers,

bankers, educators, academics, scientists, businesspeople, future leaders, and other cadres of highly educated and skilled professionals (Salmi, 2010, p. 590). These expectations are some of the factors that have engendered changes in the HE landscape and triggered an unprecedented demand for access to HE opportunities (World Bank, 2018). Graduate empowerment also figures in HE stakeholders' aspirations. It can be defined as the continuous actions of a collective aimed at assisting individuals to achieve better health, welfare, overall contentment and satisfaction (Wallerstein, 1993). In a HE context, the collective may represent HEIs, private and public sectors, parents, students, labour sector, to name a few. Graduates are empowered through the active mobilisation of a community (stakeholders) to equip them with the resources needed to improve their lives, participate in their community and understand their environment. Thus far, HE's primary focus has been training students for the working world. In South Africa, where one of the main challenges is the development and improvement of its people's knowledge and skills, society expects higher education to provide students with the tools and competence to navigate and achieve success in uncharted futures. Since entrepreneurship education has the potential to provide the relevant curriculum and competencies to support youth in developing resilience, independence, innovation, and the capacity to recognise opportunities for living productive and fulfilling lives, HE is required to prepare students in this area. Whether the curriculum training is enough to prepare students professionally and entrepreneurially is an aspect that the literature should have emphasised.

Internationally, it is also acknowledged that higher education plays a pivotal role in promoting durable and sustainable growth while furthering social and occupational upward mobility. Globally, employees with HE qualifications earn, on average, 17% more than their counterparts with lesser qualifications (World Bank, 2018, p. 1). Therefore, an appropriately skilled and competent labour force with quality HE qualifications propels countries worldwide to achieve sustainable growth and innovation (World Bank, 2018, p. 1). This framing assumes that HE is solely responsible for job attainment, creation and economic growth without highlighting how mentorship interventions can promote sustainability through professional and employability skills.

Participation rates in South African higher education institutes have increased in recent years. According to the 2017 Higher Education and Skills Report in South

Africa, HEI enrolment rates increased by 30% from 2000 to 2008 and 22% from 2008 to 2016 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). In tandem with the National Development Plan (NDP), a considerable portion of the South African government's budget is allocated to the education sector to fulfil its objective of promoting access to quality higher education and training opportunities for all. Such allocation in public funding of the education sector is prompted by the realisation that it is instrumental in uplifting and improving human capital and societal growth. In this regard, the total post-school education budget for the 2017-2018 financial year increased to R149.7 billion, 2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Nevertheless, one cannot readily conclude that a high HE budget will automatically result in employment and economic growth for South Africa. In practice, there is a need to provide alternative institutional strategies for promoting graduate employability with limited resources.

The combination of the knowledge-based society (which is driven by the link between the years of study and income) and the knowledge-based economy (which is driven by the direct link between human resources development and economic growth) places further strain on higher education institutions to develop economically active and relevant workers (Jabłoński, Jabłoński & Fedirko, 2018). Moreover, HEIs are still expected to adequately prepare students who will ultimately become fully functional citizens (Johnson, et al., 2016). However, contributing to national economic growth should include how higher education can ensure graduate empowerment through mentorship while maintaining the institutional reputation. Put differently, there is a need for research to show the link between institutional mentorship and graduate preparation for the labour market, especially in Africa, where the employment rate is continuously declining (Kappel, 2021, p. 19). Thus, this study argues that there is an immediate need to shift from considering HEIs as economic boosters rather than institutions meeting the multiple needs of the youth in a complex and rapidly evolving world.

1.2   BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In terms of the human capital theory, education was viewed mainly as an opportunity to create and increase human capital and spur economic growth (Schultz, 1961) (Becker, 1964) (Ogundari & Awokuse, 2018). Such a perspective posits that individuals possess the capacity to increase their productivity through greater

educational attainment and skills training (Tran, Is graduate employability the 'whole-of-higher-education-issue'? 2015). As a result, other forms of higher education training were established due to increasing financial costs incurred in the education sector and economic growth linked to higher education (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). However, research shows that increased human capital in the world of work is due to the high levels of education, which leads to increased productivity and its consequent growth and high outputs (Bhorat, Cassim & Tseng, 2016). Research has also demonstrated that extensive study periods lead to employees' better earnings, directly affecting a country's economic advancement and human capital development (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016).

Furthermore, educational advancement enhances the chances of reducing poverty and better access to stable income sources, which are factors of economic growth (World Bank Group, 2018). More research shows that extra years of educational attainment ultimately result in high income in the labour market and a considerable effect on job opportunities (Succi & Canovi, 2020). What remains ambiguous is how purely academic, curriculum-based activities empower graduates for work or lead to higher salary perks.

Higher education graduates expect to be adequately prepared by their higher education institutions for an efficient transition into the professional world, where they aspire to be promoted to higher positions with upgraded job specifications (Succi & Canovi, 2020). However, research should reveal whether academic training in preparation for work truly influences academic and career outcomes. This is because employers expect HEIs to train their students to be versatile and possess transferable abilities outside their respective academic fields of study (Elamir, 2020). Therefore, there appears to be a misalignment in the literature between the curriculum or programmatic offerings of HEIs, society, the labour market, and graduates' demands (Nicolescu & Cristian, 2009, p. 18).

In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, 83% of the graduates have secured employment, and those without a secondary school education constitute about 56% of the schooling population (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012). In South Africa, higher education institutions are not always successful in preparing graduates for the complexities associated with advanced knowledge economies, as demonstrated in the

increasing graduate unemployment rate - which stood at 11% in the second quarter of 2021.

The downward spiral of graduate unemployment in South Africa implies that the country's labour market benefits of higher education might also be declining correspondingly. For example, statistics reveal that more than 200,000 of just over 250,000 unemployed university graduates had diploma qualifications (Stats SA, 2021). Yet, the second quarter of the 2021 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) report reveals that the South African graduate unemployment rate was just over 23% lower than the official national unemployment rate, which is slightly above 34% (Stats SA, 2021, p. 16). Based on the above-cited evidence suggesting that highly qualified graduates' employment prospects are much better than those with lower qualifications, it could be safely concluded that attaining a higher level of education remains an essential factor in ameliorating the South African youth's employment prospects.

Although unemployment is defined differently in various countries, most of which adhere to the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) statistically informed international benchmarking of graduate unemployment trends (Alenda-Demoutiez, 2020), the current graduate unemployment trends are relatively high by international comparisons. A comparison of global unemployment data reveals that the average unemployment rate of OECD graduates was about 5% in 2020 (OECD, 2021). Figure 1.1 below depicts the South African graduate unemployment rate in its international context.
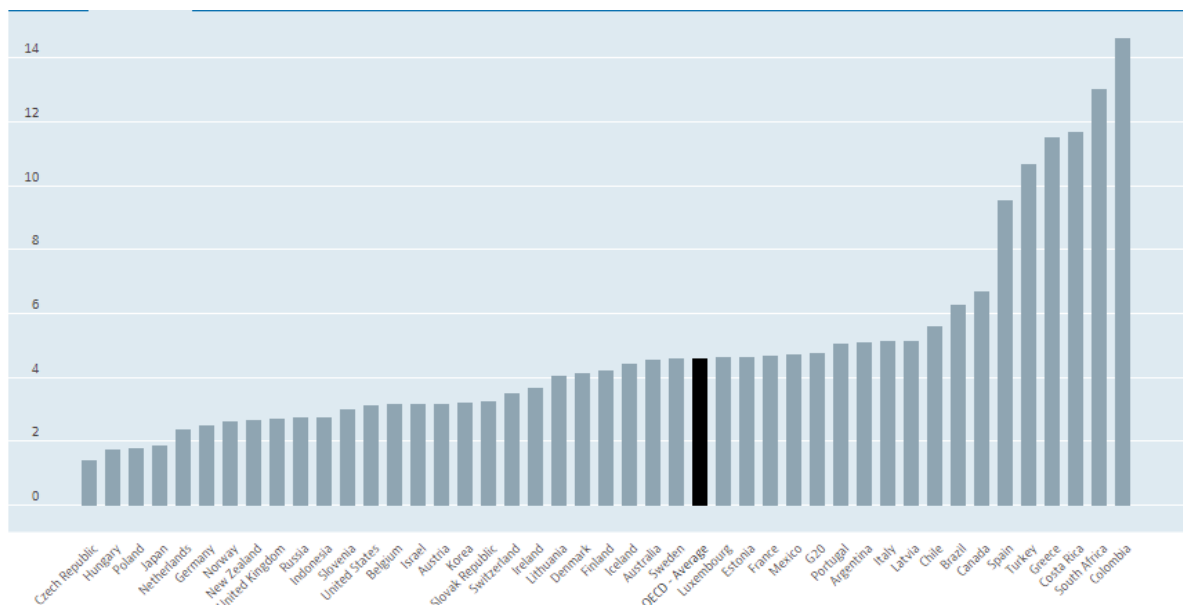
Figure 1.1: Unemployment rates by education level: Tertiary, % of 25–64-year-olds, 2020

Over the years, attempts at solving the graduate unemployment crisis have led to the creation of structures to provide solutions to the skills shortage and promote economic growth. These structures or organisations include the South African Graduates Development Association (SAGDA), the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA). In the last decade alone, a multitude of policies have been initiated to focus on unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. These initiatives include (but are not limited to) the National Growth Path (NGP), the National Development Plan (NDP), the employment tax incentives, the green and white papers on post-school education and training, the curriculum assessment and policy statement (CAPS), the national skill accord, the basic education accord, and the youth employment accord (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel & Leibbrandt, 2018).

Despite the plethora of initiatives and their intended contributions to growth in the graduate labour force over the years, the graduate unemployment rate is still growing significantly (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Such a state of affairs suggests that higher education institutions must intensify their role in preparing their youthful graduates for more active societal and labour market participation (Assaad, Krafft & Salehi-Isfahani, 2018). Researchers worldwide continue to extensively investigate the misalignments between HE deliveries and expectations of society and graduates, as there are still apparent gaps concerning HE and its role in graduate (un) employment. In this particular regard, this study focused on exploring the identified literature gaps to determine the role and importance of institutional mentorship in graduates' employability, career prospects (job creation), and overall wellness.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Enrolment rates in South African HEIs continue to increase and rapidly approach the National Development Plan's objective of reaching 1.6 million enrolments by 2030. In this regard, public and private HEIs surpassed the 1.2 million mark in 2019, which translates into a 31% increase from 2010 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2021). Notwithstanding that a slight decline was noticed from 2018 to 2019, the number of South African graduates increased by about 53% from 2009 to 2019 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2021, p. 19). Despite the annual production of more and more graduates, reports suggest that the graduate

unemployment rate stands at 11% currently (Stats SA, 2021), which is still higher than the average unemployment rate in OECD countries. Because this problem is institutional rather than policy failure, it is essential to investigate whether institutional mentorship could address the high unemployment rate in South Africa.

Further probing into the graduate unemployment crisis reveals that such high prevalence rates are attributed to causal factors such as a lack of relevant skills (employability), the type of qualification obtained, work experience, and the quality of education, among others (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling & Kleynhans, 2015). Furthermore, employers report a misalignment between their expectations and HEIs' products (Nicolescu & Cristian, 2009). Therefore, the existence of a gap between the needed skills/ abilities/ particularities and those offered is irrefutable.

The many initiatives implemented to curb the youth and graduate unemployment problem have fallen short of success by not yielding the desired outcome, as seen by the quarterly rise of the youth and graduate unemployment rates (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel & Leibbrandt, 2018). However, very few studies exist on exploring institutional mentorship as an effective strategy to empower graduates and influence graduate employability in South Africa.

It is specifically for the above-cited reason that this current study has taken a different stance by considering the critical role that HE has to play: shaping the youth, producing employable graduates, training, and equipping responsible and fully-functional citizens. In this regard, HE is recognised for its economic, academic, career, and research functions while including its psychosocial function. Accordingly, HEIs were placed in a mentorship role during this investigation, while students became protégés before graduation. Thus far, studies have been unable to investigate how much mentorship affects graduates' chances of employment and overall well-being.

This study was interested in discovering whether mentorship received by students at the institutional level develops them personally and adequately enhances their employability and success in the labour market, which would significantly mitigate the graduate unemployment rate. The findings generated from this study could assist higher education in nurturing and developing creative talent and producing fulfilled and self-assured graduates with profound ingenuity and adaptability in an ever-changing social and socio-economic environment.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate whether institutional mentorship could develop and improve graduate employability. To achieve this aim, the researcher investigated the extent to which institutional mentorship can assist in supporting institutional reputation, graduates' empowerment and preparation for work and whether this type of mentorship could mitigate the graduate unemployment crisis.

To that end, the objectives of the study were as follows:

1. Review of the literature.
2. Definition of the constructs mentioned in the research questions and identification of the most adequate research method to collect relevant data
3. Preparation of the survey protocol
4. Application for the necessary ethical clearance
5. Design and pilot survey.
6. Data collection and analysis.
7. Report on findings and make recommendations
8. Dissemination of findings

1.5 PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Purpose of the Study

The researcher hypothesized that institutional mentorship could serve as the bridge between South African youth graduating from HEIs and entering the labour market. In this specific context, this research aims to explore existing research gaps by determining the effects of institutional mentorship in developing graduates holistically and whether institutional mentorship could positively impact the graduate unemployment crisis.

1.5.2 Significance and Potential Contributions of the Study

This study remains relevant because unemployment significantly perpetuates societal poverty and inequality (World Bank Group, 2018). This study's findings could assist HEIs and the labour market in nurturing and developing creative talent and producing graduates capable of effectively entering the workplace and making a meaningful impact in their own lives and society at large. In that particular regard, determining the influence of institutional mentorship on graduates' employability could potentially

mitigate the graduate unemployment crisis. Therefore, studies in this field highlight the importance and potential of adequately mentoring the youth because their talent is a propellant of innovativeness and job creation in South Africa.

1.6 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The principal question that arises from an analysis of the literature is: why are graduates still unable to secure employment soon after completing their tertiary studies? The growing populace and corresponding supply of graduates require a simultaneous rise in job opportunities. Accordingly, the real challenge remains in employing all diplomates, which is a rather daunting spectre. Through the significant changes in the demographic composition of South Africa's pool of graduates and policy changes that have altered South Africa's HE landscape, graduates remain the group with the best labour market prospects compared to other education cohorts (Van Broekhuizen, 2016).

Personal experience has also influenced and motivated the researcher's undertaking of this study. In this case, personal experience also relates to the first-hand evidence of the graduate student's encounter with the reality of the unemployment crisis. Upon graduating, the researcher and a group of friends faced many difficulties in relation to securing employment. A year later, we were confronted with the reality of either accepting a long-term unemployment status or resorting to a career that was incongruent with our education and fields of knowledge. The situation was compounded further by the fact that, even after securing a job, there were unsavoury factors and conditions related to the workplace, such as the pressure of the workplace, tensions between colleagues of different races and/ or cultural backgrounds, as well as emotional or verbal abuse. These factors presented immense barriers to personal development and career progress, which we were vastly unprepared for.

Generally, such pressures and obstacles would lead to underperformance and subsequent loss of employment for most newly-employed graduates. Thus, the researcher gradually understood the reasons for graduates' workplace struggles despite their excellent academic records. Further confirmation was found in the literature, to the effect that South African youth were twice as likely to be unemployed (Altman, 2007). Furthermore, the International Labour Organization has reported that the Northern Africa region showed the highest youth unemployment rate of about 12% by global comparison, with little sign of decline (International Labour Office, 2016).

In addition, the above-cited report suggested that most young people enter the informal economy after graduation. At the same time, many migrate to look for better opportunities elsewhere outside of their home country. This shows that the youth across the African continent shared a common struggle. Hence, the researcher found it imperative to examine the issue of unemployment and investigate the link between institutional mentorship and employability and whether this type of mentorship could be considered a potential solution to the graduate unemployment problem. This study also proposes a range of socially practicable recommendations for stakeholders in the South African education and labour market sectors and graduates themselves to mitigate the high unemployment rate in the country.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions being addressed in this study are as follows:

1.7.1 Primary/ Main Research Question

- To what extent can *institutional mentorship* support institutional reputation, graduates' empowerment and preparation for work?

1.7.2 Secondary/ Sub-research Questions

The secondary/ Sub-research questions emanating from the primary/ main research question are as follows:

- To what extent does institutional mentorship *influence* graduate connection, confidence and loyalty to the institution?
- To what extent can institutional mentorship empower graduates *personally, professionally and entrepreneurially?*
- How does institutional mentorship influence and *empower graduate preparation for the world of work*?

1.7.3 Definition of Constructs

Institutional mentorship: mentorship provided by HEIs to provide academic, professional, personal and entrepreneurial assistance and support to students and faculty. Such mentorship improves retention, graduation rates, and academic achievement, promotes growth and assists at-risk students (Hansman, 2002).

Institutional reputation: the perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders towards a particular institution and its place in society, whether direct or indirect, are referred to as its reputation. Performance, service quality, employee and product quality, among other things, are some experiences shaping public perception. In a HE context, graduates would be considered the products of an institution (Tümtürk & Deniz, 2021).

Preparation for work: The planned experiences that are intended to promote the development of self-awareness (interests, abilities, values), opportunity awareness (knowing what jobs are available and what they require), decision learning (decision-making skills), and transition learning can be referred to as work preparation (job-search and self-presentations skills). It entails the development of employability skills frequently through work-integrated learning strategies, which provide students with the chance to use what they have learned to experience their future careers in their particular industries (Batholmeus & Carver, 2017).

Graduate connection: refers to alumni's willingness to remain in contact with and support their alma mater. *Connection* can be described as the development of a sense of belonging and the establishment of a long-lasting relationship. Alumni remain connected by engaging in various alma mater activities, contributing through volunteering and offering financial support (Sikandar, Shakeel, & Ravinder, 2019).

Graduate confidence: refers to alumni's trust in their alma mater to provide a quality education as well as an overall excellent educational experience (Wang S. , 2014).

Graduate loyalty: is determined by satisfaction with the learning experience, quality of the education received, emotional commitment and trust in an institution. *Loyalty* refers to graduates' commitment in building a connection with their alma mater and to further their studies at the same institution (Goolamally & Latif, 2014).

1.8   BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Kram's mentorship theory was selected for the study's philosophical grounding and achievement of the research aim. This theory defines the relationship between an older, experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé, during which the mentor assists in developing the protégé's career (Kram, 1985). Mentorship refers to "a developmental relationship embedded within the career context" (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Kram's theory of mentorship propounds that mentorship occurs at two levels: career development and psycho-social functioning. These levels of interaction benefit both the mentor and the protégé.

The first tenet of Kram's theory allows for addressing the questions concerned with the efficacy of a mentoring programme insofar as increasing graduates' career and employability prospects. This (first tenet) stems from the theory's career development functions, which extend into five specific mentor roles: sponsorship, coaching, protecting, challenging, and exposure. These mentor roles were helpful in framing the questions in the research instruments and discovering the advantages of such a mentor-protégé partnership in a graduate's employability. However, in the theory, career development presents an inherent weakness by only focusing on a protégé's career progression.

Solely focusing on career development and performance is disadvantageous to the protégé because essential factors such as the graduate's background, personal, emotional and psychological state are not adequately considered. These factors are critically influential as they determine the graduates' employability, development, progress, and job longevity once they enter the labour market.

The second aspect or tenet of Kram's theory concerns the interpersonal nature of the mentor-protégé relationship, which improves the protégé's competence, professional and personal development, and self-efficiency (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Therefore, in this context, the current study aimed at utilising both of Kram's mentorship functions to investigate the extent to which institutional mentorship serves to empower graduates personally and professionally.

Higher education institutions are suitably positioned to fulfil the mentorship role, given the time students spend in the university for their undergraduate and/ or postgraduate studies. Thus, exploring the mentorship phenomenon could help determine whether an institutional mentorship programme could contribute towards personal,

psychological, social, emotional and professional development. In sum, framing the study following the core tenets depicted in Figure 1.2 (overleaf) could assist in linking the core research issues of graduate unemployment and the existential purpose of higher education and its part in reducing the graduate unemployment rate.
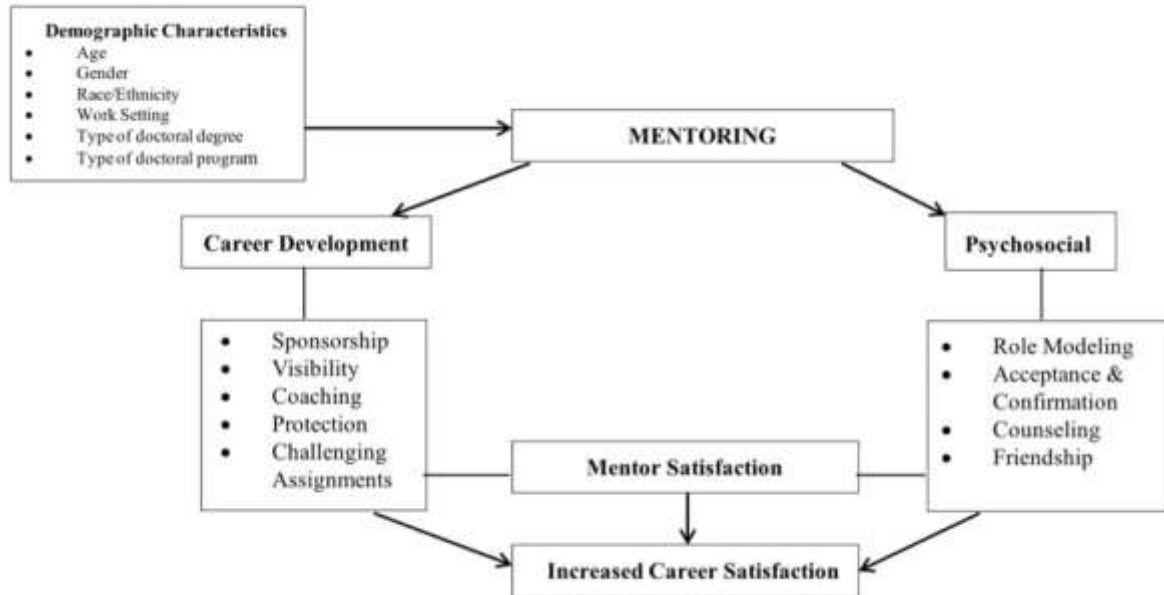
Figure 1.2: A mentoring concept analysis

1.9   A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This section briefly outlines the approach used in conducting the study and answering the research questions.

Research methodology relates to the systematic processes and techniques utilised to bring a study's aim to fruition and apply relevant tools to help resolve identified research problems (Igwenagu, 2016). In other words, the methodology in a research study provides a clear guideline of how the study will be conducted and managed. Therefore, based on a clearly identified and articulated research methodology, the seminal aspects of the problematic phenomenon could be unravelled (Terrell & Edmonds, 2017).

1.9.1   Research Design

The research design could be explained as a framework or approach in which the researcher has determined the appropriate data collection and analysis processes. To this effect, the research design essentially refers to "the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance" (Kerlinger, 1973). This research has opted for a quantitative research

design, which involves the numerically or statistically informed and objective analysis of data obtained by means of instruments such as questionnaires, surveys, or checklists. This approach allows the researcher to obtain comprehensive knowledge (Terrell & Edmonds, 2017, p. 11) of how institutions can fulfil the mentorship role to redress the unemployment problem in South Africa.

1.9.2 Graduate Survey

Surveys are research instruments whose functionality premises largely on regulated data using set questions from a sample representing a specific group within a population. The following advantages are associated with surveys:

- collection of data from a large sample within a short time;
- safeguarding the anonymity of respondents;
- cost-effectiveness; and
- standardisation of questions.

Notwithstanding the above-cited advantages, using this particular method also presents the following limitations:

- possibility of a low response rate;
- complex techniques might be needed to interpret extensive data and
- close-ended questions might be difficult for respondents to answer due to their restrictive nature.

In this study, the advantages and disadvantages of using electronics were considered in designing the instrument for the research. Essentially, the electronic survey was used to collect information relating to the influence or empowerment effect of mentorship on graduates by employing the following formula:

- *2017 - 2019 University X's alumni: 2352 in total (selected using slovin formula: $n=N\div(1+Ne^2)$*

Table 1.1 below represents the actual application of the survey instrument in the current study.

Table 1.1: Total number of University X's alumni from 2017-2019

Graduates	2017	2018	2019	2017-2019
Undergraduate	6 920	7 219	6 617	

| Postgraduate | 6 582 | 6 293 | 6 240 | |
| Total | 13 502 | 13 512 | 12 857 | **39 871** |

1.9.2.1 Sampling

The sampling approach adopted during this study followed the probability sampling methods or strategies as follows:

Probability simple random sampling: This sampling method involves the random selection of each sample to prevent bias and allow for a greater degree of representativeness (Nowell, Noris, White & Moules, 2017, p. 4). In other words, using this strategy ensured that the participating alumni selected or sampled in the study all had the same chance or opportunity of being selected and all shared homogenous characteristics (qualities or traits) true to all alumni (Bhorat, Cassim & Tseng, 2016, p. 7). This enabled the researcher to make generalisations based on the findings (Terrell & Edmonds, 2017, p. 11).

The researcher endeavoured to ensure that the completed study produced quality data that is also distinct, reliable, and publishable in accordance with the host institution's policy statement on surveys. Furthermore, the survey was advertised on University X's alumni portal, with the link distributed by the said university's Department of Institutional Advancement, in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013 (Republic of South Africa, 2013), which is in alignment with the information management policies of the University.

The choice of the institution was informed by a recent QS Graduate Employability Survey and University X's Graduate Destination Survey (Panyane, 2019). According to the former, University X improved its global ranking from its previous rank (QS World University Rankings, 2020). Moreover, the institution obtained its highest score in the alumni outcomes category. According to a previously conducted and published survey, over 90% of University X's students who completed their first undergraduate degree in 2017 either secured part-time/ full-time employment or opted to continue their studies within six months after graduation.

It should be noted that the reported "employability" rate includes the percentage of undergraduate alumni who chose to pursue a career six months after acquiring their initial degree qualifications and that of alumni who opted to continue with their studies full-time. Secondly, the researcher sourced the sample from this institution based on

its multiple mentoring programmes, each focusing on aspects such as acclimatisation to the personal and socio-cultural development of the protégés.

As previously mentioned, carrying out this study required the assistance of University X's alumni office and its Institutional Advancement Department. Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Survey Committee, the survey link was then dispatched by the afore-cited department. Therefore, the sampling approaches and ethical protocols are highlighted here to emphasise that, throughout the study, the researcher did not violate any of the privacy and confidentiality protocols pertaining to the sampled participants/ alumni, such as their contact details. In this regard, there was strict adherence to Section 19 of the Protection of Personal Information Act (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

1.9.4 Privacy Requirements

The researcher acknowledges that any study involving human respondents requires keeping participants' information anonymous, confidential, and safe at all stages of the research process (Igwenagu, 2016, p. 23). Hence, to ensure respondents' anonymity, the research data would be anonymized to remove unambiguous identifiers such as names, surnames, and identification numbers. Anonymizing the data prevents anyone, including the researcher, from tracing the collected data back to the respondents (Igwenagu, 2016, p. 23).

Furthermore, the participants' data will not be shared with anyone outside the study, and findings will not be published in a way that would allow readers to recognize any respondents (Walliman, 2016, p. 14). Moreover, the researcher will ensure measures to safeguard and protect respondents' confidentiality, as highlighted in the data management section below. It should be noted that the researcher considered University X's code of ethics by following the instructions about the steps to be taken towards protecting the privacy and confidentiality of respondents' data.

1.9.5 Data Management/ Storage

In compliance with University X's Research Data Management Policy, the data collected will be securely stored on Google Drive for the study duration. Thereafter, the collected data will be stored for a minimum of ten (10) years from the completion of the original study on University X's Research Data Repository. The collected data

will be transformed into metadata to ensure consistency, accuracy, and authenticity. This process will allow the researcher to make provisions for the publication and possible repurposing of the data gathered from the study.

The metadata will consist of a complete description and classification of the categorised variables during the data analysis stage (see the section below). Furthermore, the data will be compiled, organised, and saved into two separate and clearly labelled password-encrypted folders on a portable electronic device and Google Drive, which will only be accessible to the researcher and the supervisor. These folders will then be copied onto an external drive for enhanced safety measures. After completion of the research study, the findings will be revealed in the final thesis.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected through electronic surveys were analyzed using Excel data analysis. The commencement of data analysis involves processing participants' responses according to categories of individual and/ or groups of themes linked to the research problem, aim and questions (Walliman, 2016). The editing process entails verifying data captured by the software to ascertain accuracy and consistency between tables generated by the Excel data analysis (Jolliffe, 1986). The data is then further analysed by descriptive statistics employing percentages and frequencies. Accurately interpreting the data requires the systematic organisation and classification of the survey responses to detect patterns and frequencies within the self-same data (Walliman, 2016, p. 116). In other words, grouping variables were used to organize data within data files into categories based on the research questions.

1.10.1 Trustworthiness/ Validity of Data

The researcher ascertained the thoroughness and trustworthiness of the study by clearly outlining steps taken during analysis (discussed above) to enable readers to establish whether or not the research process and its consequent findings are credible (Nowell, Noris, White & Moules, 2017, p. 4). In the case of the surveys, Slovin's formula is used to choose a sample to ensure a high degree of accuracy. Additionally, the reliability and clarity of the research instruments used were discussed with the supervisor to ascertain their validity. Finally, the findings of this investigation were recorded in the form of a thesis, which was submitted electronically to the supervisor.

A printed copy will also be submitted to the library of University X for repository and internet availability purposes. The findings will also be shared in peer-reviewed scientific journals specialising in the field of higher education development and the world of work.

1.10.2 Limitations and Delimitations

As mentioned in the methodology section, the chosen method may present certain limitations. For instance, the surveys may not generate the desired number of responses in the allocated time for this study, which may affect the overall study outcomes. Furthermore, due to the confidentiality clause often present in consent letters, the researcher may not have access to valuable information. Moreover, the fact that the university does not keep a database of participants in mentorship programmes forces the researcher to make the discovery after the data collection stage.

The administration of this survey is essential since the data required has not been provided in previously conducted studies. Regarding the delimitations, sourcing the data solely from the University's Alumni database might limit the scope of the study. However, the survey participants found the questions appealing, as the required information is not redundant (Walliman, 2016, p. 163).

Moreover, voluntary participation in the study might lead to self-selection bias. Self-selection bias refers to people selecting or choosing to participate in a study (Bethlehem, 2010). However, this study utilised probability sampling methods to select a sample. As such, alumni were targeted for the purpose of this research.

1.11 ETHICAL MATTERS

The proposed research study forms part of a broader research project that has already acquired ethics clearance. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the researcher submitted the online ethics application to inform the ethics office and committee of this arrangement. Furthermore, all ethical procedures were strictly followed while collecting and analyzing the research data. As such, participants' anonymity and confidentiality were protected throughout the data collection process.

In addition, a full disclosure of the study was made, in which participants were appraised of the purpose of the research prior to their involvement in the study and for

purposes of avoiding any possible or unseen conflicting interests. Moreover, participants were informed of their right to participate in the study voluntarily and that no incentives would be used in the research process. In addition, they were aware of their right to withdraw their participation at any time during the study on the questionnaire without fear of reprisals. Besides, the study's outcomes are not expected to have any undue bearing on the respondents. The researcher strictly adhered to University X's Code of Ethics for Research and Research Policy for Postgraduates, highlighting the importance of professionalism, integrity, and ethical conduct. It is essential to note that in order to protect the sample, the university's brand and reputation, the name of the research site (University X) will not be disclosed, except by pseudonym reference.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 is the opening chapter of the dissertation. It introduces the study and provides the background and context of the subject under investigation. In this chapter, the problem was stated, and the objective to be achieved in the study was also explained. Moreover, the significance of the study and its rationale were also highlighted, followed by the questions to be answered in this research. An overview of the theoretical framework was also provided, followed by a brief overview of the methodology used in the study, which included the following:

- the research design;
- the research method, and
- clarification of privacy requirements and data management.

The data analysis procedure was briefly outlined and involved a discussion on the following:

- trustworthiness of the data;
- limitations; and
- delimitations of the study.
- Finally, ethical matters were clarified.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, the researcher presented an extensive literature review. Following the introduction in the chapter, the following topics were discussed:

- Towards understanding HEIs;
- The link between HEIs and employment;
- Causal factors for graduate unemployment in South Africa;
- Initiatives and policies implemented to address youth unemployment from the 1990s to the present;
- Remedial steps taken towards solving the graduate unemployment crisis;
- Reasons for the failure of current strategies in place;
- Towards understanding mentorship and its role in graduate employability;
- The influence of institutional mentorship;
- HEIs and institutional mentorship;
- Challenges in the implementation of institutional mentorship programmes nationally;
- Hiatus identified in existing research;
- Theoretical framework, and
- Summary.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is the section of the dissertation that presents an extensive discussion of the methodology. The following were presented:

- Research paradigm;
- Research design;
- Methodology and method;

Subsequently, the chapter also presents the following:

- Data analysis;
- Ethical considerations;
- Delimitations;
- Limitations; and
- Credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4

This chapter is concerned with presenting the data and the analysis thereof. Data collected from the electronic surveys are presented, described and analysed. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the data presented.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 discusses and interprets data gathered during the investigation. This is accomplished in relation to the relevant literature on the topic being investigated. Different trends, patterns, and themes from the findings are also discussed and interpreted. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summary of the analysed data. Further conclusions and recommendations based on the study's findings are made. The main themes of the research are recaptured, and a summary of the study's outcome is provided. Moreover, recommendations with psychosocial, personal, professional, and economic implications are proposed to assist stakeholders in the South African education sector and the South African labour market towards curbing the high unemployment rate in the country.

1.13   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter allowed the researcher to introduce the main issue being investigated. The chapter comprises the introduction and the background of the study. The problem statement, the objective, the purpose, and the study's rationale were also presented. Most importantly, this introductory chapter outlined the theoretical framework's research questions and provided a brief overview of the methodology. Finally, the thesis structure was outlined, and a chapter summary was also provided.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

It is inconceivable to conduct any concerted research investigation without a clear understanding of the subject matter based on a detailed analysis of existing literature on the particular subject (Creswell & Plano Clark, Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research, 2018). Ravitch and Riggan (2017) posit that a research study adds value and significance once the researcher is able to situate their research within pre-existing studies and once generativity has been gained, that is, gaining knowledge from prior research conducted (Schulman, 1999).

This chapter will provide an embedded literature review to identify and fill in a research gap by making an original contribution to the existing corpus of knowledge concerning higher education's potential role in job creation and the reduction of graduate unemployment. Prior to this investigation, the reviewed literature was selected from peer-reviewed journals, research articles, books, and handbooks, as well as other academic/ educational sources pertaining to the topic under investigation. This chapter will further summarise existing research regarding emerging new trends or perspectives.

2.2   TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS)

2.2.1   Defining Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions

In the 21st century, higher education is viewed basically as any post-secondary studies, training, or research training provided by a university or other educational establishment that has been approved by competent state authorities (UNESCO, 1998). However, Alemu (2018) avers that higher education generally refers to tertiary and educational activities that occur in conventional learning institutions offering arts and science faculties or in more technical institutions offering technology, science, and engineering. In South Africa, the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997) defines higher education as "all learning programmes leading to a qualification that meets the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework" (Department of Higher Education and Training, 1997, p. 7).

Meanwhile, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) established a policy on higher education that provides for the establishment of a framework to promote the development of a single nationally coordinated higher education system (Council for Higher Education, 2014, p. 10). Higher education is defined differently in various countries in terms of the national objectives and various institutional missions on offer. Assie-Lumumba (2005) suggests that higher education institutions typically include universities, colleges, polytechnics, and other professional or vocational institutions.

In tandem with the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997), a higher education institution in South Africa refers to any contact or distance learning institution offering full-time or part-time post-secondary education. In addition, a higher education institution is any institution that is merged, deemed established, or declared a public higher education institution under the Higher Education Act of 1997 or registered as a private higher education institution under the same Act (Statistics South Africa, 2019). As such, higher education includes public and private institutions such as Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, Community Education Training (CET), and private colleges (Statistics South Africa, 2019, p. 1). These four categories of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system are overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These structures' fundamental mandate consists in increasing access to PSET, enhancing PSET system success and PSET quality, and delivering excellent business operations in the DHET (Council for Higher Education, 2014, p. 10).

Within the framing of higher education and higher education institutions, the expectation is that the institutions will align their overall goals to achieve not only reputation but also channel their activities towards preparing graduates for the world of work through mentorship. The idea that the aim of the institutions should include mentoring is argued to be fundamental to the objective of higher education (Knippelmeyer & Torraco, 2007). Therefore, the definition of higher education should have encompassed areas and aspects of student mentorship as part of the strategy to better connect to society.

2.2.2 The Role of Higher Education in Society

Higher education functions and goals have changed and evolved in contemporary times (Blunt, 2005). Overall, higher education's role has been clarified through expositions on the aim (what?) and purposes (what for?/ why?) of education broadly (Bok, 2003). Aristotle propounded that the vital goal of education was to enable human beings to achieve a level of self-realisation (Hummel, 1993, p. 2). Meanwhile, the Chinese philosopher Confucius emphasised the lifelong pursuit of knowledge and self-cultivation to produce citizens with great character acquired through observation, study, and critical thinking, all of which are for the well-being of society (Zhao, 2013, p. 10).

On the other hand, Plato suggests that education transcends the mere transmission of knowledge from an older generation to a younger one with the conversion of perception to reality (Sanni & Momoh, 2019). Hence, education involves directing a person's soul toward the light (knowledge, truth) since the soul already contains inherent talents (Sanni & Momoh, 2019, p. 67). Common to all the aforementioned philosophers (Aristotle, Confucius, and Plato) is education's vital role in self-realisation, lifelong learning, knowledge production, and collective and individual upward mobility.

Inherent in the above fundamental tenets is the view that education is instrumental in teaching future generations to preserve, discover, and create knowledge (conduct research), which translates into participating at a societal level in terms of developed abilities, creativity, innovation, and talent (OECD, 2018). Therefore, higher education is tasked with improving life, assisting students in developing sound judgment, worldviews, a keen mind, and the overall betterment of lifestyles.

According to liberalist thinking, higher education should offer multi-disciplinary education that allows students to consider and identify their best potential and apply and transfer the acquired knowledge to real-life situations for a harmonious society ((Kurennoy, 2020); Cacciolatti & Rosli (2021); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017)) report on a different, often neglected perspective concerning the function and role of higher education, namely:

- The pursuit of truth, which requires research;
- Knowledge and skills transfer, which implies that the researched truth needs to be transmitted through teaching and training; and

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- The assertion of culture implies that higher education institutions should be the pristine places where local indigenous knowledge systems are found, developed, and legitimised for socio-economic improvement and international recognition.

Historically, higher education has proven to be interwoven with society's social, economic, cultural, and political aspects according to the variability of conditions (Frijhoff, 1997). For instance, in medieval times, universities produced learned and virtuous individuals, instilled the importance of morality, and satisfied society's material needs (de Ridder-Symoens, 1997). Therefore, higher education was viewed as the custodian of moral values, training providers, and promoters of knowledge advancement (de Ridder-Symoens, 1997, p. 14). Numerous studies have also reflected that changes in higher education's purpose and goals have been affected and influenced by changes in a country's or community's political, cultural, social, and economic affairs and needs (Frijhoff, 1997).

Throughout the world, higher education has evolved and adapted from its purpose to add a research component to its initial medieval function of only transferring knowledge and training its graduates for the professions (OECD, 2012, p. 21). Over time, the pursuit, production, and publication of knowledge have become the norm around the globe (OECD, 2012, p. 21). This development has been described as "an academic revolution […] marked by transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity" (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009, p. iii). In addition, higher education institutions have become highly diversified in the contemporary era and offer more access to the growing student populations and their varying interests, backgrounds, and needs.

This massification of higher education by growing student populations has also seen the rapid usage of new technologies for greater participation, partnerships, and cooperation (OECD, 2012, p. 12), which reflects the social, economic, cultural, and political landscape of modern-day society (Kromydas, 2017, p. 3). In addition to the massification and rapid expansion of new technologies, global higher education institutions find themselves in competition in the global market. However, traditional higher education institutions still remain the main – but not dominant - providers, facilitators, and promoters of teaching and research, while their economic responsibility has become even more significant. This economic imperative could

present a situation where money and moral values compete against each other (Kromydas, 2017, p. 3).

Changes in society have ushered in the salience of practical knowledge production and its utilitarian value for economic growth. Bringing about economic growth necessitates a trajectory toward providing higher levels of education to competent citizens to ensure their upward mobility and active involvement in promoting national economic growth (Institute for International Cooperation Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2003). Such an orientation toward economic growth is viewed as commodification of higher education or its surrender to becoming a tool for the private sector's impulse for economic growth and advancement. The focus on higher education's function of stimulating the economy may reduce the realisation of the pursuit of knowledge and cognitive development for the benefit of society (Kromydas, 2017). Higher education is responsible for an apparent increase in output productivity by generating a highly-skilled workforce to boost the economy (International Labour Organization, 2011). Such responsibility is also expected to drive innovation and increase employability in a highly competitive job market (p. 2).

Higher education has adopted an instrumentalist role in the post-colonial African context by participating in developmental efforts and initiatives (Muriisa & Rwabyoma, 2019). Kofi Anan, former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, endorsed higher education institutions' crucial role in the transformation of African economies and suggested that:

> "The university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions, serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution, and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars". Kofi Anan cited in Bloom, Canning, Chan & Luca (2014, p. 26).

This instrumentalist view has led higher education institutions to assume the responsibility of providing developmental experts, thus contributing to social and economic upliftment matters such as poverty eradication. Such a view complies with the reality of the higher education sector's functions in a knowledge-based society dominated by the economy. According to UNESCO, the following roles have been identified for the relevance of a responsive higher education in the twenty-first century (UNESCO, 1998): to educate, train and undertake research, among others.

However, arguments about higher education in terms of its role in society seem inadequate in terms of a number of societal issues that countries face but require a partnership of institutions and relevant stakeholders. The challenge remains how institutions can respond to societal needs by producing employable graduates. This requires exposing graduates to the world's reality through context-based institutional mentorship.

2.2.3   The Importance of Higher Education in Modern Society

According to Perry (2012), higher education institutions globally are under massive pressure to prove their relevance. Such pressures could be attributed to expectations from the labour market, society, and graduates regarding the production of a skilled workforce in our knowledge-based economy (OECD, 2007). Higher education has become an instrument for contestations regarding its contribution to respective countries' developmental plans and economic growth. According to the human capital theory (HCT), socio-economic development requires producing high-quality human resources (Tran, 2015). Therefore, the attainment of a higher level of education will enable graduates to gain essential expertise, qualifications, and training to benefit the country's socioeconomic development (Harry, Chinyamurindi & Mjoli, 2018). Thompson (2014) also suggests that higher education institutions have become corporate entities driven by economic demands, which have transformed the agenda of higher education from the pursuit of knowledge to a transactional process (Bylsma, 2015).

A review of recent literature on the economic returns of education reveals that an individual's productivity increases as more qualifications are attained (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). Some regional Sub-Saharan Africa studies have shown that the overall rate of return on education is 10.5% for an average of 5.2 years of schooling (p. 10). Higher education graduates are expected to be active and fully equipped members of society who participate in local and global economies based on their acquired training, knowledge, skills, and sense of responsibility necessary to enter the workforce (Spellings Commission, 2006).

The advent of today's knowledge-based economies has seen the rise of neoliberal ideologies influencing the purpose of vital national institutions in society (Badat, 2009). As such, the capitalist approach of the free market economy has optimised the role of

higher education in human and societal development (Berdahl, 2008, p. 48). In terms of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), the higher education sector is tasked with equipping "people with high-level skills to meet the employment needs of the public and private sectors" (Statistics South Africa, 2019, p. 8). It is imperative for higher education to remain aware of the needs and requirements of those societies in which they function while also maintaining the fundamental purpose of knowledge production, dissemination, and community engagement. Inevitably, higher education institutions will also engage in social issues such as economic growth, job creation/unemployment, poverty reduction, and gender violence. However, HE must remain true to its core value of equipping society in tandem with Plato's ideal of a perfect and stable state where every member of society diligently and wholeheartedly fulfils their roles within their respective communities (Sanni & Momoh, 2019, p. 68).

However, it is unclear whether institutions have the capacity or are supported by policy to offer institutional mentorship to respond to a number of societal problems that countries, including South Africa, are facing. While this study explores mentorship as a potential alternative strategy to bridge the gap between what higher education institutions are producing and what society expects, there is a need for further research to understand the capacity to deliver such a strategy for employment and society purposes at different institutions.

2.3   THE LINK BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The value of investing in higher education is associated with a higher chance of success in the labour market (World Bank Group, 2018). From this perspective, graduate students' higher education success is viewed as leading to better career prospects, higher salaries, and overall economic stability (Grant, 2017). Published data further demonstrates that a reliable supply of highly skilled workers is essential for the economies of OECD countries, where the employment rate is exceptionally high amongst youth between the ages of 25 and 34 years with low-level educational qualifications (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 67).

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate of young adults without tertiary education was 15.1% in 2020 and 6.6% for those with tertiary education (OECD, 2021, pp. 67-68). At the same time, 85% of the youth aged between 25 and 34 with a tertiary degree were employed in OECD countries (OECD, 2020, p. 68). Furthermore, young adults without

an upper secondary education have a 51% employment rate, compared to 75% of those with a higher level of education across OECD countries (OECD, 2021, p. 66). Moreover, statistics show that 8% of adults with a tertiary-level education have an advantage of being employed compared to those with either a post-secondary or upper-secondary level of education (OECD, 2021, p. 66).

In the South African context, approximately 1.7 million adults are in possession of a degree today, compared to a decade ago. This number translates to a 5.9% increase in the adult population in 2020 (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 6). Be that as it may, it should be noted that unemployment rates are lowest for adults with tertiary education despite the low percentage of tertiary-educated adults in South Africa (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021, p. 14). According to a factsheet published by the Department of Higher Education and Training, PSET qualifications offer good returns to those who attain them, thus increasing adults' chances of employment and leading to better wages (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 13). It is reported that the average salary of employees with a degree is six times more than that of employees without a grade 12 qualification (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 13). In 2019, 6% of South African young adults between the ages of 25 and 34 had some higher education qualification, much lower than the OECD average of 45%. Furthermore, 81% of these young adults (with tertiary education) were employed in 2019, compared to the 85% average for OECD countries (OECD, 2020). The knowledge society we live in has led to expanding education worldwide. The massification of education, the preponderance of new technologies, globalisation, and global competitiveness have collectively contributed to this growth (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009, p. 7).

Therefore, the ongoing debate on whether higher education leads to higher income is still relevant. However, the focus should be to conduct research to design an alternative model for policy review and recommendation whereby issues related to student empowerment and graduate employability in the context of mentorship may provide future direction to solving unemployment in South Africa.

2.3.1   Higher Education and Graduate Employability

In the current era of globalisation, a new role for higher education in catering to society's demands has become necessary due to its involvement in international markets and the increase in private higher education institutions (Chan, 2016, p. 2).

Thus, the onus is on higher education institutions to produce proficient and capable graduates who can fulfil the economy's need for a skilled labour force in today's global marketplace and the societal need for developing fully functional citizens (Chan, 2016, p. 2). Accordingly, governments worldwide have urged the expansion of higher education opportunities to potentially impact economic productivity and skills development (International Labour Organization, 2011). In South Africa, the NDP was drafted as the government's policy-directed intervention to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. This goal was to be reached by adopting a multi-dimensional approach to "increasing employment and generating higher incomes through productivity growth" (National Planning Commission, 2019, p. 15). Furthermore, this approach involved making resources available to "… increase enrolment at universities by at least 70% by 2030 and produce more than 100 doctoral graduates per million per year by 2030" (National Planning Commission, 2019, pp. 59-60). In an effort to transform the economy, the country is also determined "to enhance human capital, productive capacity and higher investment" (National Planning Commission, 2019, pp. 28-29).

Similarly, Ireland's 2030 national strategy report for higher education proposes that "higher education needs to change over the coming decades to meet new economic, social and cultural challenges" (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p. 30). In addition, the report proposes that: "the further expansion of higher education is inevitable and essential if we are to fulfil our aspirations as an innovative and knowledge-based economy" (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p. 33). Generally, countries perceive skills development as a strategic measure in their development plans and seek to increase investments towards attaining or developing the skills (International Labour Organization, 2011, p. iii). Notwithstanding the role of higher education in skills development for economic growth, stakeholders are cautioned against turning the higher education sector into a worker-producing factory attempting to achieve economic growth under the guise of employability (Frankham, 2017).

Higher education would jeopardise its fundamental purposes should it prioritise governments before the needs of society (Frankham, 2017). Nonetheless, it should be recognised that higher education has both instrumental and intrinsic components that direct its role toward the labour market. This is due to expectations to produce

graduates with qualities, abilities, and competencies relevant to the employment market in today's globally fast-evolving, knowledge-based economy (Frankham, 2017). The compatibility of graduate employability and higher education training needs to be adequately examined to clarify higher education's role and relevance (Harvey, Defining and measuring employability, 2001).

Greater emphasis has been placed on the link between higher education and the labour market globally since graduate employability ratings have become an indicator of the quality of education offered by higher education institutions (Cheng, Adekola, Albia, & Cai, 2021). For the past thirty years, the term 'employability' has generally been associated with higher education institutions' contribution to expanding citizens' knowledge and skills (Harvey, Defining and measuring employability, 2001). Employability is described as the ability to attain and maintain a suitable job in the workforce (Small, Shacklock, & Marchant, 2018). This definition denotes that competent employees can operate independently within the workplace to reach their full potential. When a job seeker is applying for a job, prospective employers determine the applicant's employability in terms of attributes such as their attitudes, knowledge, and competencies (Portnoi, 2003); (Kearney, 2000).

Other definitions view employability as finding one's first employment, keeping such jobs and finding a new position, if necessary, while using the competencies at one's disposal (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). It is important to note that employability is not confined to possessing programmatic or curriculum-oriented competencies specific to a particular field taught through higher education institutions' curricula. Research shows that employers expect higher education to instil unique key, non-academic and transferrable attributes in students during their higher education studies (Williams, Karypidou, Steele, & Dodd, 2019). Academics have defined these transferrable attributes or skills as developed qualities that guide or influence students' contributions to their future careers and society (Cheng, Adekola, Albia, & Cai, 2022).

Students' participation in the national economy and contribution to the capitalisation of human resources also require developing an awareness and interest in fundamental human rights and skills acquisition. To that effect, countries such as Norway and Germany emphasise the ability to learn quickly and presentation skills as determining factors in attaining employment (Arthur, 2006). Researchers have also listed other essential skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, teamwork, and

self-awareness as fundamental competencies required for employment and employability (Coetzee, Botha, Eccles, Holtzhausen, & Nienaber, 2012).

In the South African context, the following competencies are generally expected from graduates: self-awareness, adaptability, information and communication technology literacy, written and oral communication fluency, management competence, critical and analytical ability, as well as fostering societal and labour market partnerships (Jonck & van der Walt, 2015). According to Cheng, Adekola, Albia, and Cai (2022), several higher education institutions have incorporated employability skills encompassing presentation and time management skills into their curricula to embrace all stakeholders' expectations.

Programmes such as engineering, medicine, nursing, teaching and social work often offer curricula that include practical or learning opportunities to prepare students for employment once they graduate (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009). However, graduates in the humanities and arts (e.g., social sciences, literature and philosophy) seldom enjoy the same practical learning opportunities as their counterparts who are not in the humanities and arts (Kunene, 2018, p. 21). The practical training provided to students enhances their employability skills, including in-person visits to companies, placement opportunities, employer-connected projects, and work-tailing (Atfield, Hunt, & Luchinskaya, 2021).

Government imperatives regarding graduate employability are increasing globally. In fact, the OECD also emphasises the importance of skills attainment and describes it as the world currency in the 21st century (OECD, 2012, p. 3). Research studies report that governments and institutions of higher learning in many countries worldwide have prioritised and developed employability frameworks to enhance graduates' employment opportunities (The International Graduate Insight Group, 2011). The Trans-European Mobility for University Studies (TEMPUS) is emblematic of such imperatives, albeit under the aegis of the European Union (EU). TEMPUS forms part of an overall scheme to restructure higher education in Central and Eastern Europe to meet the market's rapidly evolving needs (European Commission, 1998).

Other European Union examples include the European Lifelong Guideline Policy Network and the European Competency Reference Framework for Lifelong Learning. Essentially, these initiatives aim to modernise higher education in partner countries and ameliorate graduate employment rates through a partnership between universities

and the labour market while adapting graduate training to the competencies needed in the labour market (Mc Cabe, Heinämäki, Giorgio, & Ruffio, 2013).

The United Kingdom (UK), Australia and the United States of America (USA) have also implemented their own employability strategies (The International Graduate Insight Group, 2011). Examples include the United States National Career Development Guidelines and the Canadian Blueprint (The International Graduate Insight Group, 2011). In the United Kingdom, the following strategies have been developed and adopted by higher education institutions for the purpose of enhancing practical graduate employability (The International Graduate Insight Group, 2011, p. 19).

In the South African context, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019 has proposed the development of a skilled and capable workforce that is able to fulfil the country's economic and societal needs by aligning the demand for knowledge and competencies with the concomitant supply (Republic of South Africa, 2014, p. 22). However, the National Development Plan has proposed that the blueprint for South Africa's poverty eradication efforts could be achieved by raising employment strategies, among others (National Planning Commission, 2019, p. 17).

These priorities are directly linked to employability skills since they underline human capabilities. Overall, higher education institutions' adoption and implementation of employability policies or strategies are heavily informed by government policies that are generally aimed at promoting and accelerating skills development to meet labour market, economic and national needs (Mc Cabe, Heinämäki, Giorgio, & Ruffio, 2013, p. 19).

Thus, strategies and programmes designed to promote employment should consider HE role to achieve positive outcomes. Research into the contribution of different models in terms of strength and weakness will help to understand how the mentorship model for employability could help solve employment problems after graduation in South Africa.

2.3.2   Higher Education and Graduate Outcomes

International organisations also highlight the relationship between graduate skills attainment and employability (European Commission, 1998, p. 43). HEIs globally have adjusted their student training to national and international market needs by adopting

demand-based approaches (Tomlinson, 2012). Ample research on graduate outcomes has been conducted internationally and can be divided into attaining essential attributes as a determining factor in securing employment and improving career prospects. Some examples of various countries' and organisations' approaches to higher education graduate outcomes are cited below.

2.3.2.1   Department of Education, Science and Training of Australia

The required skills for attaining employment and employer/ employee satisfaction are essential in determining and measuring graduate outcomes. Competencies needed by Australian employers range from communication and teamwork to lifelong learning and entrepreneurial skills (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002).

2.3.2.2   United States

Two significant perspectives dominate the debate on employability in the United States. On the one hand, neoliberalists advocate education policy shaped by world market demands (Smith, Smith, Taylor-Smith, & Fotheringham, 2017). On the other hand, neo-conservatists urge a return to the original purpose of higher education, namely, training and instilling moral values (Reilly, 2004).

2.3.2.3   Europe

In Europe, graduate outcomes rely strongly on skills development and securing employment within a reasonably short time (Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002). Such an orientation has become an indicator of higher education performance due to the increased emphasis on graduate outcomes.

2.3.2.4   Africa

Critical policy changes in Africa and other developing countries are to ensure a workforce increase by 2050 (JICA Research Institute, 2013). Ensuring that emerging workers and graduates "have the skills needed to escape the cycle of poverty and take advantage of the opportunities made possible by globalisation and technological change" (Wang Y., 2012, p. ix) is also a concern. Accordingly, higher education institutions in Africa are also developing the skills and attributes needed to achieve

positive graduate outcomes regarding job attainment and maintenance (Association of African Universities, 2013, p. 3). For instance, the South African higher education policy urges the adjustment of student enrolment to labour market requirements to address the graduate unemployment issue (Department of Education, 2001).

2.3.2.5   Beyond Learning for Earning

Graduate outcomes are seldom viewed regarding access to equal economic opportunities and growth, poverty reduction, and a sense of self-worth. (Fongwa, 2018). Therefore, graduate outcomes should be about more than obtaining an income and should also encompass socio-cultural considerations (Fongwa, 2018, p. 48). The common view is that attaining qualifications automatically increases graduates' career prospects. However, a UK study revealed that graduates had fewer chances of employment compared to those who were experienced because graduates entered the world of work soon after their studies and have not accumulated any practical knowledge and experience pertinent to the aspired job opportunity (Hoskins, Leonard, & Wilde, 2018).

It is crucial to differentiate employment from employability, such as when attaining a higher education qualification may not automatically lead to securing employment (Støren & Aamodt, 2010). The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines employment as "all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit" (International Labour Organization, 2013). The organisation also defines employability as "portable skills and qualifications that enable a person to make use of education and training opportunities to secure decent work" (International Labour Organization, 2015, p. 1).

Evidently, employability transcends the mere acquisition of a job. Still, it entails skills and competencies acquired throughout a lifetime that enable an individual to obtain employment and perform competitively in the job market (Taylor, 2016). This differentiation is critical because it is possible to have relevant attributes but remain unemployed. As such, measuring HE quality or performance based on employment rates could be problematic due to the multiplicity of factors contributing to graduates' unemployment. In this regard, higher education institutions, the labour market, and governments should understand and accept their collective responsibility in producing

employable graduates for the benefit of graduates themselves, society at large, and the overall economy (International Labour Organization, 2015, p. 1). In reality, higher education institutions alone cannot guarantee or ensure graduate employment despite the burden of producing employable graduates on the higher education institutions themselves.

2.4 CAUSAL FACTORS FOR GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Graduate employment outcomes in South Africa are influenced by several factors whose analysis is imperative for this study. Amongst others, the percentage of young adults with higher education qualifications is low. The employment status of adults aged between 25 and 64 with a degree stood at 11.3% in 2020 compared to 8.3% in 2010 (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 12). With the labour market's growing demand for skilled and competent workers, it could be concluded that a high level of higher education is becoming more appealing. Despite the evident increase in higher education participation rates and graduate output, the official national unemployment rates continued to increase from 32.6% to 34.4% in the first and second quarters of 2021, respectively (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 12).

It is reported that the graduate unemployment rate is currently at 11%, with 64.4% of youth aged 15-24 years and 42.9% of those aged 25-34 years unemployed in the second quarter of 2021 (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021, pp. 14-15). Notwithstanding the low graduate unemployment rate compared to the national average, the steady annual percentage increase is disconcerting since unemployment is one of South Africa's triple socio-economic challenges, with inequality and poverty (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019, p. 2). South Africa is experiencing difficulties creating enough jobs (World Bank Group, 2018). The slow economic growth has also compounded the lack of employment opportunities in the job market for graduates (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019, p. 3). Hence, an analysis of causal factors for graduate unemployment is imperative.

2.4.1 Field of Study

Graduate unemployment research frequently points to the field of study as a critical factor in determining graduate outcomes (Moleke, 2006); (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2012). According to the *OECD Skills for the jobs* report, 32% of South African workers are mismatched by virtue of their respective fields of study (OECD, 2018). Studies also show that graduate unemployment rates differ among graduates from different fields (Purcell, Pitcher, & Simm, 1999). Meanwhile, Kraak (2015) and Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, and Kleynhans (2015) posit that graduates' degrees and chosen fields often lead to low career development opportunities.

Harvey (1999) suggests that graduates in the Arts and Design fields take longer to enter the labour market than those who studied different subjects. Moreover, those majoring in the Humanities and the Arts have difficulty finding employment opportunities compared to those in technical fields such as Medicine or Engineering (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015); (Yu, 2013). Walker (2015) also corroborates the latter view, stating that graduates from the Sciences and Engineering fields were more likely to be employed than their peers in the Humanities and the Arts. According to Moleke (2006), degrees in Humanities and the Arts do not necessarily equip students for a specific career field, which is the reason for their delayed entry into the labour market compared to graduates in the Natural Sciences and the Economic and Management Sciences.

2.4.2 Lack of Employability Skills

The report on skills supply and demand in South Africa (2019) posits that skilled workers in South Africa are in short supply compared with the labour market demands. This fact reveals a direct link between the high graduate unemployment rate and the mismatch between qualifications and the skills required in the world of work (Nel & Neale-Shutte, 2013). Walker (2015) suggests that a lack of coordination between theory and practice through practical work is attributable to most graduates' ineligibility for employment in the job market. According to Van Aardt (2012), the average graduate unemployment rates emanate from graduates' overall lack of critical skills expected by employers. Griesl and Parker (2009) found that South African employers require five (5) primary skills, competencies, and attributes: fundamental skills,

intellectual capacity, professional skills, ability to apply theoretical knowledge, and communication skills.

In today's market, where productivity, performance, and efficiency transcend all other factors, employers are hesitant to hire inexperienced graduates. This reluctance is due to the perception that their analytical skills, emotional intelligence quotient (EQ), and management skills are lacking (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015), as well as cultural capital (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2016).

2.4.3   Quality of Education/ Type of Institution

Studies reveal that employers' perceptions of higher education institutions attended by graduates contribute to the increasing rate of graduate unemployment (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015). As such, obtaining a degree from certain higher education institutions can affect career outcomes, either negatively or positively (Pauw, Bhorat, Goga, Ncube, & van de Westhuizen, 2006, p. 24). According to Bhorat and Visser (2012), the reputations of Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) and Historically White Institutions (HWIs) are also instrumental in graduates' employability outcomes. By implication, employers consider graduates from HWIs more favourably due to the presumed high quality of education offered while displaying bias against HBIs due to the perception that these higher education institutions provide a comparatively poorer quality of education. Such discrepant notions and attitudes by employers in the job market also contribute to furthering social injustice and increased unemployment rates. Moreover, the quality of secondary schooling has contributed to graduate unemployment and highlights the overall poor quality of the South African education system at the lowest levels (Paridjo & Waluya, 2017).

Many new matriculants are considered semi-literate because they lack the basic maths, writing, and communication skills required at the university entry level (Paridjo & Waluya, 2017, p. 12). Illustrating that statement is the rank received by South Africa when the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAEEA) rated South African Grade 9 students 38th in a list of 39 countries (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019, p. 4). Likewise, South Africa ranked 127th in a list of 157 countries in the World Bank's human capital index (World Bank, 2019). Undoubtedly, both the IAEEA and

World Bank ratings reflect a poor quality education and have resulted in international criticism despite the country's increased level of investment in education.

Furthermore, South Africa was ranked second-last in a 2015 OECD survey of 76 countries' overall education systems (Hanuschek & Woessman, 2015). The status of the South African education system causes some concern about students' cognitive skills and the accumulation of relevant skills that generate positive outcomes for employment, wages, income distribution and national economic growth (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019, p. 4). Moreover, Van Aardt (2012, p. 60) has also noted that poor-quality education contributes to poor learning capacity and low workplace productivity.

2.4.4   Expectations of Graduates

Newly graduated students tend to have high salary expectations when searching for employment opportunities (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). High salary expectations often make new graduates reluctant to consider junior positions. They then prefer to continue searching with the hope of finding better-paying career opportunities (Kunene, 2018, p. 15). Alas, the continuous search contributes to the ever-increasing unemployment queues in the South African job market. There is also the perception by companies that new graduates lack the required skills and necessary experience for holding managerial positions. Hence, employers offer lower salary packages but provide training opportunities for graduates to acquire the skills needed in the labour market (Kunene, 2018, p. 15).

2.4.5   Age

Pitcher, Hogarth, and Purcell (1999) uphold that younger graduates are disadvantaged by their age and lack of work experience, one of the most important factors that prospective employees consider. The positive correlation between age and employment is depicted in the figure below.

Figure 2.1: Labour market rates by age group (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021)

Figure 2.1 illustrates the labour market rates by age group. Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) findings for the second quarter of 2021 show that youth aged 15-24 recorded the highest unemployment rate of 64.4% in this category (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021). They were followed by 25-34-year-olds, constituting 42.9% of the unemployment rate. However, adults aged 35-44 recorded a lower unemployment rate at 29.4% in their age category, while those in the 45-54 and 55-64 years bracket record even lower unemployment rates with 21% and 12.4%, respectively. This statistical information suggests that age contributes to the employment equation.

2.5 AGENCIES, POLICIES, AND INSTRUMENTS ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The demand for highly-skilled workers in South Africa is increasing, notwithstanding the increasing unemployment rates. Research suggests that the misalignment between graduates produced and those required by the labour market cannot be ignored further (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). As mentioned previously, the field of study, lack of employability skills, quality of education, type of higher education institution attended, and work inexperience are all contributing factors to the graduate unemployment situation in the country. Despite the improvements in higher education over the years, as demonstrated by the increasing enrolment rates, the lack of relevant skills and the need for high-quality education also feature prominently as causal factors in the country's labour market skills deficit.

The South African government has taken an acute interest in this regard and considers graduate unemployment a significant policy challenge. Accordingly, the ascension to power by the African National Congress (ANC) in the 1990s resulted in the development of several policies to boost general employment growth (Corder, 1997). Policies focusing on youth unemployment, in particular, abounded. The following figure depicts policies developed to curb youth unemployment from 1990 to 2016. Most notable among the repertoire of policies in Figure 2.2 are the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. Of equal importance are the National Youth Policy (NYP), the Employment Incentive Tax (ETI), the National Growth Path, and the National Development Plan (NDP), all of which are discussed below.

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EARLY 1990s	1994–1995	1996–2003	2004–2007	2008–2016
Policy debates on overcoming apartheid legacies	Reconstruction and development	Focus on macroeconomic instability	First and second economy; War on Poverty	Overcoming triple threat of unemployment, poverty and inequality
Discussion Document on Economic Policy; Ready to Govern; RDP	RDP White Paper; Special Poverty Relief Allocation	GEAR; Jobs Summit	AsgiSA, JIPSA; Growth and Development Summit	National Growth Path, National Development Plan
				Employment Tax Incentive; Jobs Fund
Special employment creation programmes	National Public Works Programme, Working for Water		EPWP; National Youth Service Policy Framework	EPWP; Kh Ri Gude, Masupatsela, NARYSEC
National Training Strategy; Education Renewal Strategy and Curriculum Model for South Africa	South African Qualifications Authority Act; White Paper on Education and Training; South African Schools Act, National Education Policy Act	National Skills Act, Skills Development Act; Further Education and Training Act; Outcomes-based education/Curriculum 2005	Department of Higher Education and Training; Department of Basic Education; Revised National Curriculum Statement	Green and white papers on post-school education and training; Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement; National Skills Accord, Basic Education Accord, Youth Employment Accord
	Labour Relations Act (LRA)	Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Employment Equity Act	Employment Services of South Africa	Amendments to BCEA, LRA, EE; Public Employment Services Act
		BEE Commission Report	B-BBEE Act	B-BBEE Amendment Act
National Youth Development Forum	Umsobomvu Youth Fund / National Youth Commission			National Youth Development Agency
Small Business Development Corporation	White Paper on a National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business in South Africa	Nstika Enterprise Promotion Agency, Khula Enterprise Finance	Small Enterprise Development Agency; Small Enterprise Finance Agency	Department of Small Business Development; Youth Enterprise Development Strategy

Figure 2.2: Policy development on youth unemployment: 1990 to 2016 (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, 2018)

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2.5.1 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)

The RDP is a socioeconomic policy framework developed by the ANC in 1994 in its policy framework document. It was aimed at redressing past apartheid-induced social injustices and promoting sustainable economic growth utilising the service delivery improvement, establishment of peace and security for all citizens, and provision of comprehensive education and training to complement the world of work (African National Congress (ANC), 1994).

The above-cited three fundamental policy tenets include the following five essential aspects: meeting basic needs, developing efficient human resources, building the economy, democratising the State and society, and implementing the RDP (African National Congress (ANC), 1994, p. 9). Soon after the implementation of the RDP, Black South Africans, in particular, were immediately aware of the prevalence of the policy (Corder, 1997). Despite South Africans benefitting to some extent from houses, education and overall life improvement, the RDP could not achieve its goal of creating employment and growth due to a shortage of funds, resources, and opportunities (Corder, 1997, pp. 200-201).

2.5.2 Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR)

In conformity with the objectives of the RDP policy framework, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy was developed in an attempt to rebuild and restructure the economy (Mahadea, 1998). In 1996, the policy proposed the elimination of trade controls, stabilising the economy, and privatisation through the formalisation and implementation of an economic strategy that prompts growth, development and employment in South Africa (Mahadea, 1998, pp. 447-448). It was envisaged that such a policy orientation would improve the standard of living of all South Africans (Mahadea, 1998, pp. 447-448). Despite steady progress towards its 6% growth rate target by 2000 and its goal to reduce the budget deficit, GEAR failed to create four hundred thousand new jobs by the end of the same year (Mahadea, 1998, p. 460). Regrettably, the standard employment rate has continued to decline since the 1990s (Lehohla, 2000, pp. 3-4).

2.5.3 National Youth Policy (NYP)

The National Youth Policy (NYP) was drafted in the early 2000s, with the first draft presented in 1997 without gaining traction. It advocated for career guidance and training provisions to address youth unemployment and entrepreneurship skills. The latest version of this policy is known as the NYP 2020-2030. It aims to ensure "effective positive youth development outcomes for young people at local, provincial, and national levels in South Africa" (Makoae, Tirivanhu, Alubafi, & Mkwanazi, 2021). This 2020-2030 version is based on two previous NYP drafts spanning 11 years. It identifies the repertoire of youth resources as an underused asset that must be exploited to serve the interests of the entire society (Makoae, Tirivanhu, Alubafi, & Mkwanazi, 2021, p. 1).

A primary objective of this policy is to assist young people in developing their competencies and becoming responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to society (p. 3). Although several youth policies were drafted and improved over time, their implementation and enforcement were inadequately coordinated between the relevant institutional bodies (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, WHAT DRIVES YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND WHAT INTERVENTIONS HELP? A Systematic Overview of the Evidence. High-level Overview Report., 2018, p. 17). Such poor coordination resulted in mismanagement and deregulation in the workplace, contributing to persistent youth unemployment. However, it should be noted that financial support for youth enterprises and learners possessing a post-school qualification has slightly increased under the previous NYPs (South African Government News Agency, 2021).

2.5.4 National Development Plan (NDP)

The National Development Plan (NDP) was drafted and first released in November 2011 (National Planning Commission, 2019, p. 14). Its stated goal was to abolish poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. To attain these goals, it was critically important that economic growth, human capital and skills development, state capacity enhancement and the promotion of leadership and partnership prevailed in a conducive environment (National Planning Commission, 2019, p. 14). Guided by this plan, the government proposes reforms to propel employment, resolve spatial issues, and encourage business organisations to stimulate growth in the labour market.

Furthermore, this action plan relied heavily on industry, as policymakers intended industrial policies to support growth and employment as proposed in the NDP (Loewald, Makrelov, & Wörgötter, 2021). In this regard, the NDP recommends intensifying public works programmes, among others.

Despite its well-developed intentions, several of the NDP recommendations mentioned above were not implemented, and efforts to bolster the economy were unsuccessful. It should be noted that, despite the introduction of the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) programme at the time, the migration of skills was progressing at a slow and undesirable pace (Loewald, Makrelov, & Wörgötter, 2021, p. 21).

2.5.5   Employment Tax Incentive (ETI)

The Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) is a policy-initiated programme that took effect on 1 January 2014 and is scheduled to end on 28 February 2029. The National Treasury drives the policy mainly (South African Revenue Service, 2022). The ETI was designed to address youth unemployment by stimulating job creation opportunities for the youth (National Treasury, 2016). In addition, the ETI was also intended to reduce the high labour costs associated with recruiting and training young employees (National Treasury, 2016, p. 22). This incentive is also aimed at stimulating the recruitment of young workers. Empirical evidence indicates that the ETI's effect on youth employment is generally negligible, although youth employment in small companies has increased moderately ((Ebrahim, Leibbrandt, & Ranchhod, 2017); (Makgetla, 2017)). In sum, smaller firms tend to be more effective at using ETI, suggesting that youth unemployment should be addressed more aggressively by focusing on these small firms.

2.5.6   National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) came into effect in 2008. Its main goal was to create and promote the coordination of youth development matters and financial affairs while providing for the government's management, governance, and administration of the funds for youth development. The NYDA funding was governed by the Demutualisation Levy Act of 1998. Furthermore, the Act aims to repeal the National Youth Commission Act 1996 and provide for matters connected therewith (Republic of South Africa, 2009). The National Youth

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Development Agency (NYDA) is dedicated to institutionalising challenges faced by the youth in South African society. Furthermore, it is tasked with facilitating youth development across all sectors (National Youth Development Agency, n.d.).

2.6 CAUSAL FACTORS FOR FAILURE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

A review of South African youth policies suggests that the outcome of interventions and strategies is not as productive as expected. Although intervention measures are in place, they have remained uncoordinated, lacking a solid or concrete implementation plan, and have unclear accountable structures in certain instances. Given the prolonged high rates of youth unemployment and overall low graduate employability, youth agencies and their policies have not accomplished the desired outcomes (Mtwesi, 2014, p. 38). Research has highlighted several reasons for the poor performance of youth agencies and policies, which are discussed below.

2.6.1 Vague Mandates and Fragmentation

Various agencies lack a clear direction regarding their aims, objectives, and the respective governing or accountable bodies (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, 2018). Such a situation has resulted in duplicated responsibilities, disintegrated coordination, confusion, and time-wasting (p. 17). Moreover, a lack of coordination, collaboration, and communication has resulted in considerable overlaps between the mandates of government bodies tasked with overseeing various youth initiatives. An example in this regard relates to the overlap between the National Youth Council, the Youth Directorate, and the NYDA and the Youth Directorate.

2.6.2 Lack of Coherence and Coordination

Mismanagement, miscommunication (or a lack thereof), and poor coordination have severe implications for economic participation and growth, accountability, monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of implemented programmes (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020, p. 12).

2.6.3   Lack of Capacity

A lack of capacity is noticeable in the NYDA, which is the agency meant to be the primary overseer of all youth initiatives. As a result, there is a lack of accessibility to its initiatives. Moreover, a misallocation of funds limits the availability of monetary resources needed to run programmes effectively.

2.7   TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING MENTORSHIP

2.7.1   What is Mentorship?

The terms *mentorship* and *mentoring* have been redefined and used interchangeably over the years (Mulder, 2019). In this study, the term *mentorship* is preferred. Traditionally, mentorship has been defined as a mutually beneficial relationship involving an experienced person (mentor) and a less experienced protégé (mentee), in terms of which the mentor assists in the development of the protégé's (mentee's) career (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5). Based on this definition, knowledgeable and skilled individuals provide counsel and direction that assist in developing the mentees.

According to Meyers and Fourie (2006), mentorship could be described as a mutually beneficial affiliation between two or more people in formal or informal circumstances and surpasses the strict boundaries of responsibility and compulsion. Such association encompasses coaching, networking, sponsoring, and career counselling (Meyer & Fourie, 2006, p. 33). On the other hand, Jyothi and Sharma (2015) consider mentorship as a valuable resource for both the protégé's developmental needs and the organisation's business interest, thus providing the protégé with relevant strategies to cope when facing structural transformations.

Castanheira (2016) defines mentorship as a process during which a mentor (who is usually more experienced) provides adequate support to a mentee (who is typically inexperienced) in various matters concerning work and professional development (p. 337).

Mentorship is also used to describe the actions taken to guide mentees personally or professionally through career guidance and psychosocial support by more experienced persons within an organisation (Mohana & Enoch, 2020, p. 1974). For Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017), mentorship is an encounter on whose terms a mentor (who has well-developed skills) offers career guidance, psychological support,

and encouragement to a mentee in an effort to boost the mentee's work performance and growth.

Based on the various above-cited definitions, the researcher then views mentorship as an interactive partnership involving a skilled and experienced mentor on the one hand and an inexperienced protégé on the other. Within such a partnership, the mentor provides opportunities to develop the protégé personally, psychologically, socially, and professionally. However, the protégé actively takes full advantage of these opportunities and offers a fresh perspective regarding the organisational strengths and challenges of the mentor. Figure 2.3 below depicts the variables involved in the mentor-mentee (protégé) process.
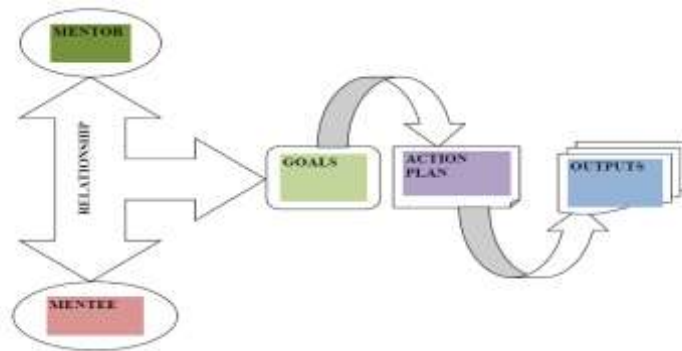
Figure 2.3: The mentorship relationship

The above figure illustrates the relational interaction between a mentor and their protégé. We then observe within this figure that preset goals and an action plan frame the interaction between these 2 parties. At the end of the relationship, outputs produced due to the association are assessed. The study suggests that in a mentorship relationship, the mentor and protégé have expectations that lead to their assumption of various roles. Of note is that a successful mentorship relies on identifying and fulfilling each party's roles. In terms of Kram's theory of mentorship, a mentor assumes a duality of roles and primary functions as depicted below:

- **career development function:** mentors offer coaching, present thought-provoking projects, and promote the protégé's visibility and
- **psychosocial function:** mentors support protégés by providing counselling, support, and adequate role modelling.

Notably, mentor-protégé affiliations are reciprocal relationships where protégés are also expected to take control of their development at all levels of the process and to

consider criticism from the mentor as a chance to improve their skills further (Goodman & Marx, 1978). Table 2.1 below is an illustration of the mentor and protégé's roles.

Table 2.1: Mentors and protégés' key roles, adapted from (National Treasury)

Mentor roles	Protégé roles
Father	Learner
Mother	Reflector
Confidant	Researcher
Advisor/Counsellor	Self-Developer
Motivator/Role model	Communicator
Developer	Listener
Networker	Interpreter
Champion/ Defender/Protector	Implementer
Knowledge Broker	Relationship Builder
Listener	Innovator
Storyteller	Problem-Solver
Teacher/Coach	

The mentorship partnership stems from the demand for progress, growth, and durability that need to be supplied by crucial stakeholders; that is, the mentor, the protégé, and the organisation/ institution as representative of the labour market (Kibbe, Pellegrini, Townsend, Helenowski, & Patti, 2016). In such an equation, the protégé is the ambitious job seeker or junior employee keen to establish and develop themselves professionally. At the same time, the mentor is typically a more experienced and knowledgeable senior member of an organisation wishing to be of value by bringing about transformation within the organisation (National Treasury).

Table 2.2 showcases the factors involved in mentorship. Mentorship is defined by objectives/ activities and the expected outputs generated by implementing these activities. The table also offers examples of goals and outputs typically found in a mentorship partnership.

Table 2.2: Translating mentorship dynamics into outputs (National Treasury)

Translation of Mentoring Dynamics Into Output		
Goals	Action Plans	Output
Development of leadership skills	Attend a management development programme to improve leadership skills	Appointment in a senior management position
Attaining great work-life balance	Spend more time with family	Diarise and book a long weekend away with the family
Manage corporate change	Organise team-building sessions to improve teamwork	Improved teamwork as measured by team-effectiveness instruments

2.7.2   Objectives of Mentorship

Various types of mentoring partnerships are formed for a variety of reasons and may include, but are not limited to, the following objectives or specific activities:

- increasing the organisation's productive output (Abomeh, 2015);
- promoting knowledge and skills transfer (DeLong, Gabarro, & Lees, 2008);
- promoting leadership qualities (Toor & Ofori, 2008);
- promoting diversity and inclusion (Martin & Haar, 2021);
- promoting learning and development opportunities (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015); and
- creating supportive relationships and environments for minorities (Murrell, Blake-Beard, & Porter, 2021).

2.7.3   Types of Mentorship

Byrne (1991) suggests four (4) main types of mentorship styles, namely the traditional, the professional, the institutionalised, and the informal mentorship style, all of which are discussed below.

2.7.3.1 *The traditional mentorship style*

The traditional mentorship style is the oldest recorded mentorship style. It involves two parties: a knowledgeable and influential mentor who becomes a patron and the protégé whose career path is being developed by the mentor. In this mentoring style, members in senior positions within an organisation may initiate contact with younger

or newly recruited members (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999). This practice may lead to favouritism or unfair bias towards some protégés. Other inherent shortcomings of the traditional mentoring style are:

- **Sexism:** Traditionally, males are stereotypically viewed as more capable than their female counterparts (Renzulli, 2019). For this reason, traditional mentoring partnerships often involve a male mentor and a male protégé. This preferential selection is based purely on gender and increases occurrences and perceptions of sexism within organisations that opt for this mentoring style and

- **Homosocial reproduction:** This proposition suggests that people are more likely to work with similar colleagues and have a similar worldview (Kurt & Zietsman, 2021). In such a situation, there is a conscious or unconscious effort to preserve a homogeneous workforce in an organisation as this maintains and sustains the predictability of the organisational environment (and outcomes) in an unpredictable and flux labour market (Holck, 2018). It is reported that women are often excluded from management positions in most private and public sector organisations that wittingly or unwittingly embrace homosocial reproduction (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999).

2.7.3.2 *The professional mentorship style*

Professional mentorship is regarded as a progressive and critical component of staff development and should be promoted and encouraged by top management (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999). This mentorship style plays a vital part in affirmative action legislation (p. 4). Furthermore, barriers to the advancement of women and minorities from career growth opportunities under traditional mentorship programmes are removed through the implementation of professional mentorship programmes in organisations.

2.7.3.3 *The institutionalised mentorship style*

The institutionalised mentorship style forms part of an organisation's policy framework. This mentorship style is essential to the institution's developmental strategies since it allows the organisation's mentorship programme director to allocate, supervise, and support mentorship partnerships (Lyons & Curtis, 1998). It is important to note that institutionalising mentorship neither ensures its endorsement by senior staff members nor its success (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999, p. 5).

2.7.3.4 The informal mentorship style

Informal mentorship styles occur when an organisation or an institution develops an unprompted and uncontrolled relationship with a mentee (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999, p. 5). Considering the spontaneity of these relationships, mutual interest and a sense of ease between both parties are precursors of the development of these relationships from the very beginning. The reasons for forming such a partnership may include factors such as the protégé's need for guidance in the performance of specific tasks and the mentor's need for assistance in completing a project (American Psychological Association, 2006, p. 9).

There are several types of mentorship programmes, and they are as follows (Smith B. , 2009):

1. **One-on-one mentorship programme**: this programme is the most popular of all mentorship programmes and is also referred to as "the grooming model" (Haring, 1997). Students are paired with an industry expert or an academic professional during this programme. Despite the benefits associated with this type of individualised programme, it has been reported that mentors often use race and gender as causal factors for failed mentorship relationships. Moreover, this programme tends to promote bias as mentors often select protégés with whom they share similarities (see section 2.7.3.1).

2. **Network mentorship programme**: this programme involves several participants who share similar core values, experiences and outlook. Participants have access to several mentors, contrary to the one-on-one programme.

2.7.4 Mentorship Phases

Kram (1983) posits that "the mentor relationship has great potential to facilitate career advancement and psychosocial development in both early and middle adulthood" (p. 608). The author suggests that career advancement and psychosocial growth are achievable through accomplishing tasks in four predictable phases (p. 614), outlined below.

2.7.4.1   Initiation or connection

This mentorship stage is referred to as the "honeymoon phase", based on the mentor's representation of an idea. It is viewed as someone who will effectively assist the protégé's efforts to grow within the organisation. During this initial phase, the mentor and protégé create a bond through regular contact discussions of personal development goals and action plans and set the parameters of this partnership. The following aspects are discussed during such sessions:

- the protégé's strengths and weaknesses;
- skills and competencies that the protégé needs to succeed after graduation;
- development of action plans, and
- drafting a memorandum of agreement that explains the mentor's and the protégé's obligations and rights.

2.7.4.2   Cultivation relationship-building

This phase lasts 2-5 years and allows the mentor and protégé to deepen their bond, leading to psychosocial functions such as acceptance, confirmation, counselling, and even friendship (Kram, 1983). In this instance, the protégé realises the value and essence of previously mentioned psychosocial functions and their contribution to self-management and capability. In turn, the mentor derives satisfaction in knowing the positive influence exerted on the protégé's personal and professional development. As such, the mentor experiences a sense of empowering the protégé by providing direction, coaching, constructive criticism, reassurance, and praise (pp. 616-617).

2.7.4.3   Separation

This stage is characterised by feelings of anxiety and confusion as both mentor and protégé anticipate the end of the relationship approaching (p. 618). At that stage, the protégé is more autonomous and functions independently from the mentor. This phase allows both parties to reassess the efficacy and extent of achievement regarding the goals set during the *initiation phase* of their engagement. At this point, a redefinition of the relationship is critical, seeing that it figures in second place in each person's life at work.

2.7.4.4 Redefinition

The mentoring relationship becomes more of a friendship during this mentorship phase, and both parties interact informally. Career and psychological functions continue to occur at a distance due to the amount of time spent together. "For the mentor, the protégé is proof of effectiveness in passing on important values, knowledge and skills" (Kram K.,1983, p. 620).

Figure 2. 5 below represents Kram's mentoring phases, encapsulating various other aspects already mentioned in this section.
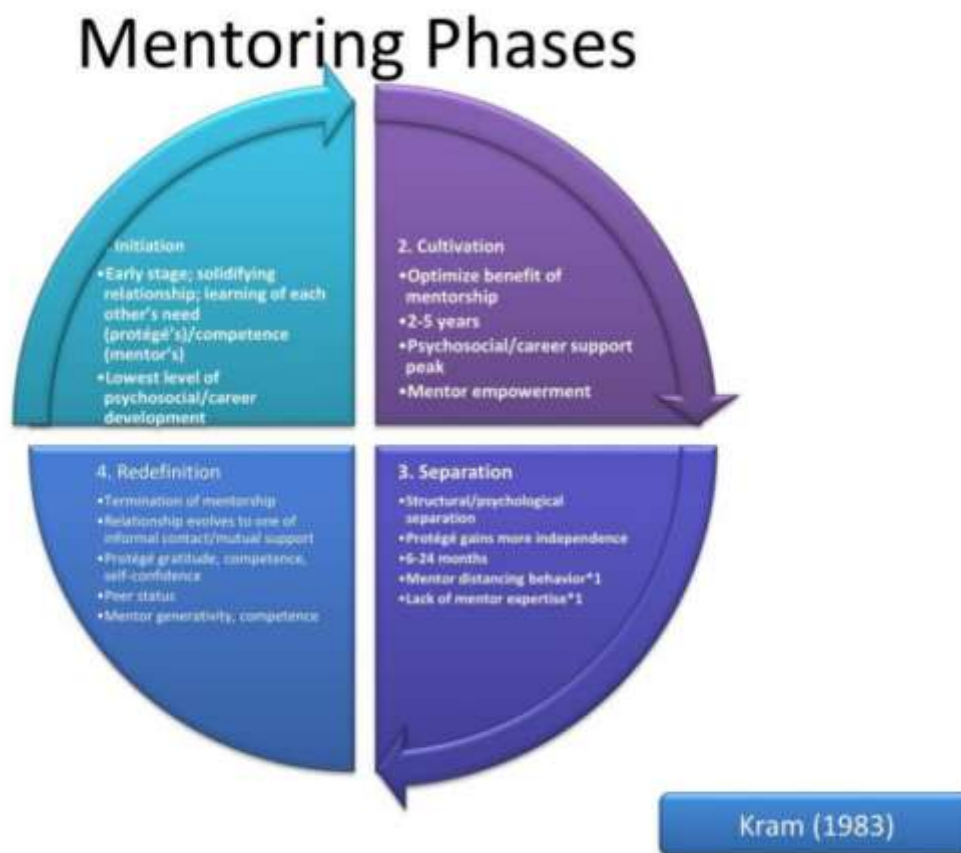
Figure 2.4: Kram's phases of mentorship (Kram K., 1983)

2.7.5 Benefits of Mentorship
2.7.5.1 Workplace benefits

Mentorship has become indispensable in the contemporary age of global competition characterised by an ever-changing marketplace and technological advancements, highlighting skills development and transfer as vital to increasing employee

performance and productivity (Nyamori, 2015). Well-developed mentorship programmes can benefit any organisation in the following ways:

- expansion of employee's understanding and knowledge, as well as the improvement of their performance and output (Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari, 2009);

- facilitation of new employees' integration into an organisation, boosting young workers' confidence and improving their cultural capital, and identification of employees' strong points and shortcomings (Ritchie & Genoni, 2002);

- development of a more robust dedication to the organisation, improvement of the company profile, and achievement of the company's strategic objectives (Murray, Innovations in Performance Improvement with Mentoring, 2006);

- enhancing substantial return on investment (Ready, Conger, Hill, & Stecker, 2010);

- application of theoretical knowledge to real-life situations (Napolitano & Henderson, 2011);

- reduction of time needed to produce excellent work (Nyamori, 2015);

- advancement and acceleration of employee's career (Lamm, Sapp, & Lamm, 2017);

- motivation of senior staff (Murray, 2011);

- promotion of teamwork and cooperation (Denicola, Altshuler, Denicola, & Zabar, 2018);

- transmission and development of positive attitudes (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008)

- increase in wages and promotions (Okurame, 2012);

- reputational enhancement and empowerment (Hunt & Michael, 2013);

- opportunity for networking (Zachary, 2012);

- development of critical skills and creative thinking (Meleis, Hall, & Stevens, 1994);

- development of good habits/practices (Giacumo, Chen, & Seguinot-Cruz, 2020);

- development of complex problem-solving skills (Northouse, 2011); and

- institutionalisation of mentoring practice (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezle, Mentoring research: A review and dynamic process model, 2013)

Table 2.3 below depicts a general overview of the benefits that both mentor and protégé can have.

Table 2.3: General benefits of mentors

Mentors	Mentees	Organisation
Get more opportunities to apply leadership skills	Learn from experienced people	Pool of talent for professional & management jobs is increased
Develop leadership skills	Acquire skills for career progression	Effective skills transfer
Self-fulfilment to see mentees perform	Disadvantaged employees are empowered	Future leaders of organisation are shaped
Learn from mentees	Adapt quicker in new jobs & roles	Supports fast tracking
Improved credibility	Develop networks	Image of organisation is enhanced
Expand opportunities for dialogue at all levels of the organisation	Enhanced interpersonal skills	More co-operation between staff & departments
	Enhance professional development	

As the table above shows, all stakeholders in a mentorship relationship can enjoy several benefits. Mentors can improve their credibility and leadership skills, and mentees can acquire new skills to improve their careers and enhance their interpersonal skills. Moreover, the organisation or institution can strengthen its image and shape future leaders. Overall, the mentorship relationship can be used to the advantage of all those involved.

2.8   THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL MENTORSHIP

2.8.1   The Influence of Institutional Mentorship Before Graduation

Mentorship programmes are some of the most effective strategies higher education institutions can offer students to assist them in earning a tertiary qualification and provide emotional and material support (Balu, 2014). Higher education institutions can

fulfil a crucial mentorship role as the primary source of information, direction, reassurance and support when preparing students for entry into the corporate sphere. Mentors devote time, attention, and support to their protégé to advance their careers (Peluchette & Jeanquart, 2000). This explanation of a mentor's role places lecturers and faculty staff as ideal in assisting students to overcome the trials and obstacles they face at the tertiary level, which is a form of preparing them for life after graduation.

At the faculty level, mentorship facilitates the competency mapping process, preparing students to acquire traits and skills conducive to their future careers (Balu, 2014). Moreover, mentors can equip students with the required competencies to conduct research and public speaking and publish their protégés' work in peer-reviewed journals. Such an orientation boosts students' exposure and confidence (p. 66). Hooley, Watts, and Andrews (2015) describe mentorship programmes in higher education institutions as providing a platform for career and employability education, as well as enabling all activities relevant for future planning and development of relevant skills and transitioning into the real world (Balu, 2014, p. 19). Therefore, mentorships in higher education occur practically between qualified lecturers and industry experts associated with the particular higher education institution (mentor) and inexperienced students (protégés).

Research conducted by Waldeck et al. (1997) reveals that faculty members place greater emphasis on the psychosocial benefits of the mentoring relationship, which provides a rewarding mentoring experience for students. Furthermore, a study conducted by Campbell and Campbell (2000) reports that faculty members willingly chose to mentor students based on their mutual academic interests and commonality. In their study, the aforementioned researchers found that providing educational assistance, gaining social benefits, and building friendships were crucial to participants. It was also found that higher education institutions can assist protégés in advancing their education, enhancing their careers, and developing enduring networking skills. (Balu, 2014).

Therefore, mentoring students in higher education institutions enables them to holistically attain the necessary skills for planning their lives after graduation (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). There is also evidence that professionally mentored individuals efficiently demonstrate daily routines such as time management and critical and creative thinking and acquire the skills necessary to succeed in their careers after

graduation. Effective collaboration between lecturers and students was also noted as enhancing efficient and productive learning (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). In addition, higher education students who receive mentorship from well-structured and well-managed mentorship programmes are more likely to be internationally competitive (Balu, 2014). Lucey and Giannangelo (2015) suggest that psychosocial functions of mentoring proved essential in the protégés' quest for professional identity development and provide great potential for career advancement. Mentoring students at the higher education level lays the foundation for upward mobility opportunities post-graduation, academic success, and personal growth (Crawford & Smith, 2005, p. 52). According to Girves, Zepeda, and Gwathmey (2005), abundant access to advice and crucial information on academics and professional matters benefits to protégés accrue from the higher education institutional mentoring programmes. Knippelmeyer and Torraco (2007) concur with the previously-listed advantages of mentorship, adding that successful institutional mentoring partnerships can address skills and professional development, contact building, and professional and personality improvement. Mentors can also help students develop their writing, research, and analytical competencies to succeed in higher education (Ekechukwu, 2015). It is important to note that mentorship is also beneficial to mentors as it is reflected in their scholarly works, which are revitalised, tested and inspired by a newer generation and its more innovative perspectives (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005). Furthermore, higher education skills related to research and teaching are often transferred to protégés, a gratifying reward resulting from mentoring well-implemented programmes (Schulleri, 2020), such as more cost-effective employee development strategies (Gibb, 1999). Moreover, mentoring programmes may instil a greater sense of investment and belonging to the institution, which could increase commitment and productivity (Craig, 2018).

Evidently, mentorship in higher education has numerous observable benefits. Overall, institutional mentorship has the potential to produce the following benefits:

- enhancing career prospects (Teach First, 2015);
- promoting students' career advancement and growth (Ismail & Arokiasamy, 2007);
- enhancing vocational development (Okolie, et al., 2020);
- improving decision-making skills (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017);

- facilitating school-to-work transition (Lent & Brown, Social cognitive model of career self-management: toward a unifying view of adaptive career behavior across the life span, 2013);

- developing efficient job search strategies (Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019);

- developing a stand-out résumé (Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019);

- enhancing networking opportunities (Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019);

- developing critical and creative thinking (Wang & Shibayama, 2022);

- developing employability skills (Pitan & Atiku, 2017);

- identifying occupational goals (Orsini, Benge, & Carter, 2019);

- providing advice and guidance to students (University Grants Commission, 2021);

- developing students' personality and self-confidence (Eller, Lev, & Feurer, 2014);

- enhancing human capital (McDowell, Grubb, & Geho, 2015);

- developing interviewing skills (Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019);

- increasing student retention and a greater sense of belonging to the HEI community (Gershenfeld, 2014);

- developing positive attitudes (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008);

- promoting active learning and easing academic, social and culturally induced anxieties (Long, 2007);

- promoting psychological well-being (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010); and

- developing self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, Social cognitive model of career self-management: toward a unifying view of adaptive career behavior across the life span, 2013); and

- provision of instrumental and psychosocial support (Ragins B. R., Diversity and workplace mentoring: a review and positive social capital approach, 2007).

2.8.2 Disadvantages of Higher Education Mentorship

A myriad of challenges will likely be faced by mentorship programmes if structured as a universal treatment for all institutional problems. According to Spencer (2007), an organisation or institution's management is paramount to the success of a mentoring partnership (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999, p. 11). In addition, the coordination of institutional and organisational mentorships could be problematic within any institution's structure (Douglas, 2007). Mentorship relationships could be disadvantageous if they fail to meet the mentor's and protégé's needs. A failed mentorship relationship can result from a mentor being either domineering or inhibiting the protégé's requisite level of independence when completing assignments. Adverse outcomes could be obtained when the mentor is uninterested and does not fully invest their time into the partnership transaction (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezle, 2013).

Consequently, the lack of dedication and time commitment from both parties may lead to the failure of the mentorship relationship (DeLong, Gabarro, & Lees, 2008). Without coordination, either party can assert dominant or manipulative dispositions instead of forming a partnership based on mutual respect (Lisa, 2011). However, inadequate mentoring partnerships/ programmes could also be hampered by negative protégé attitudes, a lack of cooperation and condescension (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008, p. 266). Meanwhile, Chao, Walz, and Gardner (2012) posit further that the mentor's lack of time could be detrimental to the protégé's growth. Research studies further assert that mandatory mentoring relationships are less successful than voluntary ones (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999).

Mismatching the mentor's and mentee's expectations could endanger achieving the set goals (Balu, 2014, p. 67). In this regard, the mentor must bring skills and knowledge to the mentoring process (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Furthermore, external factors such as aptitude, social class, influence, gender, race, and background may affect the outcome of a mentoring partnership (Balu, 2014, p. 67). As in traditional mentorship, exclusivity or selectivity of the pairing process can be a shortcoming of mentoring; they can cause frustrations and waste potential within an organisation (Ehrich & Hansford, 1999). Failure of a mentoring partnership could also occur in cases where a mentor feels threatened by the protégé's perceived potential, thus developing the fear of losing influence on the mentee (Kumar, 2012). Additionally, faculty members could be reluctant to undertake a mentoring responsibility due to their heavy workload and

expectations associated with their academic position (Tareef, 2013). However, successful mentorship could be achieved through well-thought-out strategies, notwithstanding the difficulty of guaranteeing whether or not the protégés will become more skilled or better prepared for their post-graduation life as a result of engaging in a mentoring partnership (Balu, 2014).

2.8.3   Reported Outcomes of Institutional Mentorship Programmes

Higher education-level mentorships are vastly under-researched (Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019). Nonetheless, copious studies suggest that graduates experienced a smoother transition into the labour market as a result of their participation in mentorship programmes at university ((Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2015); (Gannon & Maher, 2012)).

According to Eby et al. (2013), students who participated in mentorship programmes providing life and career counselling and coaching have attained positions with more significant career benefits and salaries. These students have also reported professional and personal development and psychological well-being by participating in mentoring programmes at the university level (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010). Research has also shown that students involved in institutional mentorship programmes have developed a higher sense of attachment to the university than those not (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). Consequently, these students were also motivated to become mentors when they became alumni of their *alma mater*. One of the few investigations on institutional mentorship was conducted by Hamilton et al. (2019). Their work revealed that the protégés (students) who benefitted from crucial information from their mentors (industry experts) showed greater job success and increased self-efficacy. The protégés also generated positive job search behaviours, which influenced their job status upon graduating. They reported a clearer view of the path to take after graduation, as well as more assurance and hope to face life in the world of work and a higher sense of connection to the university. They were also looking forward to returning after graduation as mentors.

Participation in institutional programmes may result in adaptive career behaviours and a panoramic view of prospective career paths for the protégé (Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris, & Sappington, 2017). In this regard, the study by Priest and Donley (2014)

reported the following outcomes of institutional mentoring programmes: mentors are instrumental in connecting students with their professional networks to facilitate their transition to the labour market. As a result of the programme and their partnership with their mentors, students report improved self-representation skills, increased confidence levels, and are better equipped to face life after graduation. Students attained leadership skills by emulating their mentors and were given tools to apply those skills to real-life situations.

McDonald et al. (2007) suggest that institutional mentorship programmes are essential to facilitate students' transition to maturity and life in the 'real world.' Therefore, it is imperative to investigate institutional mentorship programmes' role in mitigating graduate unemployment rates. However, an analysis of the available literature reveals that studies on the impact of institutional mentorship on graduate outcomes are sparse. In this regard, the current research is viewed as highly relevant.

2.9   MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

It has been demonstrated that an institution's prosperity and effectiveness are highly dependent on its staff's knowledge, competencies, and dedication (Blokland & Reniers, 2021). Institutional objectives are achievable by aligning staff members' strategies with the institution's goals (Blokland & Reniers, 2021, pp. 3-4). The lack of popularity and ineffectiveness of institutional mentorship programmes are attributed to a lack of clarity on their goals and failure to clarify mutual benefits (Jacobi, 1991).

According to research, organisations need stakeholders' knowledge, expertise, and dedication to be successful and efficient. This can be done by connecting people's strategies to the overall organisational mission. Many mentorship programmes in higher education fall short in terms of setting specific goals for each participant or connecting them to the positive effects of mentoring relationships. Higher education institutions need to construct effective faculty mentorship programmes, and leadership must offer a multifaceted framework to assist their development, implementation, and evaluation (Orsini, Benge, & Carter, 2019).

The success of higher education institutional mentorship programmes should be ensured by the establishment, execution, and evaluation of said programmes based

on informed and multifaceted blueprints provided by relevant institutional authorities (Baker, 2015). Moreover, studies highlight various causal factors for the successful outcomes of institutional programmes (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016), which include unambiguous and regular communication from administrative management regarding programme objectives and available assistance. Therefore, it is vital to successfully design and coordinate higher education mentorship programmes which are conducive to achieving preset goals and positive mentor and protégé outcomes.

2.9.1 Creating a Successful Institutional Mentorship Programme

Literature reports that successful mentorship programmes often adopt a multi-level approach to designing and implementing their programmes (Jain, 2016). A mentorship programme plan provides a blueprint for setting priorities and allocating roles, responsibilities, and quantifiable standards. Furthermore, this plan should serve as a point of reference to the structure spearheading mentorship programmes at the institution (Robinson, 2014). The following steps should be taken to design an effective mentorship programme (Kiel, 2019). The framework should describe the programme's primary aim and should be aligned with the institution's overall mission. The institution should determine its target audience by measuring factors such as age, gender, mentoring needs, and common characteristics. This decision should be informed by data obtained from a needs assessment (MENTOR, 2005). The aims and offerings of the programme should be clearly outlined (socialisation, psychological support, academic support, job/career guidance). The type of mentorship offered should be explicit (group, peer, individual, multiple mentor mentorships). The design of a road step helps to highlight compulsory activities to be undertaken during the programme. Emphasizing obligatory tasks is a helpful way to track and evaluate mentoring pairs' progress. An efficient programme operation contributes to the success of any mentorship programme and involves the following (MENTOR, 2005, pp. 13-14).

2.9.2 Duties and Accountabilities

A governing body must be designated to the mentorship programme to ensure that it is well managed and that the designated mentorship governing body oversees the effective management of the programmes, such as efficiency, reliability and integrity; effective monitoring of progress; as well as identification of shortcomings (MENTOR,

2005, p. 13). It is imperative to have one or several coordinators depending on the number or size of the programme in every mentorship programme (p. 21). According to Hobson et al. (2021), the management of the programme, among others, is integral to mentorship programme coordinators (MPCs). Successful mentoring programme outcomes become efficiently fulfilling in their task description because they mostly rely on the mentoring programme coordinator (MPC).

2.10 THEORETICAL BASIS

2.10.1 Kram's Theory of Mentorship

Kram's (1985) theory of mentorship framed the current study. This theory states that mentorship occurs under two primary functions, as outlined below.

2.10.1.1 Career function

The career function refers to a series of activities or undertakings that assist protégés in gaining the skills they need to progress in their organisations (Ragins & Kram, 2007). These activities may include coaching, sponsoring, providing exposure and visibility, protecting, and assigning stimulating tasks (p. 5).

2.10.1.2 Psychosocial function

The psychosocial function refers to mentoring behaviours that create a bond of trust between a mentor and protégé and target a protégé's psychological and social well-being (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, the protégé experiences professional and personal development, self-empowerment, and increased self-esteem due to counselling, role-modelling, friendships, and acceptance (p. 5).

The application of the mentoring function may differ depending on the type and phases of the mentoring relationship (Kram K., 1983). Accordingly, it is essential to note that, despite their different results, these two functions can work independently within a mentoring partnership. According to Wanberg et al. (2013), the career function of the theory stipulates the protégés' remuneration and career growth, while the psychosocial function relates more to the protégé's overall fulfilment with the mentoring partnership (Kram K., 1983, p. 611).

2.10.2 The Education Context

Various studies have reported on the relevance and efficiency of mentoring programmes in higher education institutions. In such contexts, mentorship programmes facilitate protégés' overall satisfaction, increase their level of involvement in the professional activities associated with their field and promote career confidence and growth (Keith & Moore, 1995). According to Nora and Crisp (2007), mentorship programmes in an educational context aim to promote student involvement in university life, increase their sense of belonging, improve their performance, promote retention, and facilitate career mapping (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Jones, Kelsey, and Brown (2014) posit that well-designed and implemented institutional mentorship programmes have contributed to effective student teaching prospects.

Successful mentorship programmes in higher education institutions lead to better teamwork, a high likelihood of becoming mentors, an overall sense of feeling valued, and increased social capital (Kahle-Piasecki & Doles, 2015). In addition, participation in mentoring programmes enhances teaching, research, and career planning (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016).

2.10.3 Usage of Kram's Theory as Framework of the Study

Kram's theory explains how organisations can effectively play a role in professional and personal graduate outcomes due to their independent career and psychosocial functions. The theory is relevant in educational contexts, wherein academics posit that adequate mentorship is directly linked to self-efficiency and self-management (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017). Possible outcomes associated with both functions of Kram's mentorship assist in effectively positioning higher education institutions in the role of mentors. In this regard, the theory facilitates the investigation of whether an institutional mentorship programme can develop students at multiple levels and affect their professional and personal prospects, thus affecting the graduate unemployment crisis.

Against the backdrop of a mentor's roles (teacher, guide, coach, counsellor, manager) combined with functions of Kram's theory, the researcher was able to frame the study to find out the following critical information to answer the research questions:

- whether the nature of mentorship students received at university facilitated the transition in the world of work;

- students' views and feelings regarding the institution they attended/ where mentorship was received;
- whether the mentorship students received influenced them on a personal level and
- their feedback on the institution's mentorship programmes.

Therefore, when Kram's theory is applied to an educational context, it highlights the higher education institutions' position as mentors in the students' quest to develop excellent skills for fully functional and contributing members of society. Notably, the career function of the theory brought to the surface the need for continuous collaboration between higher education, labour, and students/parents. Additionally, Kram's theory highlighted that the attributes and skills gained under the psychosocial functions benefited graduates personally and professionally. This is confirmed by the literature-based view that psychosocial functions of mentoring also influenced the employment and career satisfaction of protégés (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004).

2.11 RESEARCH GAP

Graduate unemployment is a highly discussed topic in academic circles. Inordinate literature sources and media reports are replete with descriptions of youth and graduate unemployment as a "ticking time bomb" (Mofokeng, 2021), "an intractable challenge" (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, 2020), and having reached "crisis proportion" (Maciko & Siswana, 2017). Causal factors brought forth by researchers concerning this phenomenon range from slow economic growth (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019) and field-of-study mismatch (OECD, 2018) to a lack of employability skills (van Aardt, 2012) (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015) (Lourens & Fourie-Malherbe, 2016). In response to the disproportionate skill supply and demand (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019), several policies have been implemented from the 1990s to date (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, 2018) to address this acute skills shortage.

However, these policies have not resulted in positive outcomes since poverty, inequality, and unemployment still constitute South Africa's triple socio-economic challenge (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019, p. 2). The study also highlighted mentoring as an effective tool for gaining and improving human capital

(Oguejiofor & Umeh, 2017), changing protégés' lives, and promoting the national economy (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Despite the numerous studies on mentoring and its effect on performance and productivity (Abomeh, 2015), research on mentorship in higher education remains limited ((Hamilton, Boman, Rubin, & Sahota, 2019); (Arnesson & Albinsson, 2017)).

In this regard, studies on mentorship have predominantly focused on mentoring at the workplace and on factors affecting its success and apparent outcomes of mentoring relationships (Mohana & Enoch, 2020). Gaps still exist in areas such as the effect of institutional mentorship (mentorship at higher education institutions) on graduates' life/ career prospects and the subsequent effects of such mentorship on the graduate unemployment rate. For this reason, the researcher has elected to investigate the topic and discover whether institutional mentorship can empower graduates personally and professionally. Furthermore, the mitigation of the graduate unemployment rate through graduate empowerment (as a result of mentorship programmes) is investigated in the context of the extent of joint contribution, collaboration, and efficacy (or the lack thereof) between higher education institutions and the labour market.

2.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter primarily focused on a literature-centred review and analysis of the existing research on the central issues and topics such as higher education, higher education institutions, graduate unemployment, youth policies, initiatives, and mentorship. The chapter commenced with the definition and purpose of higher education and higher education institutions in contemporary society. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the linkage of unemployment to graduates in higher education institutions. Relevant policies and initiatives and their outcomes were revised and described in the quest to poignantly understand the steps taken in response to the critical graduate unemployment issue. Thereafter, the researcher brought mentorship into focus, with particular attention given to mentorship in higher education. Finally, the study's theoretical basis was provided, and the gap identified in the literature was also adequately enunciated.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PARADIGM, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The researcher conducted the study to investigate the extent to which institutional mentorship programmes could equip and empower graduate students' personal, professional, and entrepreneurial development. Accordingly, the investigation aims to explore and discover how higher education institutional mentorship programmes can prepare graduate students for the labour market and life after graduation in general. In this regard, the findings of this study could be utilised to determine how higher education and the labour market can contribute to reducing the alarming graduate unemployment rates in collaboration with students and parents.

The current chapter's structure and content describe the research paradigms, research designs, and the methodology employed to respond to the preferred primary and secondary research questions. Accordingly, the chapter presents detailed discussions on the following elements:

- the quantitative research approach;
- data collection methods;
- sampling procedures;
- data analysis and interpretation procedures;
- delimitations and limitations of the study;
- trustworthiness and ethical considerations;
- reliability and validity; and
- summary of the elements discussed at the end of Chapter 3.

3.2   RESEARCH PARADIGMS

The term *paradigm* is described as "a typical example or pattern of something" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2022). Babbie (2021)states that a *paradigm* is premised on various presumptions concerning reality and reflects particular perspectives or viewpoints on life and other phenomena. Initially, Thomas Kuhn utilised the term *paradigm* to describe a philosophical mindset (Kuhn, 2012). This universal framework reflects viewpoints or belief systems and determines how data is interpreted in a study

(Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher's philosophy about society is reflected in the research paradigm selected to conduct an investigation (Lather, 1986). Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) posit that researchers must select a paradigm that aligns with their worldview to produce an efficient and reliable research design. Hence, paradigms are crucial to the research process because they are essential in outlining viewpoints that impact the rationale for choosing the preferred topics to be investigated. The researcher's paradigm provides the foundation of the research process since this also informs the methodology and all other procedures involved in the investigation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 26). Essentially, a paradigm indicates how the findings of a study will be presented, depending on the researcher's philosophical background. Four of the most influential research paradigms are discussed hereinafter: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to preconceived notions or worldviews concerning the nature of reality (Richards, 2003). Ontology is also viewed as the existence of a substance in our world from which the researcher can attain knowledge (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Scotland (2012), on the other hand, describes ontology as the primary branch of philosophy that outlines the speculations or hypotheses – rather than actual reality - constructed or developed by an individual to assist them in understanding the nature of the investigated topic holistically. Scott and Usher (2004) further suggest that these speculations are the researcher's rationalised thoughts concerning the problem being investigated, its relevance, and the proposed approaches or mechanisms for its resolution.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is defined as the branch of philosophy concerned with the study of the nature, forms, and acquisition of knowledge and its communication with other human beings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This branch of philosophy focuses on elements related to the validity, scope, and knowledge acquisition methods and addresses the following fundamental questions (Moon & Blackman, 2014):

- What constitutes knowledge?

- How can we attain knowledge?
- How can we produce knowledge?
- How can we verify the reproducibility of knowledge?

The questions mentioned above remain crucial to any unique knowledge contribution. They could be answered by using four knowledge sources, namely the intuitive, authoritative, rational induction, and empirical sources of knowledge (Gladwell, 2007). Intuitive source of knowledge refers to an ability that accrues from intuition, emotions/ beliefs, or instincts. The authoritative source of knowledge is derived from authority figures, such as parents, government, priests, professors, and leaders in various public and private spheres of society (Khatri, 2020). On the other hand, the source of knowledge associated with rational induction is acquired through logical thinking or reasoning.

In contrast, empirical knowledge is derived or obtained from experiences and demonstrable, objective facts (Khatri, 2020, p. 1437). Establishing the basis is essential, as it informs any knowledge acquisition process. Therefore, given the various afore-cited knowledge sources, it is evident that the epistemological grounding of the study derives from the empirical knowledge obtained from the sampled study participants.

Thus, this research considered research paradigms to frame the problem and focus of the study around mentorship and employability in South African higher education.

3.2.3   Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the entire research process, including the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures opted for in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The research methodology entails the logical premise to investigate and address the research problem(s) being queried (Mason, 2017). Hypotheses, limitations, and delimitations are all included in the research methodology of a study (Khatri, 2020, p. 1437). In order to effectively select all the undertaken processes and procedures in the study, the researcher needs to consider the below-cited questions to successfully make a pertinent contribution to the knowledge pool (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 28):

- How will the researcher attain the information being sought?

- How will the researcher attain the required knowledge?
- How will the researcher assimilate the meanings accruing from the knowledge?

3.2.4　Research Methods

A research method is the precise technique or instrumentation used to gather, examine, and analyse data and may involve a questionnaire, a survey, or an open-ended interview (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 52). It is also worth noting that the preferred research methods in an investigation rely upon the research design (Section 3.3) (Walliman N., 2011, p. 14). Furthermore, interviews, online surveys, focus groups, experiments, case studies, and observational studies are some examples of research methods used for data collection (Study Smarter, 2018).

3.2.5　Social Research Paradigms

Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose four main categories to classify social research:
- functionalist paradigm (objective regulation);
- interpretive paradigm (subjective regulation);
- radical humanist paradigm (subjective-radical regulation); and
- radical structuralist paradigm (objective-radical regulation);

The functionalist paradigm adopts either realist, positivist, determinist, or nomothetic viewpoints (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This paradigm also assumes that human action is predictable or rational and that the behaviour of an organisation can be ascertained by testing a series of hypotheses (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26). This paradigm focuses on specific problems and aims to generate pragmatic solutions to real problems. Interest in understanding the world in its social and current state is the driving force behind the interpretive paradigm, which is also based on an individual's subjective experience (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28). Therefore, researchers aim to gain insight into people's behaviour by observing existing and continuous processes when adopting this approach. The desire to go beyond boundaries imposed by the social world is the rationale of the radical humanist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). Interpretive paradigms promote revolutionary changes as ideological superstructures in society, which prevent individuals from reaching their true human

fulfilment (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). Meanwhile, the radical structuralist paradigm upholds that radical changes brought about by societal disturbances (such as political and economic crises) portray the behaviour of modern society (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 34).

The following are some of the main paradigms or perspectives guiding a study:

- **positivism:** informs that knowledge is best gained through observation and logical reasoning, with emphasis on objective and observable truths as the only authentic forms of the foundation of science (Nel, 2016);
- **post-positivism:** this approach suggests that research occurs in a logical sequence and that knowledge is defined according to its objectivity, standardisation, deductive reasoning, and control (Creswell J. W., 2013);
- **constructivism:** also termed interpretivism, accentuates individuals' beliefs from which subjective meanings are derived (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011);
- **pragmatism:** this paradigm adopts a practical or pragmatic approach and proposes the most applicable methodology to solve the researched problem (Tashakkori & Charles, 2008).

The positivist paradigm, then, particularises and emphasises the scientific approach to conducting a study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 30). Also, the positivist paradigm suggests that the only valid way to contribute to existing knowledge and acquire an understanding of human nature is through the following three critical processes: testing, examination/ inspection, and experience-dependent logic (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 31). The foremost reason for adopting the positivist paradigm is to enable the researcher to explain a phenomenon and to make plausible predictions that rely on outcomes that can be measured (Sciarra, 1999) (Gergen, 2001). For example, the aim of this study (i.e., to investigate the role of institutional mentorship in graduate students' employability) predicted that the gap between graduating and entering the real world could be bridged by institutional mentorship and administered a survey to confirm the hypotheses. The positivist paradigm further seeks to determine relationships by utilising a quantitative approach to research, where findings obtained from empirical evidence are preferred (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020, p. Abstract). To that effect, the findings assisted in informing the theory and growing the knowledge pool, as well as developing hypotheses by means of the following circular process (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020, p. 690):

- identification of variables, i.e., operationalisation;
- carrying out an evidence-based and verifiable investigation; and
- guide to existing theory.

The primary goal of this study is to determine whether institutional mentorship could influence graduate students' holistic development and whether this type of mentorship could contribute to addressing the current graduate unemployment crisis. The positivist paradigm was selected for this purpose since it can promote and facilitate the researcher's objectivity and dissociation or detachment from participants during the data-gathering stages of the study (Ryan, 2018, p. 41).

Furthermore, the researcher gathered pertinent data from the alumni of a local university without being actively involved. This process was helpful in objectively discovering institutional mentorship's role in producing employable, well-rounded, and fulfilled graduates who will meet the labour market's needs as contributing members of society. This methodology was conducive to obtaining data unaffected by the researcher's belief system (Ryan, 2018, p. 44).

Through the positivist paradigm, the researcher can also determine the relationships between variables in the study (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020, p. 692) through the emergence of trends and patterns. In this regard, the independent variable (A) is the participation in institutional mentorship programmes, while the dependent variable (B) is the extent of the graduate students' employability. Though the researcher intended to verify whether variable A leads to variable B to design a model that could demonstrate the causal relationship between variable A and variable B (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 54), it should be added that establishing a strictly causal relationship was not achieved as the researcher was unable to collect data in strictly controlled conditions due to COVID related restrictions. Positivism is characterised by other paradigmatic aspects such as inductivism, objectivity, deductivism, and phenomenalism (Bryman, 2012). The deductive approach was employed to analyse the data collected, which implied the following (p. 24):
- selection of theory;
- formulation of a hypothesis;
- empirical investigation/ collection of data;
- statistical analysis of findings;
- validation or nullification of hypothesis; and

- confirmation, construction, or revision of the selected theory.

This deductive approach also allowed the researcher to control and manipulate variables (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001), as depicted in the sampling procedure applied during this investigation. Thus, it was revealed that participating in institutional mentorship programmes (independent variable A) affects graduates' employability (dependent variable B), as demonstrated by the empirically gathered data. (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 54).

Electronic surveys were administered to gather data in order to respond to the open- and close-ended research questions. The collected data was analysed by providing basic sum-ups and measures of the sample, combined with graphs illustrating the respective data sets. Descriptive statistical analysis was also utilised to describe the data obtained (Kaur, Stoltzfus, & Yellapu, 2018). Moreover, inferential statistical analysis enabled the researcher to validate the hypothesis. This analysis style allowed the researcher to "draw a causative conclusion from the data" and to determine the generalisability of the findings (Kaur, Stoltzfus, & Yellapu, 2018, p. 61).

In conclusion, the positivist paradigm optimally enabled the researcher to analyse and interpret the data gathered from survey questionnaire responses to determine whether the mentorship provided by the respondents' institutions played a role in preparing them for life after their academic studies (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33). It should be noted that the positivist paradigm is not exclusively used in quantitative research methods but is also suitable for qualitative experimental studies (Chua, et al., 2019).

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design relates to the particular frame of reference that guides the study's data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 46). Creswell (2009) describes the research design as the plans and the procedures for research that encompass the range of research-related decisions, from the broad assumptions and strategies to the detailed methods of data collection and analysis applied by the researcher. In this regard, Fouché and Shurink (2011) proffer that a research design refers to the choices made by the researcher in planning the research study.

As discussed in the previous section, the researcher opted for the positivist paradigm as it established the causative deduction approach related to the cause-and-effect

relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). The three main research design approaches in the social sciences are outlined below (that is, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research designs) (Morgan, 2014, p. 45):

- **Qualitative research:** an experientially informed process by which individuals or groups of individuals illuminate the meaning of a particular social or human issue (phenomenon) from their understanding, experiences, or worldview. This type of research resonates with the inductive perspective and places emphasis on describing the complexity of a phenomenon through prosaic in-depth reports (Creswell J. W., 2009, p. 22);

- **Quantitative research:** an approach by which the researcher objectively tests theories to verify a hypothesis. The data obtained is then analysed numerically/ statistically (Creswell J. W., 2009, p. 22); and

- **Mixed-methods research:** a type of research design approach which incorporates numerical/ statistical and qualitative (i.e., non-statistical) data in a single research study for pragmatic or practical reasons of the study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), mixed-methods research designs encompass a minimum of at least one quantitative strand and one qualitative variant.

This study aims to determine whether institutional mentorship could mitigate the graduate unemployment crisis and thus develop students' employability opportunities and skills before graduation using the positivism paradigm. Such mitigation is intended to counter the skills mismatch prevalent in the labour market. Therefore, the pragmatist perspective enables the positivist research design approach for the researcher's determination of the influence of mentorship pogrammes on employability. The relevance of this approach lies in that the data collected using both designs could be applied to different situations and contexts (internationally and locally) (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 53). Quantitative research methods are best suited for the positivist paradigm because the researcher can readily determine and comprehend the explanatory relationship in the collected data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 31). The objectivist epistemology (p. 31) facilitated the provision of information concerning institutional mentorship's role in graduate employability.

Validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalisability constitute the main criteria to ascertain data accuracy, impartiality, and trustworthiness in the positivist paradigm (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2004). These measures mentioned previously facilitate the description, prediction, and verification of empirical data and assist in establishing the quality of the investigation and its outcomes (Antwi & Hamza, 2015, p. 220).

The researcher conducted survey research for a quantitative analysis to ascertain the alignment of the research process and data to the trustworthiness criteria mentioned above. It should be noted that the survey also generated qualitative data, which allowed for more in-depth analysis.

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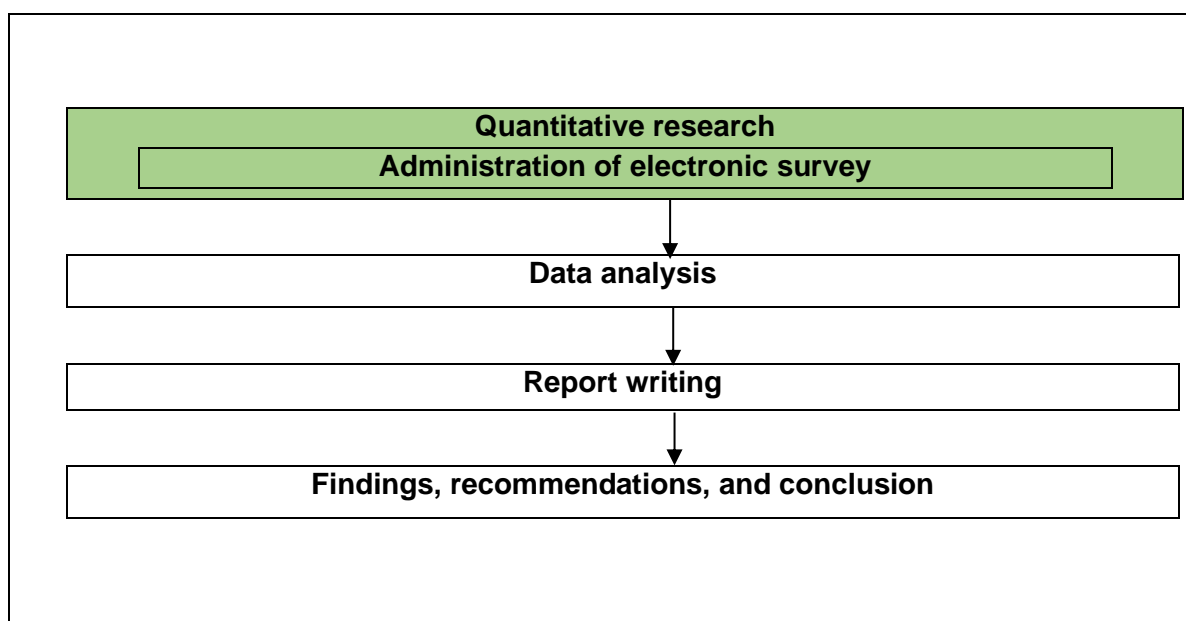
Figure 3.1: Quantitative exploratory investigation

The researcher acquired a deep understanding of pertinent factors or variables related to the research topic, such as the labour market demand and supply trends, graduate unemployment issues and existing corrective measures, the higher education sector imperatives, as well as the role of mentorship and all matters pertaining to employability. Accordingly, the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the survey were integral to answering the research questions (Travis, 2016).

Evidently, a thorough analysis of the literature was conducted before investigating in order to locate apparent gaps. This critical identification step also informed the formulation of the research questions to ascertain the study's overall usefulness. It was essential to examine previously published studies to obviate irrelevant research

that could potentially compromise the quality and reliability of the investigation (Martins, da Cunha, & Serra, 2018, p. 4).

The data collected during the literature analysis was used to inform the development of the research problem. The goal and purpose of the survey are to draw conclusions about a population by examining a sample of the population (Ponto, 2015). The materials reviewed during this phase included the findings of locally and internationally published studies in the form of research reports, official government reports and policy documents, academic books, government gazettes, peer-reviewed articles, and similar documents.

3.4   TYPE OF RESEARCH

Various methodological approaches are available for individuals interested in conducting the research. The researcher adopted a quantitative approach for this study (Young, 2016). The purpose of the quantitative survey research approach is (p. 168):

- to describe and analyse variables and relevant constructs in respect of the topic being investigated; and
- to rapidly collect data highlighting critical characteristics of a large, targeted sample.

The following research question emerged during the first stage of this investigation: *"To what extent can institutional mentorship empower graduates preparation for the world of work?"*. The survey questions targeted alumni of a South African higher education institution. Due to ethical, confidentiality and privacy implications, their responses were anonymized (Coffelt, 2018, p. 227).

3.5   SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Sampling refers to selecting a portion of a population (graduates in this instance) to study or evaluate for a specific purpose consistent with the study's general intentions and objectives (Bhardwaj, 2019, p. 158). Probability sampling techniques have been used in this study. In that regard, the selection of respondents was made to allow each member of the targeted population an equal chance to be part of the sample. Therefore, the simple random sampling technique was utilised (p. 159). Due to ethical

restrictions, the invitation to participate in the study was posted on a portal solely dedicated to alumni of University X, thereby allowing *any alumni* in this university an equal opportunity or chance to become a respondent.

Secondly, purposive sampling was utilised to target alumni of University X (targeted population) who had access to the online platform. Accordingly, University X alumni had an equal opportunity to participate.

The researcher attained the information relevant to the study as the majority of respondents participated in University X's mentorship programmes (Taherdoost, Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research, 2016). Furthermore, University X was chosen as the sampling pool due to its score in the 2020 QS graduate employability survey and the prevalence of mentorship programmes in such an institution.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The most crucial stage of the research process is the data collection stage since it enables the researcher to gather valid quality information that is vital for making informed choices (Patil & Yogi, 2011, p. 263). There are several types of data collection methods in existence. However, the researcher opted for the electronic survey in order to make valid deductions concerning the role of institutional mentorship in graduate employability.

3.6.1   Electronic Survey

The electronic survey is one of the most commonly used primary data collection methods in the social sciences (Diem, 2004) (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2007, p. 4). The survey is administered to a representative sample of the population, which the researcher targeted due to its practicality and low cost (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2007, p. 5). Following are the different types of surveys (p. 5):

- **longitudinal survey:** refers to a method that gathers data for months or years concerning events or attitudes (over a prolonged period);
- **cross-sectional survey:** refers to a tool that collects data concerning behaviours or attitudes at a single point in time (short-term), and

- **correlational survey:** refers to a tool used for exploring and explaining causal factors or relationships among different associated variables (p. 6).

The invitation to participate in the survey (information sheet) contained the following elements:

- explored theme;
- title of the research study;
- purpose of the study;
- brief introduction of the researcher;
- right to voluntary participation;
- explanation of ethical matters;
- significance of the research;
- consent request;
- survey duration of completion, and
- participants' rights.

Using the electronic survey as a data collection tool provided several advantages, as stated below.

- **internal and external validity:** the sampling technique used for the survey led to a sample that is representative of the target population and to the production of findings that made allowances for generalisation;
- **efficiency:** due to the simple randomness of the data collection method, the researcher was able to utilise a small sample size to generate findings that informed conclusions drawn about the research questions and the entire population (graduates);
- **ease of access:** the electronic survey could reach alumni regardless of their location and
- **flexibility**: using a survey allowed the researcher to supplement this data-gathering method with secondary data to enhance the information obtained (p. 6).

Administering an electronic survey enabled the researcher to obtain information from University X graduates concerning their experiences in terms of the role of institutional mentorship in their professional and personal lives. Hence, this permitted the

researcher to acquire valuable first-hand data to be supplemented with information obtained from the content analysis of the secondary data (Young, 2016, p. 18).

3.6.2 Literature Analysis

Literature analysis can be broadly characterised as a holistic approach to gathering and synthesising prior research, which establishes a solid foundation for knowledge advancement and supports theory building (Webster & Watson, 2002). Literature analysis is useful in providing an overview of several study topics. It is also a great approach to combine research results to present evidence on a conceptual level and identify areas requiring further study (Snyder, 2019).

An analysis of the existing literature was conducted to inform subsequent steps in the study. The quantitative survey research provided a better understanding of the potential influence of institutional mentorship on graduate employability (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), as it contained questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their responses. The complexity and scope of the topic under investigation were expanded by bridging the quantitative research approach and its qualitative variant (Emerald Publishing, n.d.).Though the survey produced detailed answers that led to building a more comprehensive evidence set, the study undeniably adopted a quantitative approach.

Through an analysis focus guide, the data recorded from the literature analysis process was pertinent in formulating the main research question: *"To what extent can institutional mentorship support institutional reputation, graduates empowerment and preparation for work?"*. The literature analysis content was concise and grouped consistently based on occurring patterns of similarities and dissimilarities. Congruency between quantitative survey data and literature analysis data was ascertained and aligned (Creswell J. W., 2014).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

3.7.1 Survey Protocols for Quantitative Data

A survey protocol can be described as a wide-ranging set of directives for conducting survey research, including details that give sufficient information to someone other than the researcher about data pertaining to the intricate details of the survey, such as the topic under investigation, identification of relevant questions, development of survey items or questions, selection of sampling methods, administration of the

survey, analysis of data, and the reporting of data (Irwin & Stafford, 2016). Organisations worldwide rely on surveys for gathering accurate data on whose basis they make informed decisions (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014).

The importance of surveys in education research is rooted in their ability to provide numerical descriptions of different populations' characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes (Walston, Redford, & Bhatt, 2017). The researcher administered an electronic survey to a group of University X alumni and was assisted by the Department of Institutional Advancement. However, a survey protocol was prepared before posting the survey link on the alumni platform, as shown in the table below.

Table 3.1: Research Survey Protocol

Steps	Narratives	Description
1	Survey approach confirmation	The researcher opted for a survey to generate numerical indications of the influence of institutional mentorship on graduates' employability.
	Alternative or complementary approach	Literature analysis was utilised to inform quantitative research to attain a deeper insight into the subject at hand, achieve congruency, and validate primary data. This approach also enables the inexpensive determination of the potential influence of one variable over the other.
2	Planning stage	This step involves the identification of research goals and determining the relevant questions to be investigated. Research goals: These are the confirmed reasons for creating a survey. Purpose: 1) To determine the effect that institutional mentorship could have in developing graduates holistically. 2) Using findings to make inferences about whether institutional mentorship could positively impact the graduate unemployment crisis. Research Questions: Research questions were set to inform the survey items that will enable the findings to respond to the research questions. **NB**: Alignment between research questions and research goals was ensured during this step.
3	Clarification of constructs	Key elements of the survey were clearly defined to avoid ambiguity and to determine which characteristics were needed on the instrument.

Steps	Narratives	Description
		Constructs defined during this stage were employability, employability skills, mentorship, higher education and higher education institutions, mentorship programmes, and employment. **NB:** These constructs were defined by reviewing existing literature (literature analysis).
4	Identification of subgroups	<u>Target population</u>: University X alumni The following subgroups allowed comparisons, assisted in determining the influence of mentorship, and discussing findings: • Participation and Non-participation in mentorship programmes; • Skills acquired through mentorship • Frequency of usage of skills gained through mentorship • (Current) occupation; • (Current) income; • Age at the time of graduation; • (Current) age; • Field of study; and • Degree earned.
5	Identification of unit of analysis	Units of analysis included: • Graduates; • Mentorship programmes; • Employment; • Skills; • Income; • Satisfaction; • Personal growth; • Professional advancement and • Current age. These units were identified to enable the researcher to address research questions.
6	Selection of sample	The most appropriate sample was selected to respond to the research questions and ensure that the results would align with the research goals.
7	Ensuring reliability and validity	<u>Reliability:</u> Step 3 was essential to ascertain the reliability of the data. Clearly defining each construct to remove ambiguity ensured that the same meaning was attributed to items to generate reliable data. The simple and precise wording of each item is critical in achieving reliability.

Steps	Narratives	Description
		Validity: This meant ensuring that the survey items measured elements as planned by the researcher. Thus, the validity of the survey is confirmed when data accurately illustrates the surveyed constructs and sample as intended by the researcher.

Source: Adapted from (Walston, Redford, & Bhatt, 2017)

3.7.2 Literature Analysis for Qualitative Data

Literature analysis is described as the process that includes reviewing, evaluating, and considering the content of various documents, which can help obtain context, generate questions, and supplement other types of research (Dalglish, Khalid, & McMahon, 2020). The process involved in this investigation's literature analysis consisted of an overview by scanning through documents which were read to identify applicable groups of main ideas whose content was finally analysed and interpreted (Bowen, 2009). The fundamental focus of the document is mainly premised on topics related to the role of higher education and higher education institutions, graduate unemployment in South Africa and internationally, employability, mentorship, youth development, and national economic growth.

Overall, the literature analysis framework encompassed the following:

- peer-reviewed articles on higher education, graduate and youth unemployment, employability, and mentorship;
- published academic books on the above-cited subjects;
- statistical and descriptive reports by local governmental (e.g., DHET) and non-governmental agencies (e.g., StatsSA), and international institutions (e.g., the World Bank, OECD, as well as UN specialised agencies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO);
- reports from research and financial agencies such as the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund);
- policy documents and Acts include labour market policies, National Youth policies, the National Development Plan, and media publications.

Table 3.2: Documents analysed prior to the investigation

Group	Examples
Official documents	Policy documents, Development plans, Official reports, Acts, Frameworks, Government gazettes, Declarations, Strategy documents
Scholarly works	Dissertations, Peer-reviewed articles, Books, Guides
Media communications	Newspaper articles, Blogs, Newsletters, and Webpages
Working documents	Committee reports, Factsheets, Draft documents
Statistical publications	Labour Force Surveys, Economic updates

3.8 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research-related information is regarded as meaningless or unhelpful until it has been analysed, interpreted and converted into meaningful text, numbers or symbols related to the research topic's specific context (Cambridge International Examinations, 2015, p. 4) (Bazeley, 2013). Following the conversion of information into meaningful data, knowledge is then derived or established for translating the study into a practical instrument for contribution to the body of knowledge in a particular field of research. Figure 3.2 below is a depiction of the information-data-knowledge nexus.
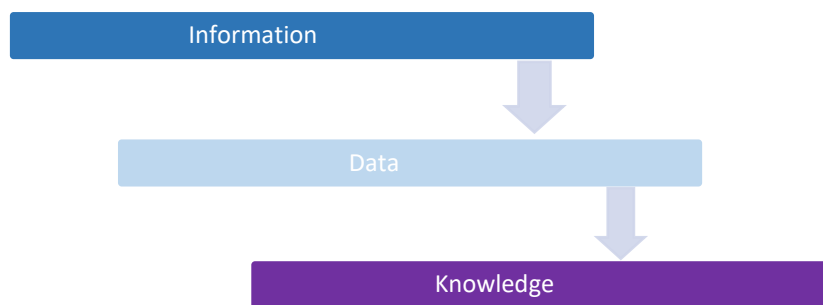
Figure 3.2: Knowledge production process (Cambridge International Examinations, 2015, p. 4)

Objectively, data can be defined as raw material consisting of random numbers, words, symbols and syllables linked to specific processes (Martin & Powell, 1992) (Flick, 2015). Data analysis, therefore, summarises, categorises, and allocates a context-specific interpretation of the collected data using analytical and logical reasoning to determine patterns, relationships or trends. For Tarab (2019), data analysis refers to bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the inordinate body of the collected data.

In the current study context, the researcher interpreted the qualitative results obtained from the narrative feedback provided by the participants as part of the survey responses to understand better the quantitative findings of the online survey (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). For this study, a literature analysis was undertaken first to inform the quantitative investigation to follow (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). However, based on the positivist paradigm, which predominantly frames the study, the researcher prioritised the quantitative aspect of the investigation, leading to a quantitative-dominant analysis, in which case the qualitative findings provide depth and breadth (Willig, 2014). The researcher followed the steps depicted in the table below to analyse the data set.

Table 3.3 Analysis process

Steps	Description	Quantitative analysis
Reduction	Reduction of the volume of overall data	The descriptive statistics technique was used to calculate scores and compare said scores to the baseline (normative data).
Display	Visual representation of data	Use of graphs, figures, and tables
Transformation	Quantitisation of data Qualitising data	Data is qualitised for analysis
Correlation	Congruency verification: Correlation of quantitative and qualitative data	Data is compared with qualitative data obtained during literature analysis
Consolidation	Combination of data sets	Creation of a new data set
Comparison	Comparison of quantitative and qualitative data	
Integration	Data obtained from the literature analysis is combined with data from the quantitative analysis to get a single, congruent data set.	

3.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics in an educational context refers to rules that guide and monitor people's behaviour and activities associated with educational institutions (Khan, 2015, p. 2). According to Hammersley and Traianou (2012), researchers should adhere to a

set of rules and regulations, making them answerable to research respondents or participants, research sites and the research community in general. While conducting research, certain ethical principles must be taken into consideration, and these often include (pp. 2-3):

- ensuring that minimal harm is done to participants;
- respecting participants' right to voluntary participation (autonomy);
- respecting participants' privacy and confidentiality;
- carefully deciding whether or not to offer incentives to participants;
- ensuring the equitable treatment of all participants;
- obtaining participants' consent with full knowledge and
- readiness to address any potential conflict of interest.

The researcher was attentive to respondents' rights and made sure to adhere to the conditions set out in the ethics approval letter obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee (UPREC), per the above reflections on ethical considerations and principles (see Appendix). Concerning University X codes and standards on the involvement of human subjects in research, the following ethical considerations were considered during the investigation.

3.9.1   Permission

Firstly, a written request for permission to conduct research at University X was sent to the Dean of the Education Faculty to ensure that the researcher's intention about the study could legally begin at this institution, for which the letter of approval was obtained on 12 May 2021. Secondly, permission to collect data at University X using a survey was applied by submitting an institutional checklist, the research survey, and the previously acquired ethical clearance. University X's Survey Coordinating Committee granted approval to undertake the study on 23 February 2022.

3.9.2   Privacy and Anonymity

Anonymity is achieved by ensuring that the researcher cannot trace data obtained back to a specific respondent during the data collection phase. However, characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity or socioeconomic status may be requested

if relevant to the study (Coffelt, 2018, p. 2). In this regard, privacy refers to the unwillingness to reveal or expose one's private matters and consists of physical, decisional, and informational privacy (Resnik, 2018, p. 149). Confidential information can be linked directly to the person to whom it belongs. Therefore, there is an expectation for the information in question to remain undisclosed. However, information readily accessible to the general public is not subject to privacy (Resnik, 2018, p. 149).

Concurrent with the above explanation on privacy and anonymity, the researcher ensured the data was anonymised to prevent the identification of respondents (Resnik, 2018, p. 149). The researcher put in place measures to protect respondents' privacy and confidentiality by digitally securing and storing the collected data, using password-encrypted folders to preserve electronic records and ensuring that no identifiers could be found when coding data (Hodge & Gostin, 2008).

It should be noted that the invitation to participate in the study reassured potential respondents that their responses would be anonymous. Thus, the above-cited privacy and ethical anonymity measures ensured that trust between the respondents, the researcher and the institution involved was optimum throughout the study.

3.9.3 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Informed consent could be defined as the process of detailed information given to the participants pertaining to the procedure, as well as the formal request for their participation in the study by informing them of the key elements and aspects related to the research (Nijhawan, et al., 2013, pp. 135-136). Additionally, based on informed consent, the participants were enabled to make well-considered decisions about whether they would like to participate in the study (Nijhawan, et al., 2013, p. 136). Informed consent was requested in the form of an invitation to participate and was published on an online platform accessible to the target sample. The invitation clearly stated the key elements of the study, such as an overview and description of the research, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any reprisals (Nnebue, 2010, pp. 5-6). Participants were required to tick a consent box before taking the survey.

On the other hand, voluntary participation refers to participants' choice to participate in the study of their own accord or volition (Hogan, 2011, p. 2). The participants were

duly informed in both the invitation and the informed consent attached to the survey that their involvement in the study was not obligatory. Notwithstanding, respondents were obligated to answer the decisional and informational privacy clauses in the consent form before responding to the survey questions (Resnik, 2018, p. 89).

3.10 DELIMITATION AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is an explanatory investigation of the relationship among variables involving institutional mentorship, employability and job creation and their contribution to improving graduate unemployment rates in South Africa. The method opted for in this investigation may be a cause for debate due to the risk of a low response rate. Larger sample sizes favour eliminating uncertainty in results and allow generalisations. However, Park, Konge, and Artino (2020) posit that the inability to completely control all parameters (external factors) and guarantee that only the essential variables are examined in this positivist paradigm could be problematic (p. 692). Quantitative data was sourced only from University X, and respondents were solely University X alumni.

3.11 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

As explained in previous sections of this chapter, the researcher opted for a quantitative approach. Accordingly, validity is underlined by notions of trustworthiness, utility and dependability. It could be explained as the process of ensuring that a particular study is credible and true and that the study accurately evaluates "what it is supposed to, or purports to evaluate" (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 258). On the other hand, reliability refers to the study's extent of stability, consistency, and repeatability (Taherdoost, 2016). The validity and reliability were ensured as described below:

- **peer review:** the survey was reviewed by an expert in the field and tested by peers who were not participants in the study, after which the instrument was revised (Creswell & Miller, 2000);
- **triangulation:** literature analysis permitted the researcher to collect evidence, while quantitative data was gathered through a survey. These methods complemented each other and rendered the results more valid and dependable (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). Details concerning the use of methods and sources have previously been provided in the data collection tools section,

- **framing the study within a positivist paradigm:** the findings from the current study apply to various contexts since reality remains constant despite the context (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Furthermore, reliability was ensured by providing details of the following aspects throughout the present report for future research, such as study participants, research site (tertiary institution), and definition of units and constructs during the survey protocol stage (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 260).

3.11.1 Research Site

Due to the conditions attached to the Survey Committee approval letter, the South African higher education institution where the study took place is referred to as University X in this report. This university is located in the Gauteng Province and is one of the few South African universities that offer institutional mentorship programmes.

3.11.2 Researcher's Position

The researcher is a doctoral student and has explicated the reason for this study under the rationale section of this research report. In addition, the researcher has experience in academic research and is interested in policy development, implementation, and quality in higher education. The researcher is also a lecturer by profession and has adequate insight into the South African higher education sector and student development, particularly students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and expectations.

3.12 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The structure of the thesis has been outlined in Section 1.12 of this study.

3.13 SUMMARY

This chapter mainly presented the present study's research methodology orientation. The research paradigm that informs the study was discussed, followed by sections showing the research design, the type of research conducted, and the sampling techniques selected. Thereafter, data collection tools and protocols were discussed before offering details concerning data analysis procedures. Matters regarding ethical

considerations, limitations, validity and reliability were outlined, followed by brief sections on the research site, the researcher's position, and the structure of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the research design and methodology of the study. On the other hand, the current chapter focuses on presenting and analysing the data collected from the online survey questionnaire and serves as the study's main findings. The evidence is presented and discussed in the context of prevailing literature perspectives relating to the fundamental area of research: an investigation of whether mentorship received by students at the institutional level develops them personally and adequately enhances their employability and success in the labour market. The findings generated from this study could assist higher education in nurturing and developing creative talent and producing fulfilled and self-assured graduates with profound ingenuity and adaptability in an ever-changing social and socio-economic environment.

The structure of the chapter depicts the participants' socio-demographic profiles (characteristics or attributes), as well as the participants' actual responses in relation to four thematically constructed frameworks that provided a context for the findings themselves. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the data presented.

4.2 RESPONDENTS' SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

For purposes of consistency and uniformity, the term 'profile' is applied in this chapter to embrace terms such as characteristics, attributes, profiles, qualities or traits to avoid their interchangeability and its possible creation of lexical uncertainty or ambiguity since their meanings and relevance could vary from one survey questionnaire variable to the other. The graduate research survey utilised was initially designed by Columbia State University and has been adapted for this study. Adaptation can be defined as the intentional amendment or adjustment of a questionnaire to generate new questions or produce a new questionnaire (Mohler, Dorer, de Jong, & Hu, 2016, p. 378). The general design of the instrument was followed. However, substantial changes were made to the content of each item (Korb, 2012). Adaption as a strategy was used to fit better the needs of a new study and sample population and to match the purpose of the present research (Harkness, 2010). Furthermore, the questions were adapted to

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reduce all likelihood of ambiguity and produce questions that are clear to the sample population (Mohler, Dorer, de Jong, & Hu, 2016, p. 383). Additionally, the researcher draws further attention to the fact that the survey questionnaire's demographic variables were not arbitrarily developed but linked coherently with the mentoring concept analysis depicted in Figure 1.2 (see Section 1.8).

The respondents' socio-demographic profiles (age, sex, education, ethnicity/race, and income) refer to those representative social and demographic aspects or features that could be referenced for trend determination purposes in a population context in relation to the core phenomenon (i.e., mentorship programme efficacy) being investigated (Walliman, 2016, p. 169). The 'population' in the context of the present study relates specifically to those 106 alumni of the selected South African higher education institution who responded to the electronic survey of the study. Before the survey administration, the researcher sought the institution's Institutional Survey Coordinating Committee's approval per the University's survey policy, highlighting the policy framework for conducting surveys. The adherence to the survey policy allows the researcher to ascertain good quality research and non-duplication of existing University surveys. It also ensures the non-involvement of the selected sample in other surveys and the adequate dissemination and use of data. As such, the researcher followed the following steps to acquire approval for this research study:

1. Institutional survey committee checklist was submitted to the Market Research Office.
2. Survey Proposal Application was also submitted to the Survey Committee and included details such as the purpose of the survey, the target population and the intended commencement date.
3. Supporting documents such as a copy of the survey instrument, the faculty/departmental ethical clearance letter, and a signed letter of approval by the faculty dean.
4. Approval was obtained from the Survey Coordinating Committee on 10 February 2022
5. Approval letter was issued on 23 February 2022.

Therefore, the survey questionnaire's focus on the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics is reflective of the study's intention to integrate or find a correlation between the alumni's (i.e., respondents') personal, psychological, educational, and

professional developmental factors on the one hand; as well as the institutional mentorship programme's efficacy on the other hand in respect of higher education institutions' contribution to graduate employability (Kearney, 2000, p. 129) (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 5).

Consistent with most (qualitative and quantitative) data collection instruments, the foremost socio-demographic profiles of interest to the researcher consisted of the respondents' (i.e., sampled alumni's) gender, age, ethnicity/race, educational background (i.e., qualifications and full- or part-time study), as well as current income. Reference to 'current' throughout this chapter means at the time of the study.

4.2.1 Respondents' Gender Profile Distribution

Respondents were asked the question: *What is your gender?* Their responses are depicted in Figure 4.1 overleaf. The researcher considers the issue of gender as relevant, given the problem of gender discrimination both in society and (private and public) employment sectors. Renzulli (2019) aptly states that gender considerations are critical in mentorship, especially in cases of the traditional mentorship style and its dominant views concerning sexism and homosocial reproduction (see Sub-section 2.7.3.1). Furthermore, the gender component is relevant to the study as equal opportunity and treatment in the labour market differ according to gender in the South African context. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey report for the second quarter of 2021 reveals that men have better employment outcomes than women, with 36.8 % unemployed women compared to 32.4 % unemployed men (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021, p. 18). Race is also linked to the gender component in that the same report illustrates that Black African women are the most at risk, with a 41.0 % unemployment rate in quarter 2 of 2021 (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021, p. 18). Gender discrimination is still a significant issue in South Africa in a diverse social and professional context, such as in the labour market, households, and educational institutions (Musetsho, Nicoleta, & Dobrin, 2021, pp. 70-71).

Consequently, the South African National Development Plan (NDP) urges the nation to support gender equality, combat racism, and promote non-racism (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p. 14). Additionally, it supports promoting women specifically in the public sector, as gender equality is critical for economic growth and

long-term development (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p. 33). In order to achieve better levels of productivity, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to promote sustained economic growth (National Planning Commission, 2019, pp. 37,86). As a result, studies that can help attain these objectives and policies that support entrepreneurship and job creation are crucial to South Africa's development.
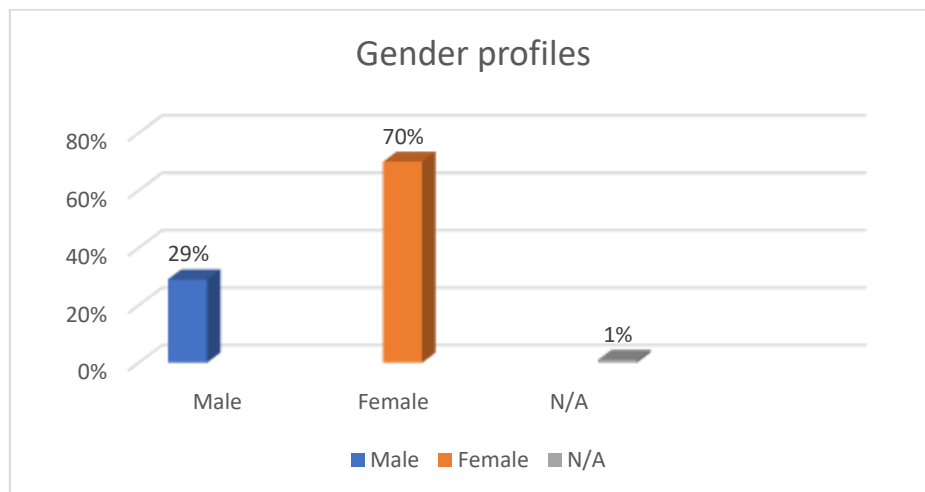
Figure 4.1: Participants' gender profile distribution (N=106)

The majority of participants (n=74, 70%) were females, followed by (n=31, 29%) males, while a minority (n=1, 1%) did not respond. These results confirm existing literature suggesting a higher chance of women participating/ responding to a survey questionnaire than men (Moore & Tarnai, 2002). Moreover, the high response rate among women can also be attributed to the fact that such a study is appealing to them since the unemployment rate among this group is high, as reported in the QLFS 2021 Q2 report. With that said, the 1 % nonresponse rate might be attributed to the complexity of gender and its various categories (Youth Department of the Council of Europe, 2022). Hence, the respondents might have refrained from selecting females or males because they might not identify as such. The researcher acknowledges that the gender distribution in Figure 4.1 is more of a response rate factor. Balu (2014, p. 67) supports the perspective posited by Renzulli (2019) and argues further that this variable (gender), together with other external factors, such as aptitude, social class, influence, and race, may affect the outcomes of a mentoring programme's partnership initiatives in terms of the gender characterisation of the mentor-mentee relationship (see Section 2.8.2). Hence, the researcher can deduce that the high response rate of

the female participants and the high prevalence of unemployed women in South Africa indicate the importance of a targeted mentorship initiative for personal, professional, and economic growth, starting at the institutional level.

4.2.2 Respondents' Age Profile Distribution

In this question, the respondents' age profiles were categorised into their pre-graduation age and the age when they actually graduated. The former (pre-graduation age) relates to their chronological age before they obtained their first or undergraduate degree, while the latter (graduation age) implies the actual age at graduation, which is logically greater than the former in months or years. Amongst other considerations, the researcher's dual categorisation of the respondents' age was motivated by her interest in determining their capacity to complete their various academic programmes within the stipulated timeframes.

4.2.2.1 Pre-graduation Age

The respondents were asked the question: *What was your age when you graduated from the University X?* Their responses in this regard are captured in Figure 4.2 overleaf. It is evident from the statistical information in this figure that most of the respondents' age before graduation was in the 26-30 years and 46-60 years age cohorts, followed by those in the 31–45-year age group, those who are less than 25 years old, and the minority of those older than 60 years of age. Interestingly, the 26-30 and 46-60 age groups figure at opposite ends of the unemployment rate spectrum. While an equal percentage of the respondents graduated from the tertiary institution studied, the older respondents stand a better chance of obtaining employment, according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) findings for the second quarter of 2021 (Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021). With age being a factor in terms of employment outcomes and the high unemployment rate (42. 9 %) among 25-34 years olds, institutional mentorship becomes a crucial element in assisting students and later graduates in earning a tertiary qualification while providing them with emotional and material support and being a source of information and direction (Balu, 2014). Research conducted by Eby et al. (2013) confirms that statement by suggesting that participants in mentorship programs that were offered coaching, life, and career counselling have landed jobs with better pay

and perks. Further, Fox et al. (2010) reported professional and personal development along with psychological well-being by participating in mentoring programmes at the university level. In that sense, institutional mentorship can mould and produce employable 25-34-year-olds, which could impact the unemployment rate within the said age group and ameliorate the overall quality of life (personally and professionally). Extrapolated from Figure 4.2 below is that the sequential rank-ordering of the pre-graduation age from the most or highest frequencies to the least or lowest is as follows: 26-30 years (n=31,29%); 46-60 years (n=31, 29%); 31-45 years (n=26, 25%); younger than 25 years of age (n=11, 10%); and 60 years and above (n=7, 7%). Evidently, the youngest age group (those who were younger than 25 years of age (n=11, 10%)) were in the minority and followed by the lowest minority of the oldest age group (those who were 60 years and above (n=7, 7%)). Such a situation implies that the majority of students were older than 25 years at graduation.
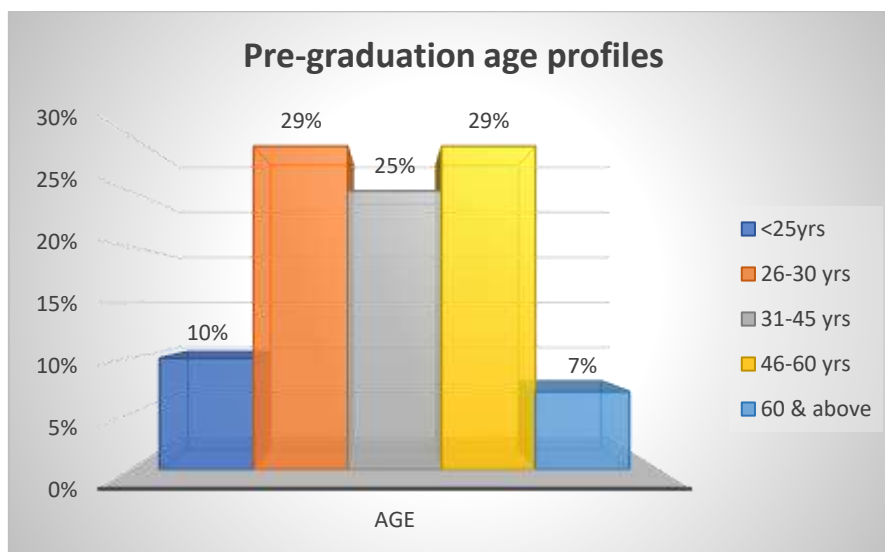
Figure 4.2: Respondents' pre-graduation age profile distribution (N=106)

Also, the fact that most students in total were precisely older than 30 years of age (i.e., 31 years to 60 years and above) implies that such a category was most likely to attend to their studies part-time since they would have other (personal, family, and work) commitments and responsibilities to attend to on a more full-time basis. The researcher makes this assertion based on inferences from Khuluvhe and Negogogo (2021, p. 6) and Statistics South Africa (2021). (According to research, family

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responsibilities greatly influence how much time and effort people are willing and able to put into their professions (Mayrhofer, Meyer, Schiffinger, & Schmidt, 2008, p. 295). Additionally, research indicates that work-family conflicts have a negative impact on an individual's mental and physical well-being, as well as their job and life satisfaction (Mayrhofer, Meyer, Schiffinger, & Schmidt, 2008, p. 294). Meanwhile, research also shows that younger graduates are disadvantageous due to their age and lack of work experience, which is one of the most crucial criteria taken into account by potential employees (Pitcher, Hogarth, & Purcell, 1999). A number of studies offer possible causal factors linked with better employment outcomes for older individuals. For instance, studies on work and ageing suggest that various emotion-related characteristics, such as emotional experiences, expressions, competencies, and emotion regulation techniques, can impact work results depending on the employee's age. Charles and Luong (2013) proposed that the level of physiological arousal (e.g., less increase/fluctuation in heart rate, blood pressure, or alertness) and, consequently, the intensity of emotions that older adults experience when they are exposed to moderately arousing stimuli can be diminished as the body ages due to the autonomous nervous system's typical slowing and decrement in flexibility. Thus, this can be advantageous in various work-related scenarios since older individuals may be less vulnerable to emotional triggers and health threats than younger colleagues (Scheibe & Zacher, A lifespan perspective on emotion regulation, stress, and well-being in the workplace, 2013). Consequently, the age issue should not be disregarded. The importance of mentorship lies in the ability of mentorship programmes to equip participants with time management skills (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993) and the development of healthy coping mechanisms (Demir, Demir, Bulut, & Hisar, 2014, pp. 258-259), especially in the case of younger graduates.

4.2.2.2   Actual Age at Graduation

The respondents were asked the question: *What is your current age?* This question is different from the question posed in sub-section 4.2.2.1 above. In other words, the emphasis on the actual age at graduation implies the period each respondent took to complete their various academic programmes. Inevitably, the completion period is itself a factor of either the full-time or part-time status of the respondents, as reflected in Figure 4.6 later in this section on respondents' demographics profiles. The

responses concerning the respondents' actual age at graduation are shown in Figure 4.3 below. The statistical data in Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of respondents were 31-45 years (n=37, 35%), followed by those younger than 25 years of age (n=36, 34%); the 26-30 years cohort (n=19, 18%); the 46-60 years cohort (n=14, 13%); and those aged 60 years and above (n=0, 0%). In Figure 4.2, those aged 60 years and above before graduation were 7 (7%). This age group's absence at graduation implies they did not complete their various academic programmes. This might result from the perspective shift that happens with ageing (from a broad perspective in younger individuals to a more constrained time perspective in older adults), which causes a reordering of priorities (Charles & Luong, 2013).
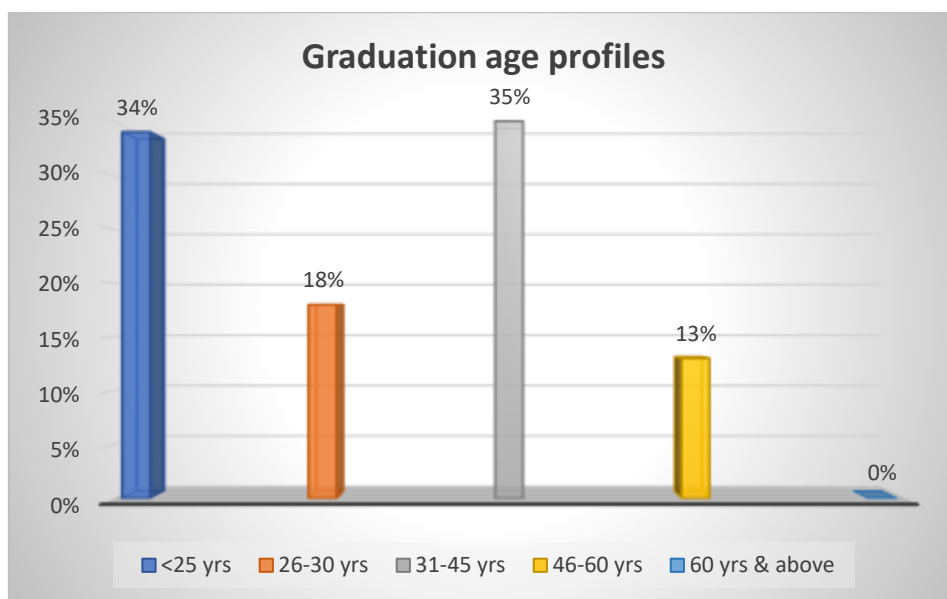
Figure 4.3: Respondents' graduation age profile distribution (N=106)

People are increasingly likely to value emotional health and significance over other objectives, including knowledge gain and status, when one's personal and professional lifespan is shortened (Scheibe, Walter, & Zhan, 2021, p. 2). In contrast, the 31-45 years (n=37, 35%) age group and the younger than 25 years cohort (n=36, 34%) are the majority, respectively. These two age groups constitute 73 respondents (69%) of the overall 106 respondents, which is not the case in Figure 4.2. The implication is that the attrition (failure or dropout) rate appears to have primarily affected those in the 26-30 years cohort (n=19,18%), followed by the 46-60 years age group (n=14, 13%) and the 60 years and above (n=0, 0%) who hardly made any significant presence on graduation day. These results are unsurprising as reports show that more and more youth graduate yearly (e.g. public university graduation rates

increased from 92 874 in 2000 to 203 076 in 2016.) (Statistics South Africa, 2019) without being able to penetrate the labour market (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 12). The possible attrition rate among our 26-30-year-old participants corresponds to the 42.9% unemployment rate reported among 25-34-year-olds. Hence, institutional mentorship can bridge the gap between higher education institutions and the labour market by laying the groundwork for advancement and personal development after graduation (Crawford & Smith, 2005, p. 52). Particularly for the study's focus on the efficacy of university mentorship programmes, the researcher considers the issue of (both pre- and post-graduation) age as a relevant factor, given its significance as one of the causal factors of graduate unemployment in South Africa. This was elaborated in Section 2.4.5 and Figure 2.1, wherein the younger the graduates, the more likely they were to remain unemployed for longer than adults in the 35-44 years category (Stats SA, 2021). Higher education institutions (HEIs)' ability to develop students on multiple fronts and influence their post-graduation professional and personal prospects is called into question when HEIs are positioned in the mentorship role, as is allowed by Kram's mentorship theory. Addressing the youth's prolonged inactivity in the labour market (which might lead to discouragement in the long run) requires creating and implementing pre-graduation mentorship programmes. The establishment of key and appropriate mentor-mentee partnerships might contribute to increasing students' career prospects.

Further, mentoring partnerships at the institutional level can prove to be a game-changer for students, as experienced mentors can better assist their mentees in aligning their studies and preferences to labour market demands. Moreover, such programmes are a perfect opportunity to go beyond the technical skills acquired through academics and develop "soft skills, " which will make them more appealing to employers (Little, 2007). In sum, this data highlights the vital mentor role that HEIs have and the importance of well-thought-out and structured mentorship programmes on graduate employability.

4.2.3 Respondents' Ethnicity/ Race Profile Distribution

Respondents were asked the question: *What is your ethnicity/ race?* Their responses regarding the question are reflected in Figure 4.4 below. In terms of Figure 4.4 and its ethnicity/race representation in the study, the following statistical information was

obtained in terms of the highest to the lowest prevalence rates: there were Black African (n=76, 71.7%), White (n=20, 18.9%), Asian/ Indian (n=5, 4.7%), Coloured (n=4, 3.8%), and non-South African (Ugandan) (n=1, 0.9%) respondents. From the researcher's point of view, this data is authentic to the South African demographic landscape regarding race or ethnicity.

The researcher considers the issue of race/ethnicity as relevant, given the historical legacy of apartheid and its racially engineered educational system at all levels of learning (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2021) (Panyane, 2019). According to the Department of Government Communications and Information System, the standard or official unemployment rate stood at 21.5% in 1994, whereas the expanded rate was 10 % more (Department of Communications' Chief Directorate: Policy and Research, 2014). Since then, the unemployment rate in South Africa has remained above 20% and was around 34 % in the second quarter of 2022 (Maluleke, 2022, p. 6), with the expanded unemployment rate being approximately 44 % in quarter 2 of 2022 (Maluleke, 2022, p. 7).

Furthermore, the unemployment rate by population group reveals unemployment to be another indicator of racial disparity. Africans' unemployment rates rose to 37% in 2002, which was higher than the 26 % global average in 1994. Twenty years later, the unemployment rate among the Black population stands at approximately 38 %, with about 39 % of Black African women being unemployed in quarter 2 of 2022 (Maluleke, 2022, p. 17). On the other hand, the unemployment rate among the White population group continuously stayed at 4 % in 1997 (Statistics South Africa, 1998, p. 25) and stands at 8.6 % 25 years later (Maluleke, 2022, p. 17). Evidently, the figures obtained for this question follow the usual trend in the country. One can cautiously deduce that race remains a key factor in employability and employment issues.

Therefore, the issue of race and ethnicity could not be overlooked because it still dominates workplace dynamics even in the 'new South Africa'. In Section 1.6, the researcher has specified the tensions she observed between colleagues of different races and/or cultural backgrounds as one of the reasons that propelled the undertaking of this study. Since national data demonstrate that the various South African population groups do not benefit from equal employment opportunities, institutional mentorship should serve as an affirmative action strategy to meet the 2030 NDP goals, hence this study.
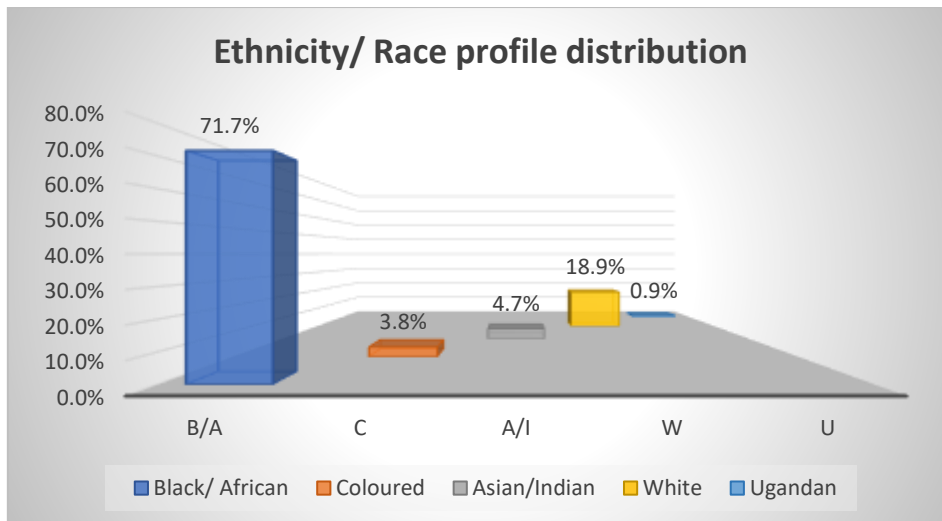
Figure 4.4: Respondents' ethnicity/ race profile distribution (N=106)

In other words, institutions should consider gender and race factors in designing and implementing mentorship programmes.

4.2.4 Respondents' Undergraduate Degree Profile or Status

Respondents were asked the question: *Have you earned a bachelor's degree or higher?* Their responses are shown in Figure 4.5 below. Regarding Figure 4.5, the majority of the respondents (n=73, 96%) have a Bachelor's and another degree, while the rest, the minority (n=33, 4%), only have a Bachelor's qualification. It is evident that most students aspire to more academic qualifications to enhance their employability.
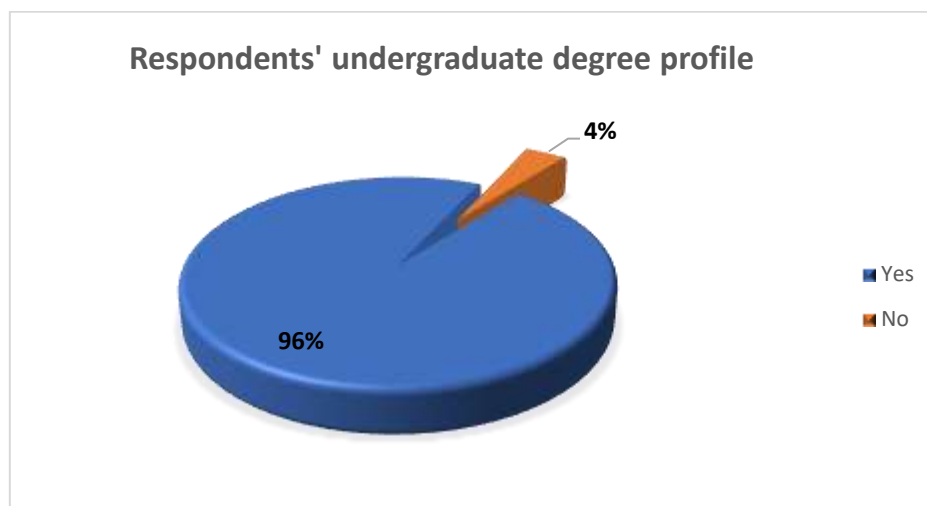
Figure 4.5: Respondents' undergraduate degree profile (N=106)

This finding is consistent with the assertions made by the World Bank (2018, p. 1) that globally, employees with higher education qualifications earn, on average, 17% more than their counterparts with lesser qualifications. Stats SA (2021, p. 16) also confirmed that the more highly qualified graduates are, the better their employment prospects compared to those with lesser qualifications. The labour market (skills) demands to motivate students to further their studies and get specialisations (depending on the field). Despite the affluence of degree holders, job opportunities remain scarce due to the lack of employability skills, among other factors. Hence, the researcher wonders what can be done at the institutional level for graduates to be better absorbed into the labour market. With the ever-rising unemployment rates, one can only ponder whether graduates have received mentoring that would allow them to prosper at all levels post-graduation.

4.2.5 Respondents' Undergraduate Attendance Profile/ Status

Respondents were asked the question: *For the most part, were you a full-time or part-time student at the University X?* Their responses are captured in Figure 4.6 overleaf. The majority of participants (n=56, 53%) studied full-time for their undergraduate studies, while the minority (n=50, 47%) studied part-time. The issue of full-time or part-time status during undergraduate studies was of relevant interest to the researcher because such status could be inferred when establishing any correlation between age and full- or part-time study. Younger students were more likely to study full-time than their older counterparts, who were very likely to have personal, social, work, and family commitments requiring their full-time attention and commitment (International Labour Office, 2016). Such an assertion is also confirmable, based on the statistical data in Figure 4.3, in terms of which the second majority (n=55, 52%) was from those aged 25 and 30 years; that is, (n=36, 34%) and 30 (n=19, 18%), respectively.
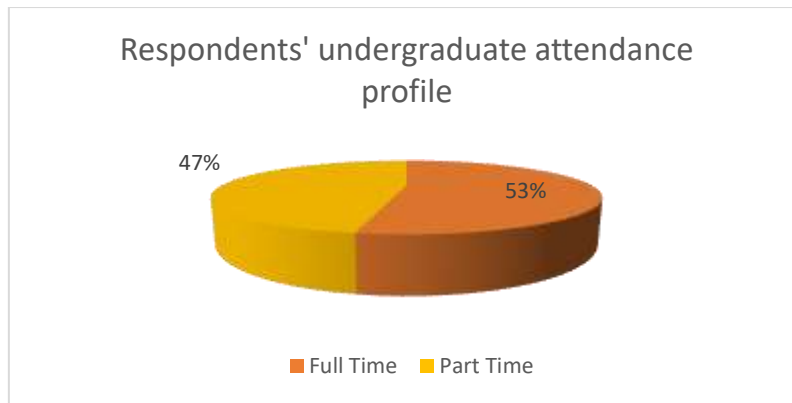
Figure 4.6: Respondents' undergraduate attendance profile/ status (N=106)

4.2.6 Faculties from which Degrees were Earned

Respondents were asked the question: *From which faculty did you earn your University X degree?* Figure 4.7 below reflects their responses in this regard.

The statistical information above reflects that the vast majority of respondents (n=99, 93.4%) were in the Faculty of Education, followed by (n=4, 3.8%) who were in the Faculty of Humanities, and (n=2, 1.9%) were in Faculty of Economics and Management Science, only (n=1, 0.9%) was in Faculty of Law. It is informative that there were no respondents in the other seven faculties: Engineering, Health, Natural and Veterinary Sciences, Theology, and Management.

The researcher surmises that the proliferation of graduates in Education accounts for the scarcity of workforce members in the private sector, where Education-related skills are not necessarily a pre-requisite commercially viable knowledge and skills (Oluwajodu, et al., 2015). As such, higher education institutions could contribute to graduate unemployability through programmes or curriculum offerings that are not adequately aligned with the world of work (Nicolescu & Christian, 2009, p. 18). That is to say that students often enrol in programmes which do not cater to labour market demands, i.e. mismatched by field of study (OECD, 2018). As Kraak (2015) and Walker (2015) state, low career prospects often result from graduates obtaining specific credentials, specialisations, or chosen fields.
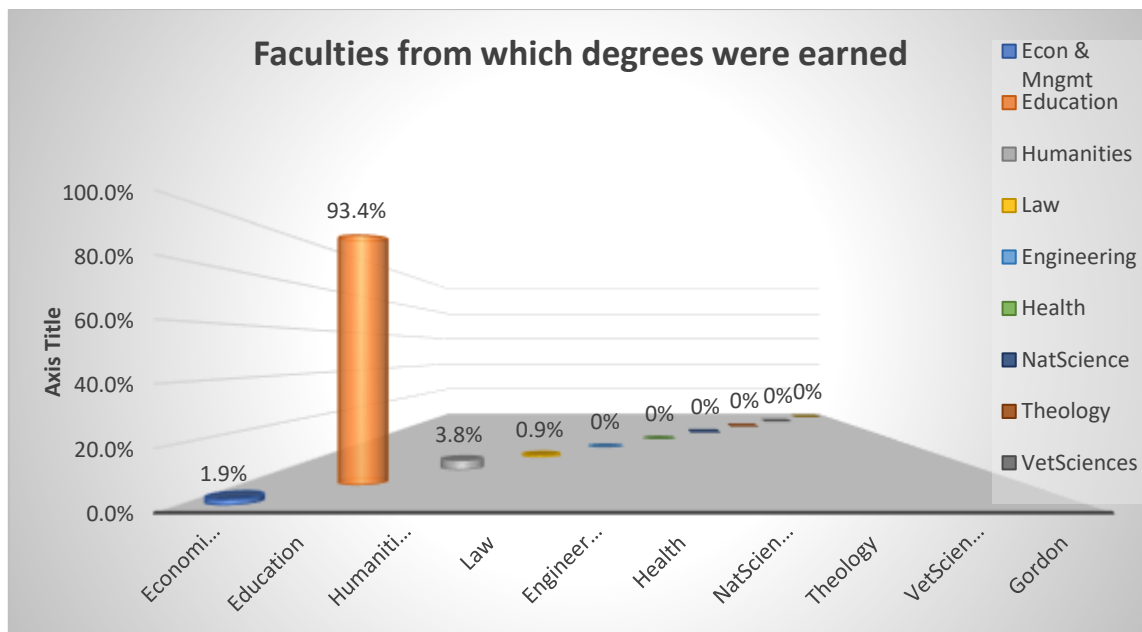
Figure 4.7: Faculties from which degrees were earned

For instance, graduates with a background in the humanities and arts have a more challenging time finding employment than those with a technical background in sectors such as engineering or medicine (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015) (Yu, 2013).

4.2.7 Respondents' Current (Post-graduation) Income Profile/ Status

The following question was posed to the respondents: *What is your current annual salary range?* Since the participants were recruited from the alumni of the university in question, it is then axiomatic that the "current income" refers to salaries earned by employees who have graduated from the university.

In this question, the emphasis is more on the monetary value (income or salary annually) than the mere numerical value of respondents (i.e., majority or minority) associated with any particular income group. The elicited responses to the question above are shown in Figure 4.8 below. The information displayed in Figure 4.8 reflects that the highest annual salary or income was above R650, 000.00 earned by (n=8, 8%) of the respondents, followed by R350, 000.00 to R490, 000.00, earned by (n=22, 21%) of the respondents, followed by R200, 000.00 to R340, 999.00 earned by (n=26, 25%) of the respondents; while (n=20, 19%) earned less than R200, 000.00. Notably, the higher the income (monetary value), the lesser the number (numerical value) of individuals in that income group. It is also apparent that such a situation could imply

fewer graduates are employed in economically viable positions or job categories. This coheres with the statistical information in Figure 4.7, in which a vast majority of respondents (n=99, 93.4%) graduated in Education, and only (n=2, 1.9%) graduated in Economics and Management Science.
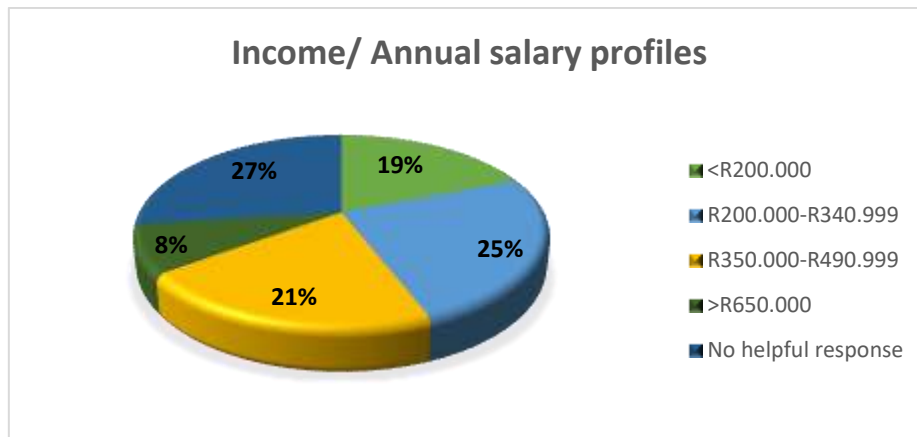
Figure 4.8: Respondents' current (post-graduate) income or salary (N=106)

Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) and Kunene (2018, p. 15) illuminate that high salary expectations by graduates could be a demotivating factor as they still lack the experience required to advance to those high-paying positions. Salary disparities are common in the labour market and can be primarily attributed to education (Mabuza, 2020). Education refers to the qualification obtained (level of education reached), which contributes to these salary disparities and the quality of education received. In the South African context, the type of institution attended, i.e. historically Black institutions (HBIs) and historically White institutions, has a perceived influence on the quality of education (HWIs) (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2012). Studies posit that the variance in the quality of education, whose root cause lies in the history of apartheid, will have an adverse effect on the level of education completed (Mabuza, 2020, p. iv). In identifying that both the length of schooling (level of education completed) and the quality of education are taken into account in explaining wage differences between South Africa's various population groups, research suggests that the more education one has completed, the higher the level of earnings (Schultz & Mwabu, 1998).

Moreover, experts have identified education as a crucial element of human development and a booster of an individual's earnings (Lloyd & Hewett, 2009). According to the 2020 National List of Occupations in High Demand, positions such as Director (Enterprise/Organisation), Policy and Planning Manager, and Research and Development Manager show a relatively high employment growth based on past,

present and future trends and are currently in shortage (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020, pp. 5, 11). Specialist medical doctors, actuaries, architects, biomedical engineers, chartered accountants, management consultants, sales managers, pilots, lawyers, and cyber security engineers have been reported as some of the highest-paying jobs in South Africa (Y-Axis, 2022). Mentoring is undoubtedly linked to success and self-fulfilment. As research conducted by Higgins and Kram (2001) and Chao (1997) showed, mentoring is a potent tool that helps mentees advance professionally and personally. Hence, institutional mentorship can be a crucial instrument in assisting students in avoiding skills mismatches and misaligned fields of study. Thereby, HEIs, in their role as mentors, can train and produce employable graduates (graduates who meet labour-market demands and economic needs and are equipped with competencies that allow them to thrive both personally and professionally).

4.3   MAIN FINDINGS

This section constitutes the core domain of the chapter in terms of the main findings that were generated from the 106 respondents (i.e., alumni) through the online survey questionnaire. In that regard, the findings themselves are mainly premised on response to the following as articulated in Section 1.7 of Chapter 1:

Primary/ Main Research Question

- To what extent can *institutional mentorship* support institutional reputation, graduates' empowerment and preparation for work?

Secondary/ Sub-research Questions

The secondary/ Sub-research questions emanating from the primary/ main research question are as follows:

- To what extent does institutional mentorship *influence* graduate connection, confidence and loyalty to the institution?

- To what extent can institutional mentorship empower *graduates personally, professionally and entrepreneurially?*

- How does institutional mentorship influence and empower graduate preparation for the world of work?

Rather than presenting a narrational account of these findings, a thematically constructed discussion and presentation are pursued based on the generated themes, as shown in Table 4.1 overleaf. In that regard, it is also worth mentioning that in some instances, there could be an overlapping effect of questionnaire items/ variables in different thematic positions appearing to address various issues. However, the researcher has addressed such possible ambiguity by not repeating any such question.

Therefore, each question appears only once and is located only in the particular theme it addresses. Furthermore, cross-referencing has been applied where necessary to allocate a degree of logical discussion and connection of the findings related to the core issue of institutional mentorship and its associated variables. In essence, then, the fundamental focus of the questionnaire survey was to generate an empirically defensible response to the issue of the respective forms of contribution by both higher education and the labour market sector regarding the rising graduate unemployment rates in South Africa. As illustrated in Table 4.1 below, the generated five main themes are institutional reputation, institutional mentorship's graduate empowerment, institutional mentorship's influence, institutional mentorship's empowered graduate preparation for the world of work, and higher education and labour market contribution to graduate employment. These five themes logically connect to institutional mentorship programmes as products of higher education institutions and the private sector's ameliorative intervention against graduate unemployment.

Overall, and in the context of this study, these five themes straddle across the notion of 'graduate outcomes', understood as measurable programmes aimed at enabling graduates as university products to find employment in the labour market within the shortest possible time after graduation and ultimately becoming fully functional citizens (Tomlinson, 2012).

Table 4.1: Main themes and categories derived from the findings

Main Theme	Sub-theme/ Category
Institutional **reputation**	Level of connectedness to university/ alma mater
	Extent of confidence to continue studying at alma mater
	Extent of recommending alma mater to others
	Preferred activities/ means for staying connected
	Personal empowerment

Institutional mentorship's graduate **empowerment**	Entrepreneurial empowerment
	Professional empowerment and current career/ academic development
	Reasons for dissatisfaction
Institutional mentorship's **influence**	Influence on alumni; Enrolment status during studies; effective ways for alumni support.
Institutional mentorship's empowered graduate **preparation** for world of work	Employment alignment; Reasons for misalignment; Recommendation letters; Period of finding employment; Daily use of mentoring skills; Relevance of mentoring skills; Frequency of mentoring skills at workplace; Improvement recommendations

In this regard, skills and knowledge development are viewed as an integral determinant of 'graduate outcomes. Another view is that graduates should be determined by the extent of their complete personal, entrepreneurial, psychological, and emotional development (Fongwa, 2018).

4.3.1 Institutional Reputation

The reputation of a higher education institution hinges on several aspects, including employers' perception of the particular institution (Oluwajodu, et al., 2015). Such a perception could be erroneous and biased in the South African context, given the different developmental histories of both historically white (HWIs) and historically black (HBIs) higher education institutions (Paridjo & Walluya, 2017). Such a situation shows that graduating from certain universities could lead to different career opportunities and options for expediency by specific categories of graduates (Pauw et al., 2006, p. 24). The primary goal of this study is to determine to what extent institutional mentorship can increase the reputation of a higher institution's reputation and empower and prepare graduates for work. Responding to the questions presented in this section, respondents (67%) have reported that they feel either very strongly or strongly connected to their alma mater, and 70 % revealed that they would choose the same university if they had to study again. In comparison, 71 % said they would recommend the university to prospective students. These findings validate the long-established link between mentorship and institutional reputation in research. Due to the presumptive high level of education provided, employers view graduates from HWIs favourably. In contrast, they disregard those from HBIs because they believe

they offer low-quality education. (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2012). According to Wildschut et al. (2020), the disparity between higher education institutions continues to prevent individuals from fully realising the advantages of increased participation in higher education. This is corroborated by the fact that most NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) graduates were enrolled in HBIs, which is still a cause of concern as the absorption rates at these institutions were much lower than those at the top-ranked South African institutions. These ongoing disparities in labour market outcomes further show a hierarchy among South African higher education institutions. As a result, this indicates that success does not inevitably follow from expanding access to higher education. Academics contend that a person's employability is also influenced by the type of institution they attend and the courses they choose. Higher marks may pique a student's interest in attending a school with a better ranking because it indicates that the student can meet the requirements of a higher-ranking school. Better education for students may also be possible at higher-ranked institutions because of their access to superior resources. External considerations, such as the institution's reputation, now significantly influence how employable graduates are due to the rising rivalry among higher education institutions. Rogan and Reynolds (2016) suggest that graduates who attended underfunded (limited resources) institutions are more likely to be unemployed. Furthermore, a study by Van Broekhuizen (2016) on the variations in labour outcomes across all South African universities suggests that finding employment correlates with the type of university attended (i.e., reputation, funding, resources, history). Research further indicates that among the potential explanations for the lower employment rates for graduates from HBIs are employers' impressions of the calibre of these graduates and the actual calibre of offerings at said institutions (Wildschut, Rogan, & Mncwango, 2020, p. 22). As such, the present study is highly relevant in that mentorship to prepare and produce employable graduates can significantly contribute to increasing graduate absorption rates, particularly those of HBIs, which could consequently improve institutional reputation. This is a reasonable assumption, as labour market absorption rates and employability rates have become indicators of the quality of institutions and their provisions (Cheng, Adekola, Albia, & Cai, 2022, p. 16).

4.3.1.1   Affinity/ Connectedness level with the Alma mater

The following question was asked to respondents: *To what extent do you feel connected to the University X?* Figure 4.9 below captures the elicited responses regarding this question. The figure shows that the majority of respondents (n=37, 35%) were strongly connected to the university as their alma mater, followed by (n=33, 32%) who were very strongly connected, followed by (n=30 29%) who were moderately connected to the university. In contrast, a minority (n=3, 3%) were weakly attached, and (n=1, 1%) were not at all connected (somewhat disconnected). On the whole, the overall strength of connectedness (i.e., strongly and very strongly) represented by a total of 67% (i.e., 35% and 32%) of the respondents shows that the institution has made an indelible impression on most of its products, which projects positively on the institution's image (Bhorat, Mayet, & Visser, 2012). Studies have proven that participation in properly developed mentoring programmes generates several advantages for mentees, mentors and institutions.
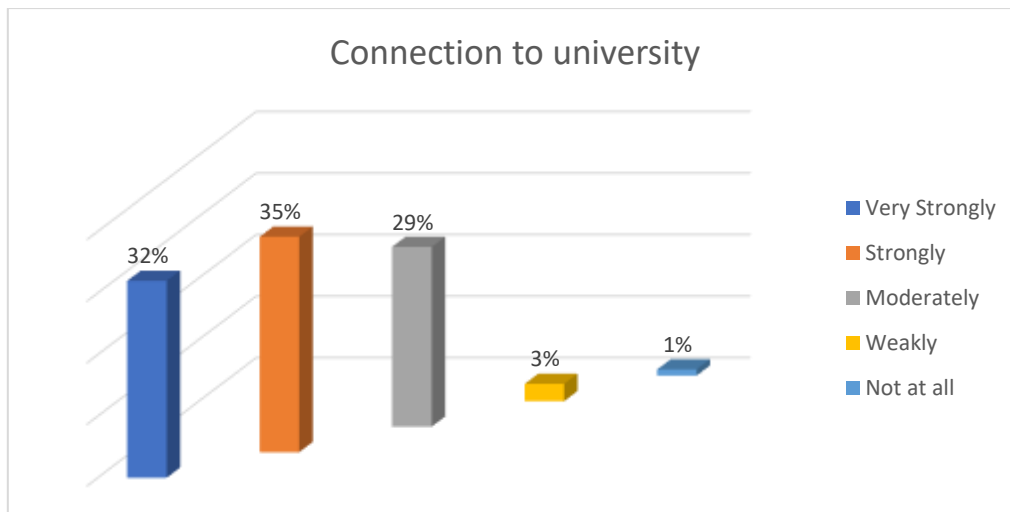
Figure 4.9: Respondents' affinity/ connection level with the alma mater (N=106)

This data confirms the literature, which posits that mentoring programmes create a more vital dedication to the organisation (Murray, Innovations in Performance Improvement with Mentoring, 2006). Additionally, mentorship programs could promote a stronger commitment to and belonging to the institution, boosting productivity, loyalty, and institutional reputation.

4.3.1.2 *Confidence to continue studying at Alma mater*

The following question was asked to respondents: *If you could start University again, would you enrol at University X?* Following the almost overwhelming positive image of the institution projected by its products (i.e., alumni), it was then inevitable that the respondents confidence in the institution became an issue of interest to the researche*r.* The respondents' views regarding the above question are shown in Figure 4.10 below. The majority of participants (n=76, 70%) in Figure 4.2 above would continue studying for other qualifications at their alma mater, while another (n=24, 22%) responded that they probably would continue studying at their institution. Meanwhile, only a total minority (n=8, 8%) stated that they probably and definitely would not consider studying at their alma mater for further qualifications. The fact that a majority total of 92% (n=97) of the respondents show the confidence to continue studying at their alma mater correlates with the responses in Figure 4.9, in terms of which a majority of the students (above 90%) showed varying degrees of connectedness with their university from which they obtained their undergraduate qualifications. Researchers say many HE graduates in underdeveloped nations are not well-prepared for employment (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2019). Because of this, many people have questioned the value of higher education programs in promoting professional growth, high-quality learning outcomes, productivity, and graduate employability. While researchers have noted the discrepancy between the availability of skills and labour market demands (Okolie, Nwosu, & Mlanga, Graduate employability: How the higher education institutions can meet the demands of the labour market, 2019), they have also pointed out that a solely academic focus frequently prevents students from successfully developing their careers or acquiring relevant employability skills that meet market demands. Literature suggests that a mentoring relationship in which a mentor provides career, psychological, or instrumental assistance to a protégé can have a significant impact and enable the protégé to join the job market fully prepared. Enhancing mentees' career behaviour and growth is one way HEIs (in their role as mentors) can positively influence graduates' overall development (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017).
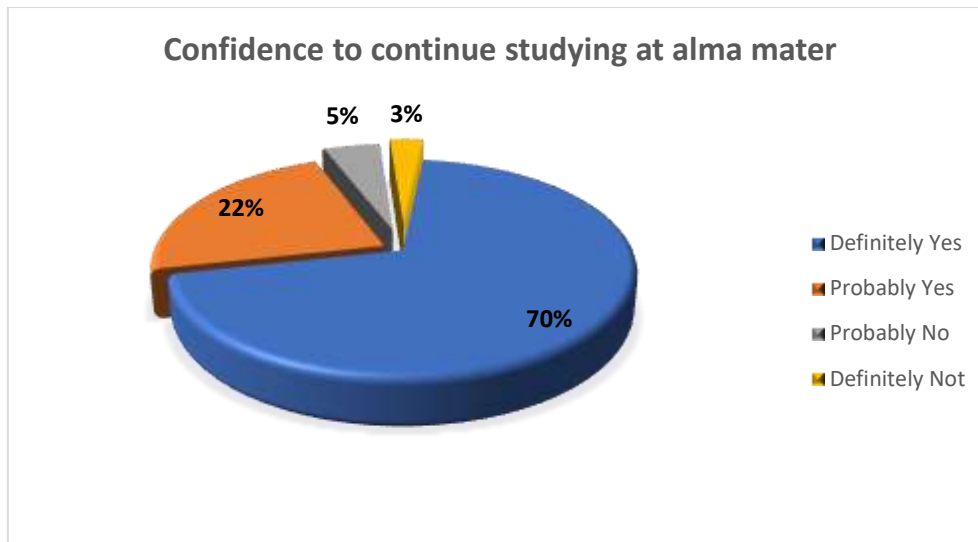
Figure 4.10: Respondents' confidence to continue studying at their alma mater (N=106)

Although mentoring does not equate to guaranteed positive outcomes (see section 2.8.2 in chapter 2 for more information), it can be a valuable tool for helping graduates enter the labour market, advance their careers, and avert actions that could be detrimental to their careers. Consequently, activities focused on education, the improvement of soft skills, career guidance, and professional counselling may be advantageous for participants in a mentorship program. Following this, mentors would make sure to give protégés exposure to opportunities (job fairs, placement training, shadowing, projects, workshops) made feasible by both HE institutions and companies, as characterised by Kram's mentorship theory. One of the most crucial qualities graduates should develop is employability (Martin, Villeneuve-Smith, Marshall, & McKenzie, 2008). Employability skills, which encompass soft skills and technical abilities that cater to labour market demands (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009), are frequently not taught to students by HEIs. Consequently, mentoring programs can facilitate the development of emotional intelligence and social ethics, the capacity to work with individuals from various backgrounds, leadership, problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, teamwork and communication. Thus, institutional mentorship programs can assist HEIs in producing well-equipped graduates, able to effectively navigate the world outside of school while working on their personal growth.

4.3.1.3 Extent of recommending alma mater

Respondents were asked: *Would you recommend the University X to others?* Figure 4.11 below shows their responses to this question. In terms of the figure above, a total majority of the respondents (n=75, 71%) and (n=24, 22%) showed, respectively, that they would definitely and probably recommend the university to others, followed by a total minority of respondents (n=7, 7%) who would not recommend the university to others or did not know (unsure) whether they would do so (recommend it to others). Thus far, the collective responses from Figures 4.9 to 4.11 demonstrate that the respondents, as alumni or products of the university, have confidence in their alma mater to the extent that they would continue to study there and recommend others this way. The researcher contends that, given such a positive image of the products of the university, the institutional mentoring programme stands favourably to benefit the students as intended and boosts the institutional reputation as a factor of its students' employability (Panyane, 2019).
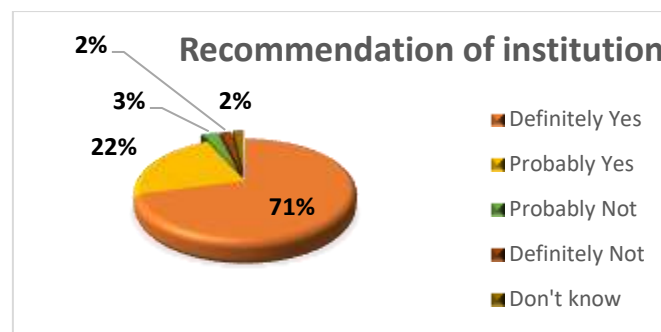
Figure 4.11: Respondents' extent of recommending their alma mater (N=106)

These findings assist us in determining to what extent institutional mentorship influences graduate connection, confidence, and loyalty to the institution. The high prevalence of graduates willing to recommend their alma mater is consistent with research. According to Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and DuBois (2008), students who participated in institutional mentorship programs felt more connected to their universities than their peers did, which fueled their willingness to serve as mentors as alumni and even encourage others to do so. Not only does this serve to boost the reputation of an institution, but studies also demonstrate that loyalty is significantly and directly impacted by an institution's reputation (Bakrie, Sujanto, & Rugaiyah, 2019). Mentoring programmes can garner student loyalty by improving service delivery (providing quality offerings that increase graduate employability), which motivates

students to recommend their institutions to others (p. 512). Additionally, graduates will be more inclined to pursue further education at the same higher education institution in order to broaden their expertise (p. 512). Returning to continue one's education may be compared to rebuying a product, increasing the likelihood that loyalty will develop and the institution's reputation will grow due to high-quality service (Griffin, 2002).

4.3.1.4   *Preferred activities/ means of staying connected*

The following question was posed to the respondents: *which of the following activities appeal to you as an opportunity to stay connected to the University? (Mark all that apply).* Figure 4.12 below is indicative of the responses to the question above. It is essential to note that the responses entail both the preferred communication means and the associated activities that render connectedness to the university (alma mater) as a meaningful process to the respondents.
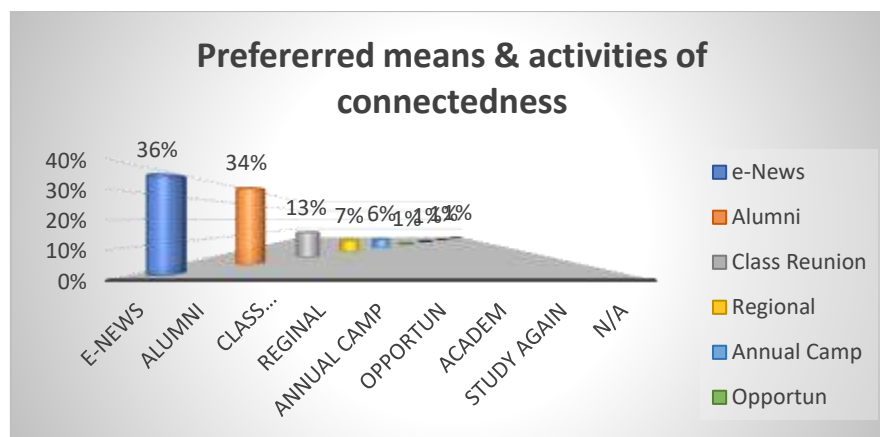
Figure 4.12: Respondents' preferred activities/ means for staying connected (N=106)

In terms of the statistical data in Figure 4.12 above, the sequential order of the respondents' appealing activities is e-news (n=38, 36%), alumni website (n=36, 34%), class reunion (n=14, 13%), regional activities (n=7, 7%), annual camp (n=6, 6%), collaboration opportunity (n=1, 1%), academic seminar (n=1, 1%), study again (n=1, 1%), and not applicable (n=1, 1%). The respondents' preferred activities and means for staying connected to their university (alma mater) include contact and contactless mechanisms. The contactless means include e-news and the alumni website, while the contact mechanisms include class reunions, regional activities, annual camps, academic seminars, studying again and collaboration opportunities. This speaks to

alumni's willingness to remain linked to their alma mater, i.e., loyalty, taking into consideration varying geographical locations and availability.

It is evident that contactless or remote communication is the preferred means of keeping contact with other alumni and the university as their alma mater. From the researcher's point of view, such a contactless communication means may be induced by the fact that the majority of those who prefer it could be full-time employees whose time is mainly spent at work and on family commitments. Contrarily, young and full-time students prefer contact communication since they are primarily on campus and do not shoulder the burden of work and family responsibilities like their older counterparts (Panyane, 2019).

The totality of responses in Section 4.3.1 amplifies the fact that institutional reputation was enhanced rather than harmed, as demonstrated by the majority of responses on various questionnaire items and variables in this regard. Studies by Eby et al. (2008) and Hamilton et al. (2019) have also demonstrated that students and alumni who benefited from institutional mentorship programmes were more likely to be attached to their universities than those who were not.

4.3.2 Institutional Mentorship Programme's Graduate Empowerment

A description of the respondents' socio-demographic status/ profiles has been provided in Section 4.2, while the institutional reputation was subsequently highlighted in Section 4.3.2 from the perspectives of the self-same respondents. On the other hand, the current section outlines the extent of the institutional mentorship programme's empowerment of graduates. In that regard, such an orientation of the current section aims at responding to the following main research question as articulated in Section 1.7: *To what extent can institutional mentorship empower graduates personally, professionally and entrepreneurially?*

In essence, graduate empowerment underlines the extent to which both higher education institutions and the (private and public) employment sectors enable the seamless employment of university graduates through academic and non-academic programmes and activities for meaningful participation in the world of work and active citizenship (Mohana & Enoch, 2020; Zachary, 2012).

4.3.2.1 Overall/ Holistic empowerment

The following question was posed to the respondents to determine the impetus of the institutional mentorship programme in empowering students for overall development: *To what extent did your experience at the University X empower you professionally, emotionally, and entrepreneurially or contribute to your preparedness for work?*

It is noteworthy that the above question straddles both the higher education and labour market contributions to graduate employment because the preparation by the university is the means to an end of eventual employment by external employers (Hunt & Michael, 2013). Table 4.2 below captures the elicited responses or participant perspectives in this regard. It is evident from Table 4.2 that the responses to the "some extent" and "very little" options are all below the threshold of 50% in all eight variables. On that basis, the below-cited majority responses present the hierarchical order of the participants' perspectives concerning the empowerment contributions of their alma mater. Data were collected to find out the extent to which institutional mentorship empowers graduates personally, professionally and entrepreneurially and the following was revealed:

Individual learning: very much (n=86, 81%) and quite a bit (n=15, 14%). In other words, 81 % of respondents believe their experience at the institution enabled them to become independent and acquire knowledge independently. This aligns with research stipulating that adequate mentoring promotes and encourages personal development and learning (Department of Education and Early Childhood, 2010). 14 % of the sampling population concur with that view and consider the guidance of the university and their experience at said institution to be beneficial to their development.

Table 4.2: Extent of personal, emotional, professional, and entrepreneurial preparation and empowerment by the institution for work (N=106)

Variable	Responses	Number of Participants (Value)	Percentages
Writing clearly/ effectively			
	Very much	78	73%
	Quite a bit	22	21%
	Some extent	5	5%
	Very little	1	1%
Solving numerical problems			
	Quite a bit	40	38%
	Very much	37	35%
	Some extent	20	19%
	Very little	9	8%

Speaking clearly/ effectively			
	Very much	76	72%
	Quite a bit	19	18%
	Some extent	10	9%
	Very little	1	1%
Using information read/ heard to perform new skill			
	Very much	74	70%
	Quite a bit	27	25%
	Some extent	5	5%
	Very little	0	0
Assessing the value of information critically			
	Very much	74	70%
	Quite a bit	28	26%
	Some extent	4	4%
	Very little	0	0
Using computer technology			
	Very much	68	64%
	Quite a bit	25	24%
	Some extent	8	7%
	Very little	5	5%
Learning effectively on your own			
	Very much	86	81%
	Quite a bit	15	14%
	Some extent	5	5%
	Very little	no response	no response
Working well with others			
	Very much	69	65%
	Quite a bit	28	27%
	Some extent	8	7%
	Very little	1	1%

Writing clearly/effectively: very much (n=78, 73%) and quite a bit (n=22, 21%). These results indicate that the majority of participants (94 % in total) benefitted from improved and practical writing skills. The findings align with research suggesting that writing is a skill set expected to be cultivated at postsecondary institutions as part of critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving (Walvoord, 2014). Additionally, given that effective written communication is essential for employment in the twenty-first century, numerous structured mentorship or intervention programs are made available at the institutional level to help students' general writing abilities (Kleinbort, et al., 2020).

Speaking clearly/ effectively: very much (n=76, 72%) and quite a bit (n=19, 18%). Participants' time at the institution was fruitful, as 72 % of respondents saw a significant amelioration in their oral communication skills. Moreover, 18 % of respondents also recorded a noticeable improvement in their speech. This is congruent with research which suggests that mentored individuals benefit from higher

self-confidence and self-assurance, as well as an improvement in their communication skill sets (Fleming, 1996).

Using information read/ heard for new skill: (n=74, 70%) and quite a bit (n=27, 25%). Results from this variable depict that 70 % of the sample are well-equipped to adequately use the knowledge acquired and successfully apply it in practice. 25 % of the sampled population also know they have been equipped well enough to transform theory learnt into new skill sets reasonably.

Assessing information value: very much (n=74, 70%) and relatively minor (n=28, 26%). As a result of their experience at the university, 70 % of respondents are able to sift through large input and determine the usefulness or significance of materials based on their content, whereas 26 % are capable of filtering information well enough to establish relevance.

Using computer technology: very much (n=68, 64%) and quite a bit (n=25, 24%). Through various programmes and courses, the university has enabled 64 % of our sample to be highly proficient in computer technology. In comparison, 24 % of respondents have acquired enough computer skills to progress in their professional and personal lives and aid them in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Working well with others: very much (n=69, 65%) and quite a bit (n=28, 27%). University courses and various mentorship programmes are designed to elevate their minds and develop/cultivate their personalities and sociability (Schenk, et al., 2020). As such, 65 % of the sample report having received above-average skills, allowing them to embrace and thrive in a team environment. In addition, 27 % of the respondents have developed sufficient collaboration skills to assist them in their growth at all levels.

Solving numerical problems: very much (n= 37, 35%) and quite a bit (n=40, 38%). Regarding solving problems numerically, 35 % of the sample responded that they had excelled at developing practical reasoning skills, allowing them to solve questions quickly. Meanwhile, 38 % of participants have gained adequate numerical reasoning skills, enabling them to address issues by analysing and converting data. From the above list of eight variables, it is evident that individual learning was considered the

significant contribution by higher education in preparing its graduates for the world of work, whereas solving numerical problems was the lowest of all the other considerations. However, it is the researcher's view that institutional mentorship programmes, which develop skills (i.e., knowing how and what to do (performativity)) that prioritised more than content knowledge of subject-based knowledge acquired in isolatory academic environments through self or individual study, need to be created and implemented in every tertiary institution. Accordingly, the above-listed hierarchy of variables ought to be reversed to permit university graduates to function more efficiently in work environments dictated by the labour market.

Moreover, mentorship programmes could place more emphasis on students' teamwork abilities (working well with others) and arm them with more skills, such as numeracy and computer literacy, which have been reported to enhance analytical (rather than route) thinking (Northouse, 2011) (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezle, 2013). Institutional mentorship programmes have the potential to influence and empower graduates for their entry into the labour market and instil into students as well as nurture the capabilities, skills, and attitudes that employers need. Participating in such programmes could equip students with the ability to independently navigate the job market, using knowledge, unique talents, and all competencies at their disposal to adapt to the employment situation, exhibiting them to employers while accounting for external and other limitations (Small, Shacklock, & Marchant, 2018). Both locally and abroad, there is an increasing demand for faculty to offer training in abilities including analytical thinking, competent reasoning, and the aptitude to arrange information and arguments in order to equip graduates to fulfil market needs (De Villiers, 2010) (Osmani, Hindi, & Weerakkody, 2018). Moreover, well-crafted mentorship initiatives can address the South African employer's need for employees to possess fundamental skills, intellectual capacity, professional skills, the ability to apply theoretical knowledge, and communication skills (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

Additionally, self-management, business and customer awareness, problem-solving, communication, the use of numeracy and information abilities, flexibility, adaptability, hard work, perseverance, and commitment are some qualities that are frequently highlighted (Tymon, 2013). In sum, institutional mentorship programmes can contribute to graduate empowerment as they are known to instil competencies in their participants, which allow them to be distinguishable from their peers in a given field,

i.e., employable (Bolton-King, Student mentoring to enhance graduates' employability potential, 2022, p. 1). This way, institutional mentorship can be a tool to reduce the graduate unemployment rate by responding directly to labour demands and equipping graduates with skills that will empower them at all levels and promote their upward mobility.

4.3.2.2 Effect of mentoring programmes on personal life

Concerning the effect of institutional mentoring programmes, participants were asked the following question: *Have these mentoring programmes had a positive influence on your personal life?*

It is important to note that, while the preceding question was more general in its focus, the current question is more specific and focuses on the effect or impact of institutional mentoring programmes on graduate students' personal or individual lives as beneficiaries of such programmes. The participants responded as indicated in Figure 4.13 overleaf. From the participants' perspectives, the majority (n=64, 61%) were non-committal (either did not answer or were unsure) about the personal effects of the institutional mentorship programme. These were followed by (n=40, 38%) who viewed the institutional mentorship programme as having positively affected their personal lives. Meanwhile, only (n=1, 1%) repudiated any positive effect of the institutional mentorship programme on their personal lives.

From the researcher's perspective, the fact that only 38% (n=40) of the participants viewed the institutional mentorship programme as having had a personal influence on their lives is a remarkable contradiction when compared to their overall outcome of the statistical information depicted in Table 4.2 suggesting that it was only in solving numerical problems that the respondents viewed the mentorship programme as most unfavourably. The low prevalence rate of 38% in Figure 4.13 is also a stark contradiction compared to the respondents' overall positive institutional reputation in Section 4.3.1.
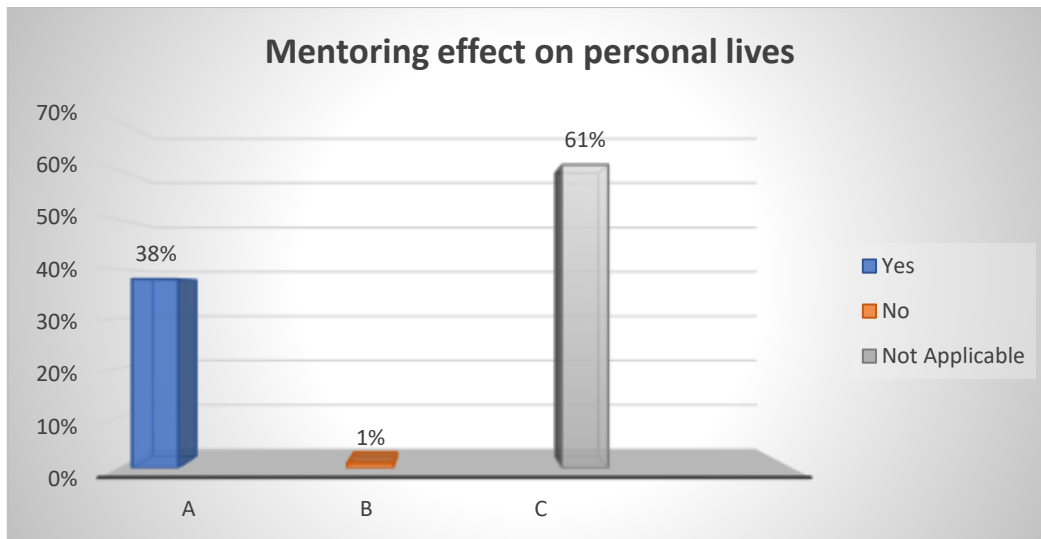
Figure 4.13: Effect of mentoring programmes on respondents' personal lives (N=106)

Despite the low prevalence rate, one of the benefits of mentorship remains personal empowerment and development (Amaefula, 2014). 61 % of respondents deemed the question irrelevant, perhaps due to non-participation in a mentorship programme. If that is the case, the institution in question is responsible for promoting its mentoring programmes more efficiently, as tertiary institutions are supposed to equip their students with a comprehensive set of skills and abilities needed by workers in today's complex society (Chan, 2016). Beyond ensuring that students are competent in their academic fields, HEIs are also responsible for ensuring they are ready for the workforce and life post-graduation. Besides the financial benefits associated with acquiring a tertiary qualification, going to university is motivated by intrinsic factors (Kromydas, 2017). The mentoring process is deeply rooted in motivation (Mathipa & Matlabe, 2016). Within the mentoring partnership, stimuli from mentors (external motivation) can spark mentees' inner drive and inclinations. HEIs could afford students the benefit of reaping the rewards of entering a mentoring partnership based on motivation, mutual respect, trust, and understanding. Essentially, mentors can assist protégés in establishing their sense of empowerment by instilling a sense of self-worth (p. 40). Through mentoring programmes, HEIs can offer students the opportunity to acquire the information and skills necessary to succeed personally and professionally (p. 40). Thus, students involved in positive mentor-mentee relationships (relationships that increase protégés' confidence and self-esteem) can effectively develop the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary for a successful life and career (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019, pp. 33-50).

4.3.2.3 Professional empowerment

Empowering students professionally is one of the core tenets of any institutional mentorship programme through career guidance and psycho-social support by more experienced persons within an organisation (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017). Accordingly, the range of questions in this sub-section focuses on diverse aspects relating to the extent of institutional mentorship programmes' professional development of its mentees. Since professional development is neither incidental nor occasional, it is construed here as embracing the educational/ academic, career, skills and training-related aspects that enhance the graduates' employability (Lucey & Giannangelo, 2015).

4.3.2.3.1 Satisfaction level on overall educational experience at the Alma mater

Respondents were asked: *How satisfied were you with the overall educational experience you had at the University X?* Their responses are captured in Figure 4.14 below. Given the combined effects of the responses for the institutional reputation (Section 4.3.1) and sub-section 4.3.2.3.1, the responses in Figure 4.13 (sub-section 4.3.2.2) would then appear aberrant rather than the trend/ norm. In Figure 4.14, participants responded to the question with a total minority (n=3, 3%), indicating various levels of dissatisfaction with their overall educational experiences. However, the perennial trend of a positive institutional image or reputation has been enhanced. Most respondents (n=103, 97%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with their overall educational experience at their alma mater.
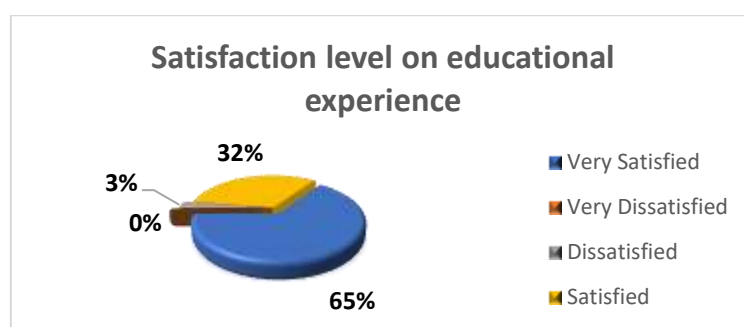
Figure 4.14: Satisfaction level on overall educational experience of respondents at the alma mater (N=106)

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4.3.2.3.2 Satisfaction level on current career/ academic development

The respondents were asked: *Are you generally satisfied with your present career/ academic situation?*

It is important to note that, whereas the preceding question (in Figure 4.14) focused predominantly on the educational experience, the current question is mainly situated in the respondents' current career or academic development. In Figure 4.15, only a minority of respondents (n=34, 32%) registered dissatisfaction with their current career/ academic development, which could be attributable to misaligned employment expectations and academic preparation (Assaad, et al., 2018). Meanwhile, a majority of respondents (n=72, 68 %) mentioned their satisfaction with their current career/ academic development. The latter situation is emblematic of the perennial trend by respondents generally reflecting the higher education institution and its reputation positively. According to Nora and Crisp (2007), the level of student satisfaction in their career and academic development demonstrates the relevance and efficiency of institutional mentoring programmes in higher education institutions.
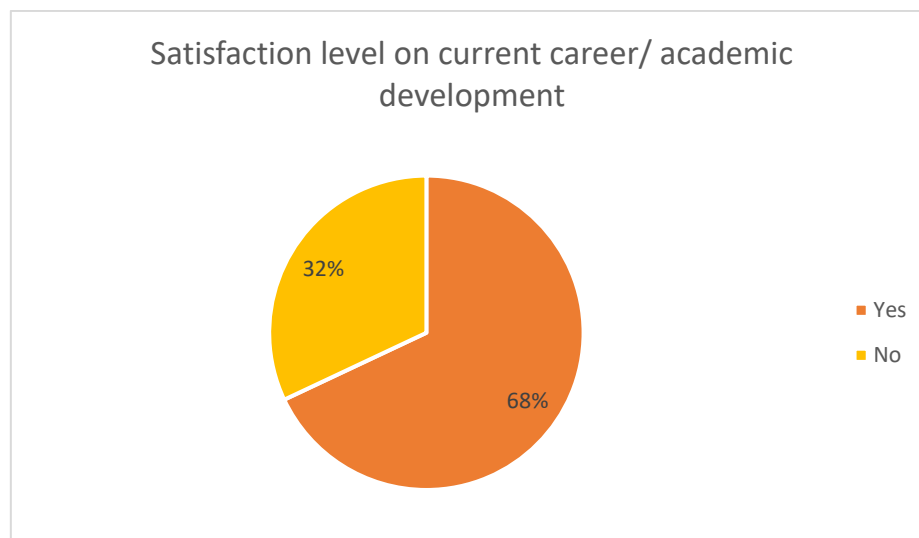
Figure 4.15: Satisfaction level on current career/ academic development (N=106)

4.3.2.3.3 Reasons for (dis)satisfaction on current career/ academic development

In probing further, the researcher asked the following question for those who were not satisfied: *If not (satisfied), please briefly describe the reasons (for dissatisfaction with current career/ academic development) below.* Responses (reasons) to this follow-up question are captured in Table 4.3 overleaf.

Table 4.3: Reasons for dissatisfaction with current career/ academic development (n=34)

Personal/ Other	Educational/ Academic	Occupational/ Professional/ Career/ Employment
I am on pension.	I need to study further to even stand a chance of being employed as a female (mom) with minimal work experience due to the structure of the B Ed degrees completed before 2019. We did not have adequate work-integrated learning. Schools want 3 to 5 years of full-time experience.	Yes and no. This job is good but hasn't offered many challenges to learn many new things up to a point.
I am unemployed and actively looking, but at the moment, that is not going well for me.	There are things that weren't taught to me, and I'm finding them now in the workplace.	I need to study further to even stand a chance of being employed as a female (mom) with minimal work experience due to the structure of the B Ed degrees completed before 2019. We did not have adequate work-integrated learning. Schools want 3 to 5 years of full-time experience.
I have been employed for over 10 years as a contracted worker because, as per my assumption that I am a foreigner.	My education degree did not prepare me to work in a classroom. I had no guidance on what subjects to teach, and I felt disadvantaged.	The education sector is piling teachers up with lots of admin, and paperwork is too much. They always change people who we report to in the district without notifications. They do not make their own follow-ups, and they don't check their communication with schools regarding important or urgent matters. I know this from experience. They can send two people to do the same job, which means there is no communication. When they are under pressure, we feel it the most as we are pushed for deadlines. Facilitators are rude. They say they are offering support; instead, they undermine and ridicule you to show that they know better than you. It is tiring, and they don't provide enough training for teachers around learner discipline, classroom management, and skills to equip teachers in certain subjects.
Getting a job in my major field is becoming impossible these days, especially given that I am an international student.	I need to study further, that's why I'm not satisfied	It's hard finding a job
N/A (not answered)	I would like to study further and possibly do something different but within the education sector.	Academic qualification is not recognised at my current employer. 2. Not enough growth opportunities.
No, I would love to achieve more and do more.	Still looking forward to pursuing higher degrees.	It's very draining emotionally. There is no discipline in our school; the principal doesn't come out of the office, learners and teachers are demotivated.

	The honours pathway in South Africa is not recognised with global qualifications.	I strive for new knowledge and possible career change after I feel I have offered the best in my current position.
	I need to acquire additional skills; hence, I desire to further my studies.	Lack of career progression and low income
	I have developed myself academically, so I wish to pursue a new career, most probably at the university. The intention is to use the acquired knowledge to benefit the country.	The job is not well paying.
		I strongly feel that educators are the pillars of any developed society. All careers and professions are brewed and harnessed through the sweat from the brow of an educator. However, it has been strongly discouraging and demotivating for one to pursue a teaching career in South Africa from time immemorial. The most frustrating element is the salary paid to educators amidst all the efforts and suffering they endure in the classroom and the communities where they live. What used to be a noble profession is now the least valued. Educators are at the apex of the ITC blacklisting because they live below the poverty lines. Many reasons may be advanced but are reserved to complete this tool.
		Teachers are everyday ambushed with new legislation that they never **an**ticipated
		Pay too little
		It's a contract position.
		For the workload, it would help if I was paid more. Teaching 60 learners in a class with a total of 7 classes. Quality is bound to be compromised under those circumstances.
		Going into teaching is not what I envisioned as the curriculum developed in our country does not allow children to learn in a relaxed environment as the demands on teaching to test are huge. As a dedicated teacher, I feel we are not compensated fully as we put in many extra hours when people are not watching.
		Teaching at a government high school in Gauteng is not as fulfilling as it used to be 30 years ago.
		I am overqualified for my current role.

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In Table 4.3, the majority of the reasons for the respondents' general dissatisfaction with their present career or academic situation were provided by (n=19, 56%) of the 34 (from 106) respondents, followed by (n=9, 26%) and (n=6, 17%). As indicated in Table 4.3, the reasons offered by the least minority of the respondents (n=6, 17%) were mainly personal and not directly linked to educational/ academic or occupational factors. On the other hand, the second minority (n=9, 26%) listed reasons that were mainly of an educational or academic nature as the cases for their dissatisfaction. These reasons ranged from the desire to study further to attain required job qualifications or pursue other interests than the current teaching career paths. Ironically, some university graduates are regarded as "overqualified" and unemployable. Conventional wisdom would suggest that the more qualified an individual is, the higher the chance for employment (StatsSA, 2021, P. 16).

Meanwhile, the majority of the respondents (n=19, 56%) were very dissatisfied with career or profession-related reasons. These reasons were centrally connected to the systemic conditions of their work as educators/ teachers. Generally, their views reflect a very dissatisfied and unhappy professional workforce. According to Salmi (2010) and Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2019: p. 3), such a state of affairs does not augur well for a versatile professional workforce expected to contribute significantly towards the country's knowledge-driven economic growth, equality, and poverty reduction.

In summary, most respondents were from the education sector and found employment in their field. However, a clear lack of work-readiness was observed not necessarily because of a lack of employability skills but of issues at a systemic level. Those in the field are either demotivated by a lack of challenging tasks, the inability to learn or acquire new knowledge, or are unprepared for the amount of experience needed for promotion and advancement opportunities. Moreover, respondents report having to dedicate a copious amount of time to administrative tasks rather than teaching and a lack of support and communication from the Department of basic education. Reasons such as limited career progression, economically unstable positions and unrecognition of local qualifications on the global market were put forth. Further, non-South African graduates face difficulties obtaining work or full-time employment due to their foreign status.

The emerging trend in these responses is the mismatch between graduate expectations and the realities of the field. Institutional mentorship programmes would play a key role in such situations to support graduates' preparation for the world of work. Being paired with an industry expert could adequately prepare graduates and awaken them to the realities on the ground. As elaborated in the literature, mentors (experts in the field) could play an advisory role regarding opportunities to grab, ways to obtain results when facing systemic failures, and introduce protégés to other industry experts, providing visibility and network opportunities. The mentor's experience and professional network could then become the difference between a fulfilled graduate and a dissatisfied one.

4.3.2.4   Entrepreneurial empowerment

One of the major objectives of an institutional mentorship programme is to cultivate and train students in skills and knowledge compliant with personal development, economic growth, and entrepreneurship for self-reliance (Harry, Chinyamurindi, & Mjoli, 2018) (Kromydas, 2017). The purpose of the two questions posed in this sub-section was to determine the extent of the 'academic' and 'entrepreneurial' in the respondents' mentorship experience at their alma mater.

4.3.2.4.1   Skills/ experience acquired during mentorship programme

Hoskins et al. (2018) and the World Bank Group (2018) submit that both skills and experience are indispensable employment factors, which is the reason inexperienced students find it difficult to get employment soon after graduation compared to those with experience – a track record for possession of the practical knowledge to do or perform work. In that regard, the following question was posed to the respondents: *Have you acquired any skills/ experience during these mentoring programmes?* The elicited responses in this regard are captured in Figure 4.13 overleaf. Most respondents (n=62, 58%) affirmed that they acquired valuable skills and experience from the institutional mentorship programme. In contrast, (n=40, 38%) responded negatively, and (n=4, 4%) were either uncertain or did not respond to the question.
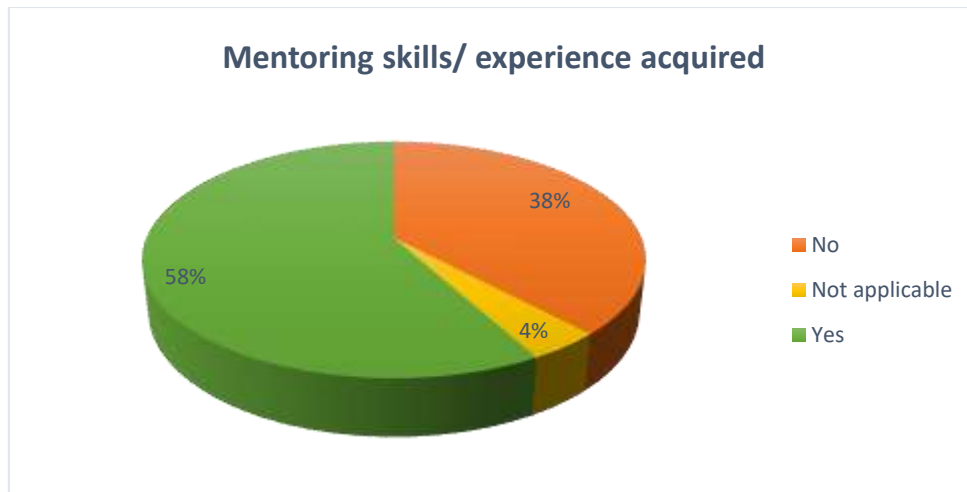
Figure 4:16: Skills/ experience during the mentoring programmes (N=106)

When executed correctly, a mentorship programme should, amongst others, prepare and equip students with the skill sets needed to succeed in the work environment while also contributing to the existing pool of knowledge for the betterment of society (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2019, p. 3). Therefore, the 58% majority of responses indicate the benefits of such institutional initiatives, which could also be associated with the highly positive satisfaction levels concerning the institution's reputation and image.

4.3.2.4.2   *Effect/Impact of non-academic Mentorship on Employment/Entrepreneurship*

Linked to the preceding question, respondents were asked the following question: *Would you say that the mentorship unrelated to academics received at the University X helped you to become a better employee/ employer/ entrepreneur?*

Higher education institutions' declared purpose is to train a highly skilled and versatile professional workforce that can contribute towards the country's development and achieve knowledge-driven economic growth in employment and entrepreneurial initiatives (Salmi, 2010). Therefore, training in non-academic skills is crucial for 'soft' skills such as numeracy, computer literacy, communication, interpersonal relations, health awareness, and cultural capital. Figure 4.17 below represents the respondents' views regarding the effect of non-academic mentorship on employment and mentorship. Regarding Figure 4.17, most respondents (n=62, 58%) responded positively that the non-academic component of the institutional mentorship programme benefited them. Meanwhile, only (n=40, 38%) responded contrarily, and (n=4, 4%)

either did not respond or were uncertain. From the researcher's viewpoint, it is instructive that the Figure 4.17 responses correspond with those obtained in Figure 4.16 despite the difference in the focus of both questions. It implies that the academic and non-academic (i.e., entrepreneurial) skills were of equal value and impetus to the respondents.
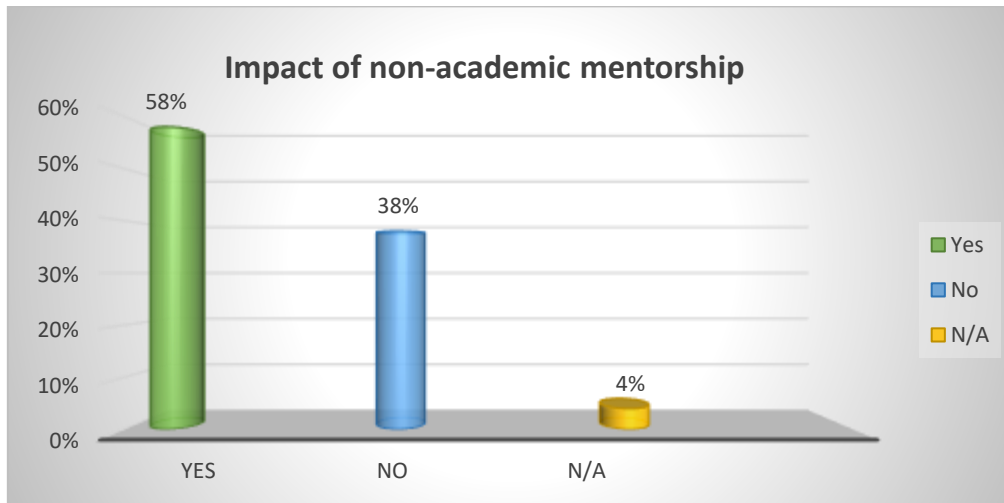
Figure 4.17: Effect/ impact of non-academic mentorship on employment/ entrepreneurship (N=106)

4.3.3 Institutional Mentorship's Influence

The various survey questions in this section mainly respond to the second research question articulated in Section 1.7 of Chapter 1: *To what extent does institutional mentorship influence graduate connection, confidence and loyalty to the institution?* Therefore, the gist of the following questions in this section is premised on the extent to which institutional mentorship has positively impacted its graduate beneficiaries.

4.3.3.1 Mentorship influences on alumni

The respondents were asked to comment on the statement: *As an alumnus, I think mentorship programmes at university influence: (mark all that apply).* As shown in Figure 4.18, most respondents (n=50, 47%) indicated that the institutional mentorship programme influenced the preparation of students and facilitated the transition from university to the professional world. On the other hand, (n=40, 38%) respondents showed that the institutional mentorship programme influenced student motivation. In

contrast, (n=13, 12%) responded that the programme impacted the alignment of higher education programmes and expectations of the professional/ employment world, followed by (n=3, 3%) who did not respond.

Except for the 3% who did not respond, the general response to the question (with a total majority of 97%) corresponds with the dominant literature-based perspectives on alumni views of mentorship benefits. For instance, the view of preparation of students and facilitating the transition from university to the professional world is also posited by Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2019, p. 3), and student motivation is posited by authors such as Murray (2011) and Wang and Shibayama (2022). The alignment of higher education programmes and expectations of the professional/ employment world is posited by Balu (2014) and Nicolescu and Christian (2009), amongst others.
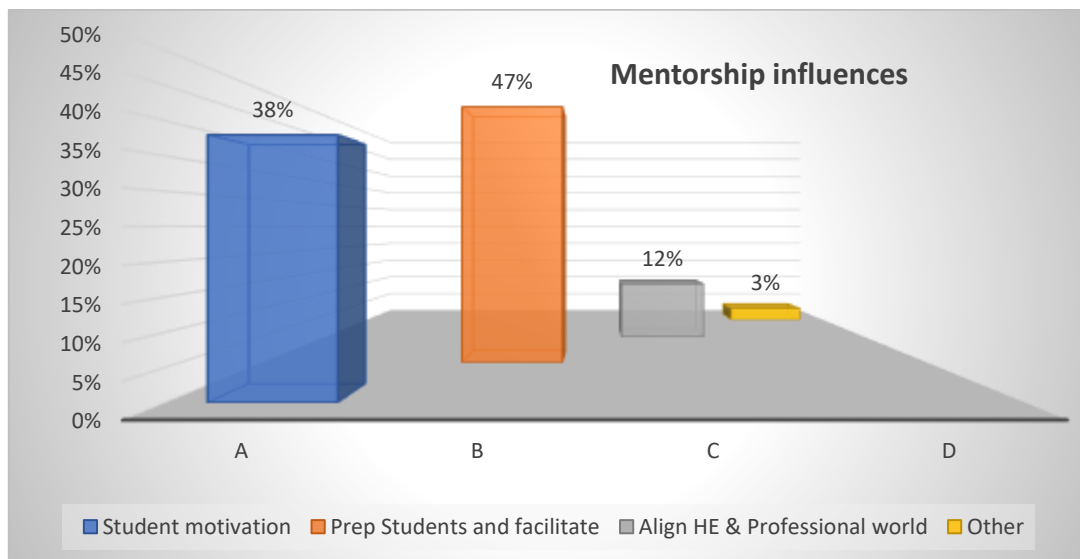
Figure 4.18: Mentorship influences on alumni (N=106)

4.3.3.2   Mentoring Enrolment Status during Studies at Alma Mater

The respondents were asked the question: *Have you ever enrolled for any mentoring programme while at the University X?* The purpose of the question was to establish both the 'attractability' and appeal of the institutional mentoring programme and its appeal to students during their university enrolment. The majority of the respondents (n=70, 66%) indicated 'yes' (affirmatively), while a minority (n=36, 34%) responded that they had not enrolled for the institutional mentoring programme during their student days at their alma mater. From the researcher's viewpoint, in this case, the

66% majority response corresponds with the collective positive influences and impact observed in Figure 4.16, Figure 4.17, and Figure 4.18.
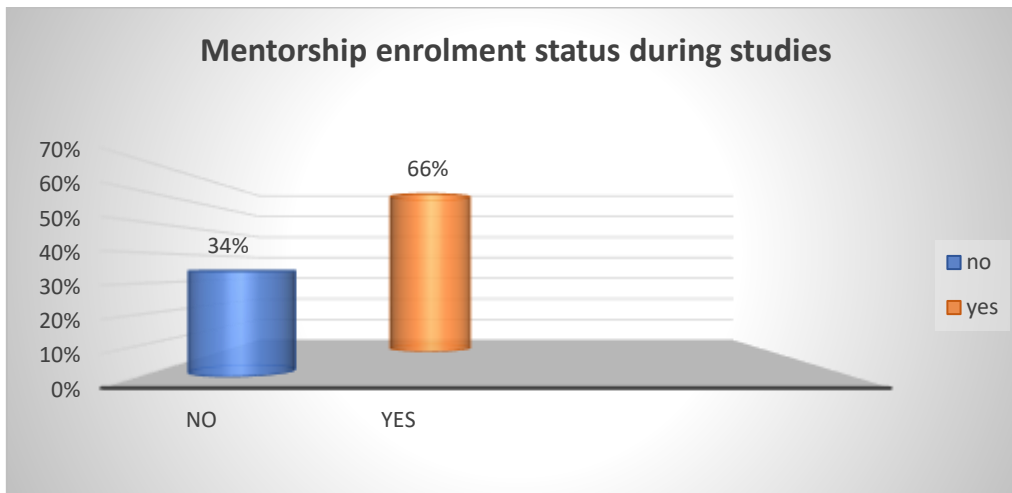
Figure 4.19: Mentorship enrolment status during studies at alma mater (N=106)

4.3.3.3   Possible effective ways for alumni support of mentorship programmes

Respondents were asked: *To what extent do you consider the following methods effective ways to garner alumni support for mentorship programmes?*

Essentially, the question focuses on how alumni could effectively support their alma mater's mentoring initiative. This could also be interpreted as a reflection of the alumni's connectedness to the university, which is strongly supported as indicated in various degrees in sub-section 4.3.1.1 and sub-section 4.3.1.4. Table 4.4 below shows the responses to the above-cited question. The elicited responses in Table 4.4 above are shown hierarchically in terms of "very much" and "some" as representative of the highest numerical or majority values of responses, with "quite a bit" and "very little" representing the lowest numerical values or responses. The researcher believes that the respondents (in their capacity as alumni) have encompassed a broad range of attributes and methods linked with mentorship to garner alumni support for mentoring by their institution. For example, knowledge depicts educational or academic attributes, while interpersonal qualities are reflected in the values of mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. On the other hand, behavioural traits are represented by self-confidence, independence, role modelling, and personal relationships. In contrast, personality/ attitudinal attributes were defined by goals, passion, self-efficiency and open communication.

Table 4.4: Possible effective ways for alumni support of mentorship programmes

	Very Much	Some	Quite a bit	Very Little
Mutual respect	(n=72, 68%)	(n=3, 3%)	(n=31, 29%)	0
Knowledge	(n=69, 65%)	(n=2, 2%)	(n=35, 33%)	0
Self-confidence	(n=67, 63%)	(n=7, 7%)	(n=32, 30%)	0
Open communications	(n=66, 62%)	(n=6, 6%)	(n=33, 31%)	(n=1, 1%)
Self-efficiency	(n=63, 59%)	(n=6, 6%)	(n=37, 35%)	0
Trust	(n=63, 59%)	(n=6, 6%)	(n=37, 35%)	0
Independence	(n=63, 59%)	(n=3, 3%)	(n=40, 38%)	0
Collaboration	(n=63, 59%)	(n=4, 4%)	(n=39, 37%)	0
Role modelling	(n=63, 59%)	(n=4, 4%)	(n=37, 35%)	(n=2, 2%)
Passion	(n=61, 57%)	(n=7, 7%)	(n=38, 36%)	0
Personal relationship	(n=58, 55%)	(n=9, 8%)	(n=38, 36%)	(n=1, 1%)
Goals	(n=55, 52%)	(n=6, 6%)	(n=44, 44%)	(n=1, 1%)

Alumni support of mentorship programmes is a testament to their own positive experience in a mentoring relationship (Gershenfeld, 2014). The endorsement of mentorship programs probably comes from past participants who have developed a strong sense of kinship with the university (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). The attributes listed in Table 4.4 all form part of the possible benefits of mentoring relationships (Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris, & Sappington, 2017). As such, these findings confirm the theory that mentorship programmes have the ability to influence graduate connection and loyalty. Indeed, increased commitment might result from a stronger sense of investment in and affiliation with a given institution (Craig, 2018), as can be seen by the responses in favour of mentorship programmes.

4.3.4 Institutional Mentorship's Graduate Preparation for Work

The questions appearing in this section relate to the following main research question appearing in Section 1.7 in Chapter 1: *How does institutional mentorship influence and empower graduate preparation for world of work?*

4.3.4.1 Extent of employment alignment with academic qualifications

Respondents were asked: *Are you employed in the field of your chosen degree?* To a more significant extent, the question interrogates the extent of curriculum/ alignment and workplace expectations and performance.
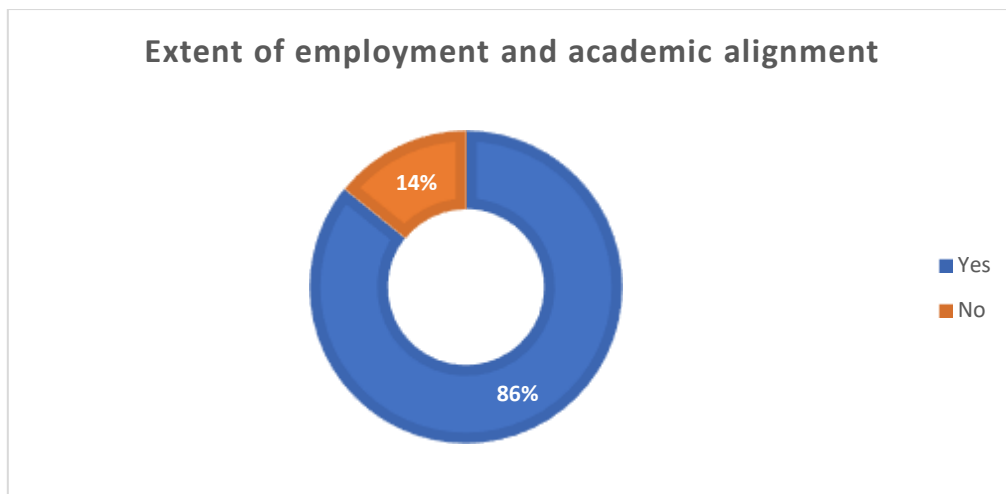
Figure 4.20: Extent of employment alignment with academic qualifications (N=106)

Most respondents (n=91, 86%) mentioned being employed in their chosen degree/ emphasis fields, suggesting some alignment between their academic programme/s and the workplace performance requirements (Elamir, 2020). On the other hand, a minority (n=18, 14%) mentioned that they were not employed in positions aligned with their chosen field of study at the university.

It should be noted that the respondents were primarily educators/ teachers. In Table 4.3, it was found that most of these respondents were dissatisfied with their working conditions. However, the causes of dissatisfaction were primarily systemic rather than curriculum-related. On the other hand, the statistical information in Figure 4.7 shows that a majority of respondents (93.4%) graduated in the field of Education, which is relevant for educators. Meanwhile, most respondents in Figure 4.15 (68%) indicated they were satisfied with their current career/ academic development. The researcher believes that the 'conflictual' nature of examples cited in the above figures generally reflects the view that graduate unemployment was caused by misaligned curriculum offerings and employers' expectations (Elamir, 2020; Kjelland, 2008; OECD, 2012).

These responses reveal that HEI cannot be deemed the sole producer of a skilled, capable, and diverse workforce (Chan, 2016). Though HEIs are undeniably responsible for preparing life and work-ready graduates, they should not be seen as a cure-all remedy to the country's skills shortage and rise in unemployment rates (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015). The researcher believes HE, the labour sector and policymakers work in unison to produce an employable and highly skilled workforce. The systemic issues revealed through the survey prove the veracity of the previous statement, which graduates were unprepared for despite being in their chosen field. Through mentorship

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partnerships, mentors could thus apprise students of the realities of the field and assist them in developing skills crucial to expertly navigate the complexities of the world of work.

Notwithstanding results in Figure 4.20, together with data depicted in Figures 4.15, 4.16, 4.19 and 4.25, confirm that institutional mentorship could aid in addressing the continued misalignment between HE produce and labour demands by equipping graduates with (more than academic) competencies relevant to the South African and global market (Holtzhausen, 2012).

4.3.4.1.1 *Possible reasons for misalignment of employment and academic qualifications*

In further probing, the respondents were asked: If not, why? *(Multiple answers apply).* The main reason for following-up on the previous question was to enable the respondents to expand on their views regarding the misalignment without feeling constrained by the researcher to do so in the original question. Figure 4.21 reflects the captured responses in this regard. According to Figure 4.21, a total of 15 respondents (70%) (that is, 22% three times) stated developing new career interests, not finding a job, and 'other' factors as the primary reasons for feeling that they were not employed in the fields of their chosen degree.

On the other hand, (n=3, 13%) of the respondents reported that they were unemployed, while (n=2, 8%) mentioned that their jobs didn't pay well, and the other (n=2, 8%) mentioned that they were only full-time students. Meanwhile, the least minority (n=1, 5%) mentioned their job had fewer opportunities to choose from. The National Planning Commission (2019, p. 9) acknowledges that the misalignment of higher education curricula could hinder enhancing socio-economic growth and reducing poverty.
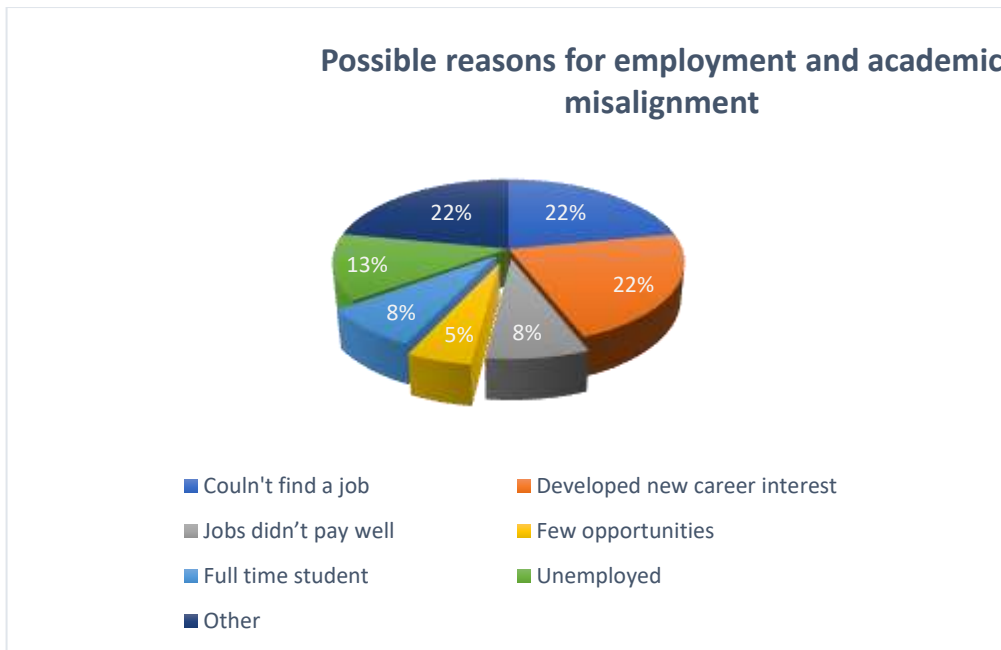
Figure 4.21: Respondents' possible reasons for misalignment of employment and academic qualifications (=106)

Though the response rate indicates a good match between skill and work placement in this institution under section 4.3.4.1, it should be noted that factors, such as (un) availability of jobs, limited permanent employment, and the ever-changing nature of the labour market, also come into play (Kalfa & Taksa, 2015). Limited job opportunities might force graduates to accept employment outside their chosen field. The mismatch between qualifications and the skills required in the world of work continues to aggravate employee discontent (Nel & Neale-Shutte, 2013). While research suggests that a lack of coordination between theory and practice through practical work is attributable to most graduates' ineligibility for employment in the job market (Walker, 2015), it is the researcher's view that this lack of coordination along with the skills mismatch can be successfully addressed by meaningful cooperation and collaboration between HE, labour and policymakers.

4.3.4.2 *Faculty involvement in letters of recommendation*

The following question was posed to the respondents: *While at the University X, did you develop a relationship with one or more faculty members such that you could ask for a letter of recommendation?* The responses are captured in Figure 4.22 below. The rationale for this question premises on a number of factors. Amongst others, it determines the nature of relationships between students and academic staff. On the

other hand, it also reflects on the confidence the students have in the efficacy of the mentorship programme (Ritchie & Genoni, 2002). Most respondents (n=58, 55%) reported that they could ask for a letter of recommendation from the faculty member with whom they had developed a relationship. However, (n=48, 45%) reported that they would not. The researcher did not follow up on reasons for either of the (yes or no) responses. As such, the nature of the student-faculty relationship becomes the primary means of determining whether or not a particular student would ask for a letter of recommendation. In sub-section 2.7.4.2, relationship building is considered an integral component in Kram's mentorship theory/ model.
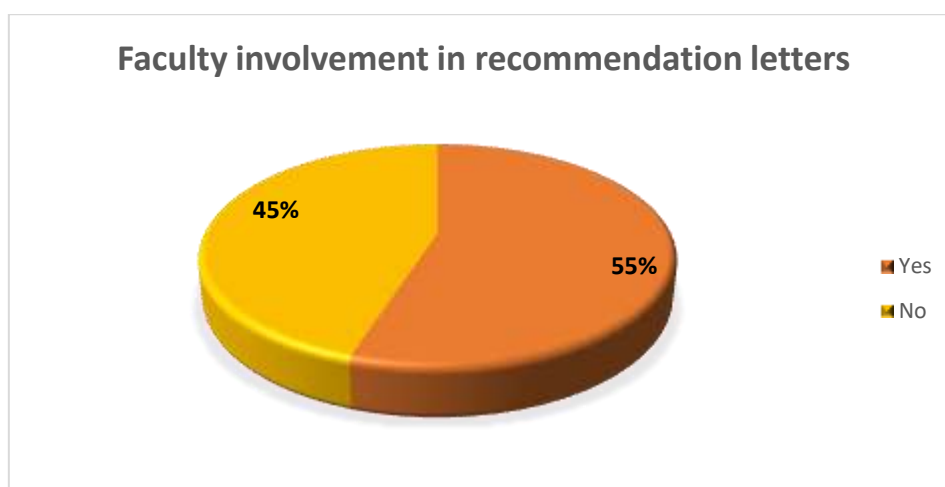
Figure 4.22: Faculty involvement in letters of recommendation (N=106)

Active participation in mentorship relationships assists in developing a close and trusted relationship, i.e., friendship, with an expert in the field whose task would be to support the protégé professionally and personally. A mentor would provide their charge with a letter of recommendation to further their career.

4.3.4.3   *Period of finding employment since graduation*

Respondents were asked: *After attending the University X, did you get employment within a year?* Figure 4.23 encapsulates the elicited responses in this regard. Most participants (n=82, 77%) mentioned that they were employed the same year after graduation, while the minority (n=24, 23%) mentioned that they were not employed in the same year. While a number of factors are involved, the employment period after graduation is essential in a South African context characterised by high graduate

unemployment rates (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021, p. 12). Graduate students who are unemployed for long periods could become disgruntled with the higher education system and migrate to other countries for better employment opportunities. On the other hand, this could cause a brain drain and slower economic growth. Furthermore, students (mentees) could be disillusioned with institutional mentorship programmes, which they consider quicker close-gap interventions to ameliorate the skills and experience shortage claims by employers.
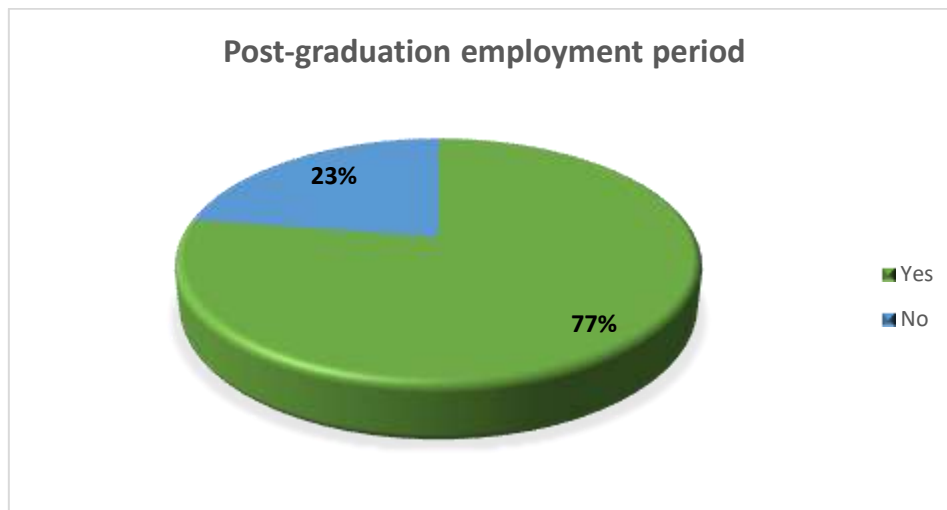
Figure 4.23: Period of finding employment since graduation (N=106)

4.3.4.4   Frequency of daily use of skills/ knowledge at workplace

Respondents were asked the question: *How often do you use skills or knowledge learned at the University in your daily work?* The rationale of the question premises on the need by the researcher to determine the extent of correlation between skills and knowledge acquired on the one hand and the practicality or relevance thereof on the other hand. Figure 4.24 reflects the respondents' viewpoints in this regard.

Most participants (n=77, 73%) in Figure 4.24 above responded that they often used their acquired skills and knowledge at their workplaces, while (n=28, 26%) mentioned that they occasionally used those skills. The least number of participants (n=2, 1%) responded that they never used these skills. The fact that a majority frequently used these skills implies some modicum of relevance and correlation between the world of work and their educational background.
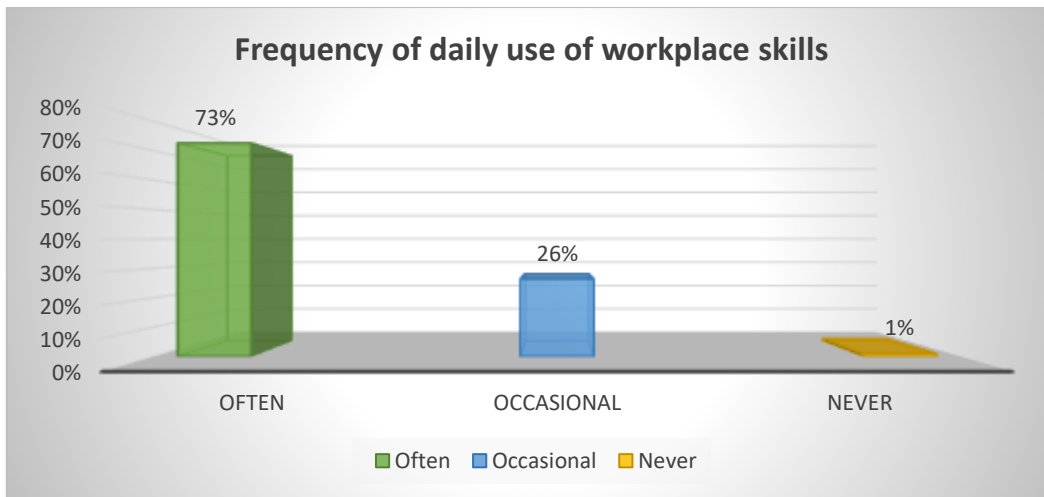
Figure 4.24: Frequency of daily use of skills/ knowledge at workplace (N=106)

This also relates to the responses in sub-section 4.3.2.3, in which respondents' views in Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15 showed satisfaction levels of 65% and 68% regarding career development. That 99% of respondents affirm their daily use of the knowledge acquired at the tertiary institution speaks volumes concerning the quality of the education received, the availability of resources and interventions at the institution, as well as the relevance of the knowledge imparted and supports findings on the university's reputation. Thus, it can be suggested that graduates from universities with a good reputation, among other factors, demonstrate the ability to transfer the knowledge learnt at university to the world of work (Garraway, Volbrecht, Wicht, & Ximba, 2011). It should be noted that knowledge transfer from school to work is not a coincidental or inherent process but a skill developed while considering the various alterations and intricacies involved (Heggen, 2008). It is through interventions such as mentorship programmes that such skills are gained. Research posits that a key factor in the knowledge transfer process is having access to a subject-matter expert (Hatano & Greeno, 1999). Hence, mentors assist their protégés in developing relevant skills and decoding the theory learned in university for successful use in the workplace. Support gained in mentoring partnerships and challenging tasks given to protégés highly increases graduate knowledge transfer ability (Eraut, 2010).

4.3.4.5   *Relevance of mentoring skills and knowledge in securing employment*
The respondents were asked: *Would you say that the skills, knowledge, or tools learned during these mentoring programmes at the University X helped you to secure employment?*

Relevance of mentoring skills for employment

- Definitely yes — 20%
- Probably yes — 34%
- Probably not — 25%
- Definitely not — 21%
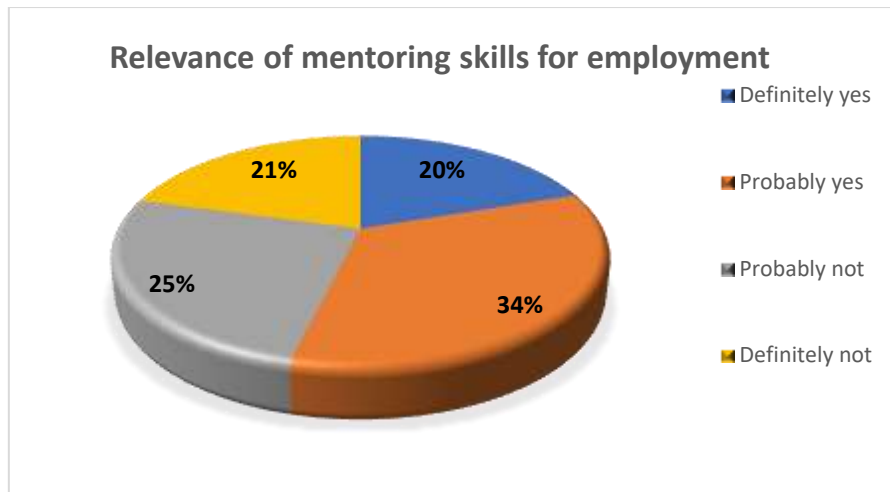
Figure 4.25: Relevance of mentoring skills and knowledge in securing employment (N=106)

The respondents provided their viewpoints as indicated in Figure 4.25 overleaf. Figure 4.25 shows that most respondents (n=36, 34%) submitted that the mentoring skills were probably relevant in securing them jobs. In contrast, (n=27, 25%) responded that the skills were perhaps not appropriate, and (n=22, 21%) responded that the skills were not helpful in their job searches, followed by (n=21, 20%) who responded that the skills helped them in securing employment. Overall, a total majority of 54% (n=57) respondents showed varying degrees of approval/ agreement (i.e., yes) that the skills and knowledge acquired through institutional mentorship programmes were instrumental in helping them attain their jobs. Similar to the situation in sub-section 4.3.4.4, the responses reflected in Figure 4.25 also relate to the responses in sub-section 4.3.2.3, in which respondents' views in Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.15 respectively showed satisfaction levels of 65% and 68%, regarding career development. These findings confirm that institutional mentorship influences and empowers students in preparation for the working world by helping them become more self-assured in their capacity to find employment, adaptable in their career choices, and significantly more assertive when applying for jobs (O'Mally & Antonelli, 2016). Acquired mentorship skills assist participants in furthering their education and enhancing employment opportunities (Balu, 2014). Moreover, mentorship programmes serve as platforms where students acquire the abilities needed to live full lives after graduation (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). In line with the findings, studies firmly back mentoring as a practical approach to developing and enhancing students' employability skills and preparing them for the workforce (Bolton-King, 2022).

4.3.4.6 Frequency of mentoring skills and knowledge use in daily work

Respondents were asked: *How often do you use the skills, knowledge or tools learned during these mentoring programmes at University X in your daily work?* Their responses are shown in Figure 4.26 below. Whereas Figure 4.24 emphasises on non-mentoring (i.e., academic/ educational) skills and knowledge, the emphasis in Figure 4.26 is on mentorship-related skills and knowledge. Accordingly, the majority of participants (n=52, 49%) responded that they never used the skills, followed by (n=33, 31%) reported that they often used these mentorship-related skills. In contrast, (n=21, 20%) responded that they occasionally used the skills. That the majority of respondents claimed not using their mentorship-related experiences is contradictory to the findings reflected in Figure 4.25, according to which a total majority of 54% (n=57) respondents showed varying degrees of approval/ agreement (i.e., yes) that the skills and knowledge acquired through the institutional mentorship programme were instrumental in helping them to acquire their jobs. However, the purported non-utilisation of mentoring skills and knowledge in the respondents' daily work could be a cogent reflection of misalignment. In such a case, the researcher shares the view posited by De Lannoy et al. (2018) that more studies need to be undertaken to investigate higher education graduates' job readiness and compliance. It can also be suggested that a portion of the 49 % depicted in Figure 4.26 corresponds to the 34% of respondents who did not participate in a mentorship programme (Figure 4.19) during their studies, thus leaving a mere 15% who claim not to use skills learnt during the mentoring process.
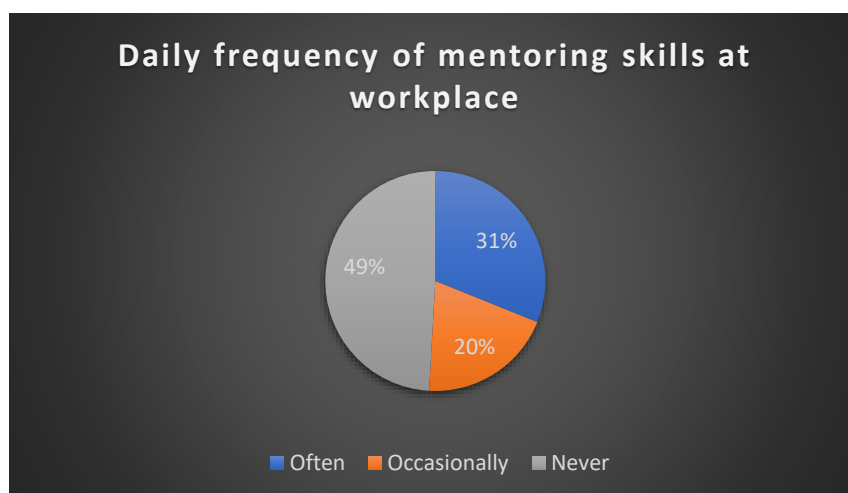
Figure 4.26: Frequency of mentoring skills and knowledge in daily work (N=106)

Nevertheless, an overall percentage of 51% illustrates that skills acquired through mentorship programmes are beneficial to graduates in the workplace. This finding is congruent with existing reports on the high value of mentorship for participants (Balu, 2014). It can be deduced that for 51 % of the respondents, institutional mentorship has significantly facilitated the transfer and development of the skills needed by these graduates to increase their performance and productivity (Nyamori, 2015) and to quickly adapt to their new roles (National Treasury). By applying their newly gained competencies through mentoring, such as the ability to cooperate (Denicola, Altshuler, Denicola, & Zabar, 2018) and adopting positive attitudes (Eby, et al., 2013), graduates can experience an acceleration of their career (Lamm, Sapp, & Lamm, 2017). In line with this perspective, existing research reports increased networking opportunities and abilities (Zachary, 2012), increased ability to solve complex problems (Northouse, 2011), and increased opportunity for promotions and salary perks as the positive outcomes of applying mentoring skills in the workplace.

4.3.4.7   *Recommendations for further improvement of institutional mentorship programmes*

The respondents were asked to comment on the statement: *With your overall experience, please add any other comments in the box below concerning the relevance of mentorship programmes at the institution level and possible areas of improvement.* Due to the voluminous nature of the responses induced by the option to provide more than a single response, the answers are attached in the Annexure at the end of the study. However, suffice that the generality of the respondents' recommendations was addressed in various sections of this chapter.

4.4   SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Despite the yearly increase in South African graduates, the graduate unemployment rate is still rising (Stats SA, 2021). Reports have determined several causal factors for this state of affairs, ranging from a lack of employability skills to obtaining the qualifications (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015). The labour sector highlights the misalignment between the HE supplies (graduates) and market demands (relevant skills and competencies) (Nicolescu & Cristian, 2009). Remedial actions have been taken to address the unemployment issue in general and graduate

and youth unemployment in particular. Yet, unemployment rates among these groups continue to rise quarterly (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel, & Leibbrandt, 2018).

Hence, the current study sought to analyse the role of HE in producing employable graduates and shaping fully functional citizens. The researcher hypothesized that institutional mentorship, i.e., mentorship pre-graduation, could be the bridging element between varsity and the labour market. The primary question to test this hypothesis was to discover how institutional mentorship could support institutional reputation, graduate empowerment and preparation for work. Moreover, the link between institutional mentorship and graduate connection, confidence, loyalty, personal/professional/entrepreneurial empowerment, and work readiness was investigated in the research process.

In order to achieve the aim of this investigation, the researcher utilised Kram's theory of mentorship as a framework to link the main research focus and the role of HE in changing the status quo (high unemployment rate despite the high number of graduates). The theory's career development function spoke to the benefits of mentoring regarding graduate employability, while the psychosocial functions addressed questions surrounding graduate personal and professional empowerment. A literature review revealed that the role of HE alters as a society's economic, cultural, and political landscape changes (Frijhoff, 1997). Economic imperatives, globalisation, technology and the massification of HE have led to the promotion of practical knowledge production to stimulate national economic growth (Kromydas, 2017). As such, HE is tasked with producing a highly skilled force to boost the economy (OECD, 2007).

In this regard, the researcher suggests that HE does not have to take an instrumentalist or liberalist stance. Instead, HE's role can remain true to its primary role (teaching, creating and producing knowledge), which also evolves with society and its needs. From this perspective, a survey was administered to determine whether an institutional mentorship programme could assist HE in producing employable and fulfilled (satisfied) graduates.

This chapter presented and discussed findings from a survey administered to alumni of a tertiary South African institution. It addressed the converted primary data collected

electronically from alumni, which generated 106 respondents. During the data analysis and interpretation, five critical focus areas were noted, namely: the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the institutional reputation, the empowerment element of institutional mentorship concerning graduates, the influence or effect of an institutional mentorship programme, and graduate work preparation.

Firstly, the findings revealed that in terms of employment, a specific population group remains most vulnerable: Black females. This result is concurrent with existing reports and indicates the need for institutional interventions to target this particular group. Results further validate the literature, which suggests that older adults have a more positive employment outcome. This accentuates the need for institutional mentorship programmes to adequately prepare, empower and equip young graduates to facilitate their success. Moreover, the data confirmed HE qualifications and financial incentives established by existing reports. An increasing number of South Africans seek to further their studies to better their career prospects.

Furthermore, most respondents from the faculty of education correlate with reports suggesting that education-related skills are not viable in the private sector (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015). This further authenticates the field of study as being a factor of (un) employment. Results illustrated in Figure 4.8 of this chapter corroborate those depicted in Figure 4.7, where little to no respondents were in fields such as engineering and health (two of the most sought-after skills in South Africa). Concisely, data on the income earned allude to the fact that most graduates do not hold financially stable employment.

Throughout the presentation and discussions in this chapter, the impact or otherwise of the selected university's mentorship programme on graduate employability remained a perennial issue. The study has further noted that there are areas of contradictions in some of the respondents' perspectives, as well as between some of these perspectives and the conventional literature propositions. However, all perspectives proffered by the various respondents were sufficient for the study to develop credible, evidence-based findings.

Data mainly demonstrate that institutional mentorship:
- ❖ Increases graduate level of connectedness to their university (67%).

- ❖ Motivates graduates to further their studies at their alma mater (92%).
- ❖ Boosts institutional reputation (95%).
- ❖ Increases alumni's willingness to remain in contact with their alma mater (71%).
- ❖ Promotes personal, entrepreneurial and professional empowerment.
- ❖ Enhances current career and academic advancement.
- ❖ Facilitates transition from school to work (47%).
- ❖ Increases student motivation (38%).
- ❖ Improves alignment between study programmes and employer demands.
- ❖ Facilitates alignment between students' chosen fields and labour market needs.
- ❖ Reduces employment search period.
- ❖ Instils relevant skills for daily personal and professional use.

Though contradictory results were obtained between HEI mentoring empowerment contribution (+50%), the effect of mentoring programmes on graduates' personal lives (38%), and the general positive institutional reputation (95%), data reveal that participating in institutional mentorship interventions (Figure 4.19) enhances institutional reputation/image and equips graduates for life post-graduation (Figure 4.16). Results also point out that non-academic skills acquired during mentorship programmes were of great value to graduates. Presumably, graduates' perceptions of mentorship programmes have minimal impact on their personal lives, which is in stark opposition to evidence found in the literature. They may be attributed to the current low career outcomes.

Based on the findings discussed in this chapter, the model, depicted in Figure 4.27 below, was created to showcase the significance of institutional mentorship programmes as reformatory interventions in relation to graduates' slow absorption in the labour market. The researcher believes this model can serve as a guide for policy design and implementation and as a support document to assist HE in fulfilling its role while addressing the labour market's demands.
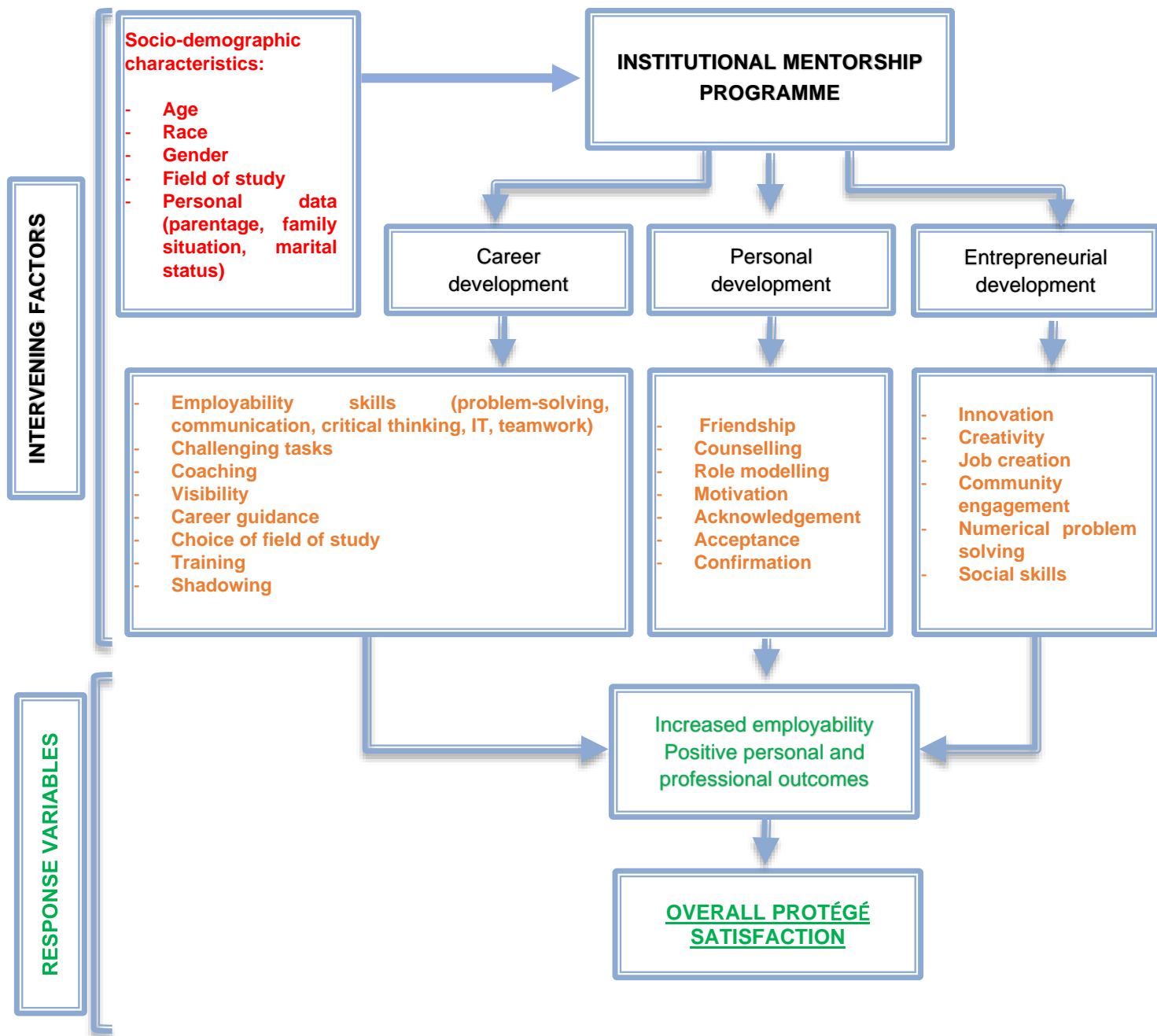
Figure 4.27 institutional mentorship programme design model

The next chapter focuses on providing recommendations based on the findings. Thereafter, the report will end with concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's objectives were to ascertain whether an institutional mentoring programme would help higher education institutions to produce employable graduates. Moreover, this primary objective led to looking into this type of programme's influence on institutional reputation, its ability to assist graduates in entering and succeeding in the workforce successfully and to provide them with competencies and other essential tools needed to contribute towards mitigating graduate unemployment and job creation. The primary question that needed to be answered was:

- To what extent can *institutional mentorship* support institutional reputation, graduates' empowerment and preparation for work?

The following questions stem from the central inquiry:

- To what extent does institutional mentorship *influence* graduate connection, confidence and loyalty to the institution?

- To what extent can institutional mentorship empower graduates *personally, professionally and entrepreneurially?*

- How does institutional mentorship influence and empower *graduate preparation for the world of work*?

This study used a quantitative approach to investigate the role of institutional mentorship in graduates' employability, empowerment and work readiness. In Chapter 4, data from the administered research instrument was discussed and interpreted. The main conclusions of the investigations are discussed in this concluding chapter, along with recommendations that have both practical and social ramifications. Stakeholders in the South African higher education system and the labour sector can use these recommendations to inform policies, which can help stakeholders in their efforts to reduce skill shortages and (graduate) unemployment. Additionally, they may stimulate additional investigation into the same subject. The summary of the primary findings in

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this chapter was written based on the critical themes emphasised in the previous chapter.

5.2 THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The main themes that emerged from the findings were the following: institutional reputation, institutional mentorship's empowerment of graduates, institutional mentorship's influence, and institutional mentorship's influence on graduate preparation for the world of work.

5.2.1 Institutional reputation

The majority of participants affirmed that they feel strongly connected to their institution and that not only would they choose the same institution as a place of study for themselves, but they would also recommend it to others. The strength of participants' connectedness to their institution revealed in the data demonstrates that the institution and its offerings have made an undeniably positive impression on its graduates. Such a connection translates to a positive image and reputation for said institution. Data provided by participants of the study, who were involved in mentorship programmes, confirm that participation in an institution's mentorship programme builds a strong bond between HEI and graduates, increases commitment to said HEI and enhances the institution's image, i.e. reputation. Further, findings suggest that those involved in mentorship programmes developed a high trust in their institutions. As such, the positive image depicted by participants for their alma mater serves to affirm that institutional mentorship programmes support and boost institutional reputation as a factor of its students' satisfaction and employability. Moreover, these programmes garner loyalty due to quality offerings and good service delivery.

Mentoring is beneficial on a variety of levels for mentees, mentors, and the institutions where they are enrolled. Through mentoring, the institution can capitalize on and share the richness of talent, ability, and knowledge among its students. An institution's reputation as a place that supports the growth and development of high-potential leaders prioritises student development and continuous learning and fosters an inclusive, varied, and collaborative environment is influenced by the success of its mentorship programmes. The current study has demonstrated a connection between

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student satisfaction and an institution's positive reputation. Therefore, effective student personal development is crucial for promoting student confidence and loyalty to the institution, as seen in the responses. According to the data, participating in a mentoring program considerably raises a student's sense of connection to the institution. Most people who have participated in mentoring programs are likely to mentor others, adding to the dynamic of training and development inside an institution.

Institutions with effective mentorship programmes should anticipate attracting talent and seeing higher retention rates with those they do. According to statistics, 79% of youth believe having a mentor is essential to their professional success (Kantor, 2017). Since this group will account for more than 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Donston-Miller, 2016), finding this talent should be a top priority. More meaningfully than only providing academic instruction, mentorship for students fosters their skill development and social connections with the institution. Mentorship programmes promote comprehensive growth and a close bond with the institution rather than only imparting new skills and assessing students.

Additionally, faculty participation in mentorship programs contributes to improving institutional reputation because mentoring can increase job satisfaction, loyalty, and professional fulfilment. According to studies, those who mentor others report having lower stress levels and feeling more fulfilled by their work (Gill & Roulet, 2019). By increasing staff involvement, contentment, and commitment to the institution, mentoring can help an institution develop a positive reputation.

5.2.2 Institutional mentorship's empowerment of graduates

Data suggest that the effect of a mentorship programme on participants' personal lives is not always self-evident, as less than half of the respondents noticed a positive influence personally. In contrast, the majority showcases varying levels of uncertainty. Although in the minority (1%), some respondents denied any positive impact. These findings suggest that the outcome of institutional mentorship programmes' psychosocial functions is not always as tangible as that of the mentorship theory career functions. Though the literature suggests that psychosocial and career functions constitute two independent functions of mentorship, outcomes resulting from these functions are not always unambiguously categorised. For instance, in this study,

speaking clearly and effectively (communication skills), using new information and applying it, and analysing the information at one's disposal (skills often required in daily life, in and out of work) are solely associated with work, according to the data obtained. The same applies to the development of social skills. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that there is a slight chance of institutional mentorship not having any personal influence on a participant for various reasons.

Despite some participants' claims, their responses to the questions reveal that mentorship positively influences participants' lives (tables 4.2 and 4.4). For the purposes of this research, personal development refers to steps taken to enhance abilities, employability, or quality of life. The study uncovered a number of advantages related to personal growth and fulfilment. Students can gain confidence through mentoring in many different circumstances. Skills obtained through mentorship can assist in generating ideas during the decision-making process. Mentoring can promote the development of problem-solving skills. Graduates who are mentored are more capable and motivated to continuously manage their development. Effective mentorship also promotes self-reliance and independence (individual learning). Essentially, mentoring fosters personal growth by imparting problem-solving and creative skills, qualities that make a student more employable and boost individual confidence.

The uncertainty surrounding institutional mentorship's influence on personal lives can be linked to dissatisfaction in the workplace and difficulty in finding a permanent or stable source of income. These results suggest that the mentorship theory's psychosocial and career functions are not as independent as previously thought. Participants' responses indicate that mentorship targeting career development and satisfaction could influence mentorship's psychosocial outcomes and vice-versa. Most participants expressed satisfaction with their academic and career growth, highlighting the importance of building effective mentorship programmes in HEIs. Interestingly, most respondents were from the education sector and provided systemic reasons for their career dissatisfaction. As such, it can be deduced that existing mentorship programmes might not adequately prepare students to deal with systemic failures. The majority of the results obtained from the survey revealed that well-executed institutional mentorship programmes adequately equip graduates with the skill set needed to be employable and even create jobs through entrepreneurship.

Mentorship is essential for advancing one's profession and is a practical approach to supporting students and profoundly impacting their lives. According to the results, such an initiative is crucial in allowing students to collaborate with others and form social bonds. Protégés will be helped to identify relevant talents and develop them for professional progress by mentoring programs with industry professionals.

5.2.3 Institutional mentorship's influence

The survey participants revealed that institutional mentorship influences multiple levels: work readiness, student motivation, skills matching and skills alignment. Thus, the data confirms the existing literature. In addition, skills, attributes and competencies developed during mentorship programmes (communication, self-efficacy, knowledge acquisition, problem-solving, among others) influence alumni support of their alma mater and mentorship programmes on offer. In other words, mentorship programmes positively impact graduate connections and loyalty to their institution.

5.2.4 Institutional mentorship's influence on graduate preparation for the world of work

Results from this study show that participation in institutional mentorship programmes can address the issue of skills mismatch and field of study misalignment, which are listed as some of the causal factors of unemployment in South Africa. Furthermore, data show the efficacy of institutional mentorship in establishing a good and beneficial relationship between staff, experts and students, enabling them to obtain referrals to secure employment. Mentorship programmes are a platform for building crucial relationships that allow graduates to secure employment with less difficulty, hence reducing the job search period. Data showed the practicality of skills gained through institutional mentorship programmes and their relevance. Respondents revealed that they use these skills either often or occasionally daily. These programmes enable protégés to transfer knowledge in various contexts, making them invaluable. Respondents also confirm the practicality of these skills by affirming that they assisted them in securing employment.

We can draw the conclusion that mentoring relationships are a crucial component of professional, personal, and skill development. The participants' demographics show

that Black South African women are more at risk for unemployment, which is consistent with the information supplied by Statistics South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2019; Maluleke, Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2: 2021, 2021). As a result, it is crucial that skills are transferred, and mentoring can be pretty helpful in this regard. According to the researcher, establishing employment equity in South Africa will be challenging without effective and efficient mentorship. Overall, we can posit that the benefit of mentorship comes from the fact that it is the most efficient means of achieving graduate empowerment.

5.3   CONCLUSION

(Graduate) unemployment in South Africa is a crucial issue, as seen by the quarterly rise in unemployment rates. Among other factors, lack of skills has been continuously evoked as a significant contributing factor. Hence, this study set out to determine the extent to which institutional mentorship programmes can support, empower and prepare graduates for work and life after graduation. As a result, the data revealed that institutional mentorship programmes could bridge the gap between varsity and the world of work by enhancing graduates' employability and increasing job creation abilities. In turn, these outcomes affect the unemployment rate. However, such a programme can only be successful with an active and effective collaboration between higher education and labour.

This study has led us to the conclusion that institutional mentoring has the capacity to affect students' academic and personal life trajectories. Everyone engaged gains from mentoring. It provides a fruitful mentor-protégé relationship and aids in opening doors to future academic and professional opportunities. The results of this study have shown that institutional mentorship offers a platform for training, motivation, and emotional support. In this relationship, mentors are crucial because they encourage students' personal growth by helping them with career advice, goal-setting, and networking. The exchange of knowledge between academics and industry experts becomes an intrinsic quality in institutions that allows students, faculty, the culture of the institution, and ultimately, industry (labour market).

5.4   CONTRIBUTIONS

5.4.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This study aimed to determine the extent to which institutional mentorship can contribute to institutional reputation, graduate empowerment, and work readiness. While many studies have looked into mentorship in the workplace, this one is special because it focused on the relationship between institutional mentorship as the bridging element between higher institutions and the labour market.

The research's conclusions and recommendations add to the body of knowledge on how institutional mentorship programmes might be implemented in each South African institution of higher learning. According to this study, a change is necessary to lower unemployment rates and make institutional mentorship the standard in South Africa's higher education system. Another point is that the failure of the Department of Education to address systemic flaws and the department's routine systemic changes without taking into account people already working in the sector can be linked to career discontent among employed graduates.

The advantages of mentorship within an organisation have long been recorded in the existing literature. However, research on mentorship in education, especially in Africa, is severely lacking. Though graduate unemployment is the lowest of all the unemployed categories, its slow and steady rise should be carefully analysed. As such, the current study considered an institution's mentorship programme's role in producing employable graduates and stimulating job creation. Such a study is particularly significant because it shows that effective mentorship programmes have the potential to develop and enhance key competencies. It also shows that such programmes can contribute to mitigating the graduate unemployment rate by influencing and empowering graduates extensively in preparation for life post-graduation.

Moreover, such a study reveals graduate empowerment's role in supporting institutional reputation, garnering loyalty and increasing confidence in HEIs through institutional mentorship programmes. This study provided knowledge that higher education cannot work in isolation as systemic issues beyond the scope of mentorship programmes were revealed. Institutional mentorship programmes can only be effective and successful (produce work-ready, competent and employable graduates) if higher education and labour collaborate. Such a partnership can be conducive to

preparing graduates to face these issues and address them. Despite mentorship programmes, career outcomes will be adverse should systemic issues not be addressed.

The study made a case for institutional mentorship as a critical element in graduate empowerment and offered a model for an effective mentorship programme. If adopted, the suggested model and transition from mentorship after graduation to mentorship while studying have the potential to make institutional mentorship a crucial part of skill development while preparing students for life after graduation. The researcher contends that if the suggested model is implemented, graduates will prosper in their personal and professional lives, benefiting both institutions and the country's economy.

Additionally, this study further extends Kram's theory by showing a strong connection between its two main aspects: career and psychosocial development. As depicted in the results discussed under section 4, involvement in institutional mentorship plays a significant role in student work-readiness, self-assurance and satisfaction in their chosen fields. The findings further indicate that positive career development outcomes linked to involvement in mentorship consisted of empowering graduates with new skills and knowledge. In turn, positive career development outcomes led to positive psychosocial factors in the form of satisfaction, better performance, confidence, self-assurance, commitment and loyalty, among others. Existing literature supports this finding, as studies show that career development and psychological growth are intricately intertwined (Bowers, Dicknman, & Fuqua, 2001).

5.4.2 Contribution to Theory

This study adopted Kram's mentorship theory. According to this theory, mentors can perform two major categories of mentor duties (Ragins & Kram, 2007). They offer career development services that aid in the advancement of protégés within an organisation. The second major group of mentor functions includes psychosocial functions. The protégé's perception of competence, self-efficacy, and professional and personal development are all boosted by these functions, which also address interpersonal components of the mentoring relationship. According to Kram, the career

and psychosocial purposes of mentoring are two largely autonomous dimensions with distinct origins and effects.

Yet, during this investigation, exciting discoveries were made. The study contributed to this theory in the following ways:

- Highlighting that mentorship theory can be applied to an educational context
- Revealing that though career and psychosocial factors of the theory can be applied independently, growth and advancement in one branch have a positive effect on the other. Likewise, adverse outcomes in one branch negatively influence the other.

Hence, this study discovered that Kram's mentorship theory could be adapted by interlinking both factors to generate more desirable results.

5.4.3 Contribution to Practice

The study depicted the extent to which institutional mentorship can improve graduate outcomes and boost the HEIs' image. As such, this study can serve as a guide to inform policy on making the existence of and participation in institutional mentorship programmes compulsory in all HEIs nationally. Moreover, this study highlights the urgent need to understand higher education's role within society and the importance of collaboration with labour. This shared responsibility will make achieving the 2030 NDP goals possible.

5.4.4 Contribution to Method

The study's main methodological contribution has been using a quantitative strategy during the data collection process. Though the survey was composed of closed-ended questions, it allowed participants to make comments and recommendations regarding institutional mentorship, which generated several responses.

First, quality was established by administering the survey to a small group of non-participants. This pilot study allowed the researcher to use validated measures to obtain responses that could address the research questions. Moreover, the framework was conceptualised by determining the items to be measured and how said items would be measured. This was done by aligning the research questions, aims and

objectives with the theory used. Survey items were carefully aligned with research questions to identify emerging patterns and allow for the reproduction of the study.

5.4.5 Contribution to Policy

The study informs policy by highlighting the value of institutional mentorship programmes in graduate employability and offering a model (see Chapter 4) that can contribute to building an effective mentorship programme, achieving NDP goals, and developing human resources. This study can inform institutional plans regarding their programme provision and assist them in adopting an "institutional mentorship for all" approach. It can also help the Department of Labour revisit its employment strategy framework and national skills development strategy to promote a more effective, active, and lasting collaboration between higher education and labour to address the skills shortage. The study encourages and supports the development of a programme targeting arts and humanities graduates.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS
5.5.1 Recommendations for Policy/pratice

The recommendations in this section are made based on the findings of this study.

First, the absence of a universal definition of mentorship, particularly in the education sector and within the African context, should motivate future studies in the field of mentorship to develop a basic conceptualisation. Having a clear understanding of the nature of mentorship can inform the implementation of well-designed mentorship programmes. Also, institutional mentorship programmes should consider societal, individual and national needs. To that end, clearly defined goals will contribute to their success. Furthermore, these programmes should be implemented in every South African institution with higher education and labour support.

Additionally, mentorship programmes aimed at prepping and empowering graduates in the education sector should be built to help graduates confront systemic issues in the South African education system.

Besides, senior faculty members should take an active role in mentoring. University policy should be drafted so that each faculty at the departmental level designs a

mentorship programme to produce employable graduates. Such a step could significantly increase graduates' career opportunities, especially those from the arts and humanities who do not necessarily possess technical skills, such as those from engineering and medicine. On the other hand, institutional mentorship programmes do not need to follow a traditional system. Protégés might benefit from having more than one mentor, thus allowing them to tap into several resources. With the competitiveness of the working world, both locally and globally, an inter- or multisectoral approach to mentoring might generate products with a profile matching labour demands.

Participation in an institutional mentorship programme should be made compulsory from the third year of undergraduate studies to better prepare graduates and ease their transition from school to life and work. Ensuring the success of both protégés and mentors requires research to determine the profile of those who would find a mentorship relationship advantageous.

Mentorship programmes should occupy more prominent platforms within HEIs to assist protégés in overcoming systemic barriers (such as those revealed in the findings) and even offer possible solutions. Moreover, institutions should actively promote mentorship programmes, as marketing provides visibility, which is vital for high participation rates. In essence, it is critical that leaders in HEIs, higher education and labour spearhead this venture.

5.5.2 Recommendation for future research

Further research on the significance of institutional mentorship should be conducted while considering the following:

- o The selection of a larger sample
- o Inclusion of population groups more susceptible to being unemployed
- o Possible comparative study between mentorship programmes at various institutions and their outcomes in terms of employment, employability, job creation and quality of life
- o Collaboration between higher education and labour to create a pilot programme based on the model in Chapter 4.

ANNEXURE: Respondents' improvement recommendations

Responses to the statement:
With your overall experience, please add any other comments in the box below concerning the relevance of mentorship programmes at institution level and possible areas of improvement.
Responses:
- N/A   - None   - NA   - Mentorship should happen between faculties   - I believe they are vital in many aspects. However, I believe that mentors from the profession that you want would aid the students better, such as lecturers for the education students.   - Creating more opportunities for students to find mentorship programmes as well as more visibility on campuses about programmes   - The University X education campus was the best thing that has ever happened in my life. I have gained so much knowledge and expertise in my field of study, which still help to this day. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to be able to graduate in such a prestigious institution.   - After attending the University X, did you get employment within a year? I was already working when I pursued further studies, and I am still employed.   - Students need to be able to go to places that will possibly hire them and receive work-integrated learning and mentoring from people who have been working at the place for over 3 years and knows what the institute expects of the students to be employed after graduation.   - I believe mentorship programmes hold such an important place within a university setting. Studying and making decisions that influence your future can be extremely overwhelming, and mentorship programmes hold that space for you where you are able to get support and not walk that journey alone. I do believe that because I was in a small department (Educational Psychology), I had more access to mentorship programmes, and it was encouraged for us to join them. I think that there should be more effort made to reach other students who are in degrees with bigger faculties and departments. Overall, I believe my participation in a programme has been amazing and meant that I still have support from mentors now while I am working.   - There were always mentorship programmes organised, but there was no follow-up. You would sign up to the mentorship programme then it would just be another form you filled in supporting an unknown cause. There were no emails sent out confirming anything at all. It can be frustrating because you want to listen to someone's experiences, especially from your specific field.   - I think a lot more planning needs to go into these programmes, the planners need to essentially plan ahead and have everything sorted out before the programme rolls out. There should perhaps also be reports like check in reports (Example: 26/03 Met with my mentor on this day for coffee).   - Mentorship programs are important to help graduates transition to the workplace. I did not know there was a mentorship program for students at University X.   - They should advertise more in education so that we can come work there or even sponsor some alumni who want to study their master's or doctorate, like me.   - It must be practical and realistic.   - Mentorship programmes are important if provided by employers. The universities should, at most, facilitate for employers to offer mentorship, not lectures.

- I didn't even know these existed at University X while I was a student there for 2 years.
- After enrolling with University X, I felt that I was studying, I did my Honours with University X, and the standard was too high. I gained more professional skills.
- Having a degree does not imply you will be able to do your new job. There is a definite gap between a degree and the work environment. This gap can be filled by mentorship (while studying) by lecturers and external mentors. In addition, it is critical that university modules do fill the gap between a degree and the working environment.
- I find it more beneficial when the mentor chooses their mentee cause the energy to succeed and guide is matched by seeing yourself in your mentee.
- Can the programs be accessible to all students, regardless of their academic performance?
- Mentorship helps not only in the transition to the workplace but also transition from high to university. Personal STARS Mentorship help me in my first year with transition from high school to university, that is why the following year, I joined and helped other students to adapt to the university environment.
- To market these programmes better and make them visible and allow for people from other expertise to also join. It should be a national call, not only an institutional call.
- Did an ACE course in leadership and management (2011-2012). I had a University X part-time appointed mentor. I was empowered.
- The experience was great.
- Personal growth, professional growth, job opportunities, greater opportunity make a critical contribution to the society and globally.
- Prefer not to say anything.
- I studied at University X part-time when I was already employed, hence I did not get a chance to attend mentorship sessions. All the best in your research.
- We should have programs which teach about practical things in our daily workplaces.
- Communication between students and support system. Do not answer phone calls or emails.
- I think they are helpful and motivating.
- I have nothing to add.
- At the time of my studying at University X, there was no mentorship programme for students.
- I guess it's worth trying.
- It is a good thing. Students need mentorship
- Make it more known to all students. Did not know of mentorship programs
- Mentorship needs to be strengthened to all students, including international students who may be conducting their programmes by research or otherwise.
- Offer bursaries for postgraduates and mentoring programmes for them in order to further their studies to reach the highest level.
- I only received Postgraduate mentorship and support. The postgraduate sessions are really helpful to keep you on track and help you with keeping your studies on par with the required timelines. Mentoring from my supervisor has also been great, and she has been a huge help, both with my studies and with my personal motivation and support.
- It was helpful and guided us.
- It can be improved.
- I only did my Honours in Education at University X. I was a part-time student and worked during the week. I built some relationships in class, but not lasting. I didn't have a relationship with any lecturer.
- I strongly support mentorship programmes at both levels.
- Prefer not to say.
- It was a great experience.
- Mentorship programs are a good initiative. However, they should go further in assisting graduates to find employment because it is tough out there. I graduated in 2021 for my honour's degree, but I'm still unemployed in a field that is presumed to be in demand.

- Mentorship, to me, is a good way to keep you as an individual growing in different aspects of life such as finance, family, church etc.
- Congratulations on pursuing your doctorate. This is an extremely high level of study, and you can only attain these levels by being mentored. One of the lecturers indicated that we should stand on the shoulders of giants that went before us. All the luck, "Doc", in the making.
- Good.
- I gained a lot of information and experience.
- It helped me to learn the importance of supporting others, seeking help, giving back to my community and networking.
- I haven't joined a mentorship program as of yet.
- University X provided many opportunities for support and mentorship. I think they have established a well-connected community within the university, as well as their alumni community.
- I'm satisfied with everything.
- Advertising mentorships more would be a bonus for students.
- The mentorship at University X through supervisors of research is very helpful, and I have gained a lot of knowledge.
- I didn't participate in any mentorship program.
- Mentorship has a positive and negative impact. Receiving great mentorship will help you become a better mentor in the memory of your previous mentor. Having a bad mentor might make you become a better mentor and guide to someone or just become like the mentor who never motivated you to do better.
- Builds self-confidence, experience & most probably work ethics.
- Good initiative
- I think that it is very important although I have no experience of that at all.
- Overall, mentorship is good.
- I was never a part of a mentorship programme; however, I wish I had the opportunity to be a member of one. As a first-year student, I did not know about such programmes. I only knew about one when a friend had a mentor, and they would do coffee dates where they discussed critical issues, and I saw it as a beautiful practice. The university should do more in letting first-year students (especially those who are not residing in the varsity Res) know about such programmes because they can contribute to the success of the students.
- Mentorship programmes teach students other skills that may not be included in the degree program.
- Motivational and emphatic guidance during the course of study. A student should never be afraid to ask for help or explanation when he doesn't understand. The quality of training influences the result that you get at the end. Enthusiasm is contagious. The mentor must lead by example. The student must be introduced to the practice or work area where he will be employed one day.
- No comment.
- For my specific degree, there were no mentorships
- Mentorship programmes are very helpful in the development of the student
- No comment
- After doing my BEd Honors (2007) at University X, I was eager to enrol for my MED. However, at that time, I was told I could not study for my MEd on a part-time basis which was rather disappointing. Hence, I went on to complete my MEd (2010) and PhD (2014) at another university.
- I wish the programme can be developed to help students on a term basis. The programme can request students for mentorship in every term.
- It is good for students if it is continuing and the Mentor has the correct tools to help the mentee prepare for future endeavours.
- Very relevant, very helpful, engaging, opportunities for growth and network, exposure

- It was a great experience overall
- It's a good strategy
- Important
- Students should have some form of mentorship or in-service training before obtaining their qualification. Mentorship bridges the gap between theory and practical knowledge. While exposing and preparing mentees for the workplace
- Very helpful
- It was a good opportunity to study at University X. Lecturers are more dedicated.
- The mentorship program will help students to be grounded and focused, and it will prepare them mentally for the world of work. It will also help to give the students guidance in terms of long-term goals in terms of the correct career path to follow.
- Mentorship could help students get the ideas and knowledge that would help them successfully in their studies.
- Mentorship is highly recommended. There is always some information that you can apply in life.
- Mentorship programmes should be advertised during course sessions to bring awareness to all students.
- I think mentorship is very important.
- A mentorship programme is essential as it empowers one with relevant skills and knowledge.
- I did not attend one, but I am aware that they are essential for students.
- I have not engaged in any mentorship programs at University X because I did not know of any except interaction with my lecturers. That being said, I think information like that should be communicated to students, especially during orientation, so that relationships can be built from the onset.
- The University X is an excellent institution. However, the focus is merely on theory and is less practical. We cannot make that jump from Varsity to the office and not be practically equipped.
- Mentorship is much important and relevant in the preparation of graduates for the practicalities in the real workplace.
- All students should have to attend a module that teaches them how to design a CV as well as how to answer interview questions.
- I was a part-time student because I was already working.
- Mentoring programs are relatively important for students.
- As an educator, if there were to be a mentorship programme, future teachers would get a better understanding of the demand of teaching.
- It helps Baby-walk Novice in the working environment so that they become well-capacitated.
- I enjoyed gaining the know-how of diversity in the modern workplace.
- I did not attend any mentoring programmes.
- As an individual, we need to volunteer at institutions that are related to the field of study we're registered for primarily for advancing our knowledge and experience. While at it, we need to subscribe to everyone's rule that governs the terms of employment.
- It will help students develop a love of their studies and to see a need of further studies.
- Very little mentorship programmes are openly available at University X.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Approval letter by the survey committee

2022-02-23

Ms O Dangbegnon

████████████████████████████

Email: ocoffi@gmail.com

Dear Ms Dangbegnon

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH STUDY

The ██ Survey Coordinating Committee has granted approval for the research study titled "Higher Education and Job Creation in South Africa: Institutional Mentorship for Employability".

The proposed research study has to strictly adhere to the associated study protocol, as well as the ██ Survey Policy and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education instructions.

Please liaise with the Market Research Office in the Department of Institutional Planning ████████████████) to officially register the study and to finalise the survey regulations, procedures and the fieldwork dates. In order to register the study, the Market Research Office has to receive the formal ethical approval letter from the Faculty of Education.

A final electronic copy of the research outcomes must be submitted to the Survey Coordinating Committee as soon as possible after the completion of the study.

Yours sincerely

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

RECORD OF MASTERS/DOCTORAL PROPOSAL DEFENCE: 2020

This form records the status and performance of MEd/PhD students at their scheduled Masters and doctoral defense

DATE OF DEFENCE 1 December 2020	
STUDENT NAME: Ophélie R Laure Dangbégnon	STUDENT NUMBER: 11120968
SUPERVISOR NAME: Dr. Adeyemo	DEPARTMENT: EMPS

Topic: Higher Education and Job Creation in South Africa: Mentorship for Employability

MAJOR COMMENTS MADE ON PROPOSAL:

1. Link data collection strategy with purpose of the study.
2. Align aims with title.
3. Integrate more theories into one conceptual framework.
4. Provide a more comprehensive description of interviews with employers (who, why, what, where).

OUTCOME: (circle)	**TITLE REGISTERED:**
1= Approved	(Yes/No) NO
x2= Conditionally approved (candidate to make minor revisions to RP to the satisfaction of his/her supervisor)	Date registered:
3=. Conditionally approved (candidate to make major revisions RP to the satisfaction of his/her supervisor)	Date to be submitted
4a= Not approved: resubmit to chair, supervisor and critical reader	
4b=Not approved: Need to defend again	
4= Not approved (need to defend again or resubmit to the supervisor, chair of proposal defense and one other academic)	
5= Failed (registration terminated)	
ETHIC STATEMENT:	**RESEARCH SCHEDULE:**
Submitted (yes/no) NOs	Submitted (yes/no)
Attached (yes/no)	Attached (yes/no)
To be submitted (date):	To be submitted (date):
SIGNED BY CHAIRPERSON OF MASTERS/DOCTORAL DEFENCE COMMITTEE	

NOTE: Copies of this form must be submitted to

- Student Administration, which will officially inform the student of the outcome of the masters/doctoral proposal defense
- The Chair of the Faculty Ethics Committee
- The Co-ordinate of the Doctoral Programme of the Faculty
- The Supervisor of the student

HOD Signature:

Appendix 3: Clearance certificate

Mrs ORL Dangbegnon

Dear Mrs ORL Dangbegnon

REFERENCE: EDU006/21

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus **approved**, and you may start with your fieldwork. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
   - Change of investigator,
   - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
   - Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.
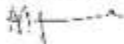
Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your

Clearance Certificate:
- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number EDU006/21 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

Appendix 4: Invitation to participate in the study

Dear Participant,

I hereby wish to invite you to participate in a research study on the issue of graduate unemployment and the possible impact of institutional mentorship on this crisis. My research topic is entitled: **"Higher Education and Job Creation in South Africa: Mentorship for Employability.** The purpose of this study is to investigate whether institutional mentorship received by graduates could have an impact on the employability of graduates and by default on the graduate unemployment rate.

I am a postgraduate student doing this study as a requirement to obtain my Ph.D.
I would like to assure you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. In addition, there are no known anticipated risks to participation. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept safely and reported only as a collective combined total.
This study has been approved by the University of Pretoria's Department of Education ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ doctoral defense committee and will be conducted according to accepted and applicable ethical guidelines and principles.
Please note that there will be no incentives for participating in this study. No direct benefit is expected, but the research findings could assist policymakers, Higher Education Institutions, and the labour market in producing graduates that are capable of effectively entering the working world and making a meaningful impact not only in their own lives but in society at large.

If you agree to participate in this research project, please answer the questions on the survey to the best of your ability. Please note that completing the survey will take no longer than 15 minutes.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

You may withdraw from the research project at any time without penalty. Under no circumstances will the identity of participants be made known to any parties/organizations that may be involved in the research process. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Should you have any queries regarding this request, please contact me at u11120968@▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Yours Sincerely,

Ophélie Dangbégnon

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Appendix 5: Letter to the Dean

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY ▮▮▮▮▮▮

I hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct research at the University ▮▮▮▮▮▮. My research project will involve ▮▮ Alumni from 2017-2019. My research topic is " Higher Education and Job Creation in South Africa: Mentorship for Employability.

This study will involve conducting an electronic survey. Owing to the University ▮▮▮▮▮▮ 93 percent employability rate and to the presence of multiple mentoring programmes each focusing on aspects ranging from acclimatisation to personal and socio-cultural development, the researcher intends to source her sample from said institution. Hence the sampling frame will be ▮▮s 2017-2019 Alumni database. Participants will answer questions on their experiences at ▮▮ and the impact thereof on their current and past employment. In addition, secondary data will be collected from reviewed and published articles, books, journals, and any other policy documents related to graduate unemployment and mentorship.

The objective of this study is to investigate whether institutional mentorship received by graduates could have an impact on their employability and by default on the graduate unemployment rate.

Participants will receive a consent letter advising that participation in this research study is completely voluntary, and that there are no known or anticipated risks to participation. More importantly, survey responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept in a safe place, and no one other than the researcher and her supervisor will know the answers to the questions asked. After completion of the research study, the data will be uploaded onto the university's repository. The findings will be published in a thesis, peer-reviewed journals, and possibly presented at conferences. Moreover, data gathered in this study may be used for secondary analysis in further research projects.

Please note that there will be no incentives for participating in this study. No direct benefit is expected, but it is my presumption that the research findings could assist both Higher Education Institutions and the labor market in nurturing and developing creative talent and produce graduates that are capable of effectively entering the working world and make a meaningful impact not only in their own lives, but in society at large.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to conduct this research.

Yours Sincerely,

Ophélie Dangbégnon

Dean's signature. *[signature]*   Date: 12 May 2021

Researcher's signature: *[signature]*   Date: 14/01/2021

Appendix 6: Survey questionnaire

Graduate Survey

This survey was designed by the Colombia State University (https://columbiastate.edu/docs/default-source/policies-procedures/survey-questions.pdf?sfvrsn=0) and has been adapted for this study. The aim of this study is to determine whether an institutional mentoring program could assist in developing graduates on personal/critical thinking, professional and entrepreneurial levels and how this type of mentorship could positively impact the graduate unemployment crisis. I would be grateful for you and your organisation to participate in this study, if possible. Participation is voluntary and not compulsory. Every participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain the reason for no longer wishing to participate. Therefore, you are free to decline to answer any question or questions that you are not willing to answer. There will be no negative consequences to the participants who wish to withdraw from the study or choose not to answer any questions in the study.

Graduate Outcomes

1. How satisfied were you with the overall educational experience you had at the ███████ ██████?
   a. Very Satisfied
   b. Satisfied
   c. Dissatisfied
   d. Very Dissatisfied

2. If you could start University again, would you enrol at the ███████?
   a. Definitely Yes
   b. Probably Yes
   c. Probably Not
   d. Definitely Not

3. Would you recommend the ███████ to others?
   a. Definitely Yes
   b. Probably Yes
   c. Probably Not
   d. Definitely Not

   e. Don't know enough about the current state of the university

4. How often do you use skills or knowledge learned at the ███████████████ in your daily work?
   - a. Often
   - b. Occasionally
   - c. Never

6. Are you employed in the field of your chosen degree/emphasis?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No

7. If not, why? (Multiple answers apply)
   - a. I could not find a job in my major field
   - b. I developed new career interests after leaving ████████████████
   - c. The jobs in my field did not pay well
   - d. The jobs in my field offered few opportunities for advancement
   - e. I am a full-time student
   - f. I am not presently employed
   - g. Other (please specify in box below)

8. Are you generally satisfied with your present career/academic situation?
   - a. Yes
   - b. No

9. If not, please briefly describe the reasons in the box below.

Graduate Engagement & Mentorship

Note: Mentorship programmes refer to initiatives, used in many organisations, to facilitate the acclimatation of individuals and to help them grow and develop by providing support at various levels (E.g., academics, career, sports, personal, social, entrepreneurial etc...) At ███████████████, examples of mentorship programmes are ████████████████, to name a few.

10. As an alumnus, I think mentorship programmes at university influence: (mark all that apply)
    a. Student motivation
    b. Prepare students and facilitate transition from study world to world of work
    c. Align Higher Education and world of work

    d. Other

11. Have you ever enrolled for any mentoring programme while at ████████████████?
    a.   Yes

b. No

12. Have you acquired any skills/experience during these mentoring programmes?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. N/A

13. Have these mentoring programmes had a positive influence on your personal life?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. N/A

14. How often do you use the skills, knowledge or tools learned during these mentoring programmes at the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ in your daily work?

    a. Often
    b. Occasionally
    c. Never

15. Would you say that the skills, knowledge, or tools learned during these mentoring programmes at the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ helped you to secure employment?
    a. Definitely Yes
    b. Probably Yes
    c. Probably Not
    d. Definitely Not

16. Would you say that the mentorship unrelated to academics received at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮ helped you to become a better employee/employer/entrepreneur?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. N/A

17. While at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, did you develop a relationship with one or more faculty members such that you could ask for a letter of recommendation?
    a. Yes
    b. No

18. To what extent did your experience at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ empower you professionally, emotionally, and entrepreneurially or contribute to your preparedness for work?

	Very Much	Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Writing Clearly/Effectively				
Solving Numerical Problems				

Speaking Clearly/Effectively				
Using Information read/heard to Perform New Skills				
Breaking Down Information into Basic Elements				
Assessing the Value of Information Critically				
Using Computer Technology				
Learning Effectively on Your Own				
Working Well with Others				

19. To what extent do you feel connected to ████████████████

     a. Very strongly
     b. Strongly
     c. Moderately
     d. Weakly
     e. Not at all

20. To what extent do you consider the following methods as effective ways to garner alumni support for mentorship programmes?

	Very Much	Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Open communication				
Goals and challenges				
Passion and inspiration				
Personal relationship				
Self-confidence				
Self-efficiency				
Mutual respect				

Trust				
Knowledge exchange				
Independence				
Collaboration				
Role modelling				

21. Which of the following activities appeal to you as an opportunity to stay connected to the University? (mark all that apply)

   a. E-Newsletter
   b. Alumni Website Updates
   c. Class Reunions
   d. Program/Major Reunions
   e. Regional Activities
   f. Annual Campus Event/Festival
   g. Other: _____

Demographics

22. Which faculty did you earn your ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ degree from? (if earning multiple degrees, please indicate primary degree only)

   a. Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
   b. Faculty of Education
   c. Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology
   d. Faculty of Health Sciences
   e. Faculty of Humanities

   f. Faculty of Law
   g. Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
   h. Faculty of Theology and Religion
   i. Faculty of Veterinary Science
   j. Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS)

23. After attending the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, did you get employment within a year?
   a. Yes
   b. No

24. Have you earned a bachelor's degree or higher?
   a. Yes
   b. No

25. For the most part, were you a full-time or part-time student at the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮?

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a. Full-Time
b. Part-Time

26. What is your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Prefer Not to Answer

27. What is your current age range?
    a. Under 25
    b. 25 to 30
    c. 31 to 45
    d. 46 to 60
    e. Over 60

28. What was your age when you graduated from the ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬?
    a. Under 25
    b. 25 to 30
    c. 31 to 45
    d. 46 to 60
    e. Over 60

29. What is your ethnicity/race?
    a. Black African
    b. Colored
    c. White
    d. Indian/Asian
    e. Other (Specify) _____

30. What is your current annual salary range?
    a. Under R200,000
    b. R200,000- R340,999
    c. R350,000-R490,999
    d. R500,000-R650,000
    e. R650,000 or more
    f. Prefer Not to Answer

31. With your overall experience, please add any other comments in the box below concerning the relevance of mentorship programmes at institution level and possible areas of improvement.

2022-11-30

Mrs ORL Dangbegnon

South Africa

Dear Mrs Dangbegnon

TITLE AND SUPERVISOR APPROVAL

I have pleasure in informing you that your approved title and supervisor for **PhD Education Man, Law and Policy** are as follows:

Title:

Higher education and job creation in South Africa: institutional mentorship for employability

SUPERVISOR: Dr KS Adeyemo

You are advised to acquaint yourself with Regulations in the publication 'General Regulations and information'.

Your registration as a student must be renewed annually before 28 February until you have complied with all the requirements for the degree. You will only be entitled to the guidance of your supervisor if annual proof of registration is submitted.

You are welcome to contact us at the abovementioned telephone number or email address if you have any enquiries.

Yours sincerely

for DEAN:
Faculty of Education
P06

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