EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: CASE OF THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY

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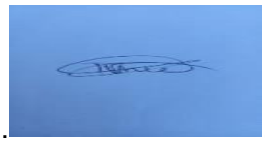
Co-supervisor: Prof M. Manjoro

February 2025

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DECLARATION

I, Tshamano Victor Netshiongolwe, hereby declare that this proposal for a Doctor of Philosophy in Rural Development (PhDRDV) submitted to the Institute for Rural Development at the University of Venda has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or another university. It is original in design and execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature …………**Date** ……24 February 2025…..

Tshamano Victor Netshiongolwe

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all people who didn't give up on me to finish my degree. And most especially to our Almighty lord our God.

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THESIS OUTPUTS

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Abstract

Internships have become a unique and innovative approach to help new graduates gain valuable experience for work-based practice. It enables interns to make connections in the fields aligned with chosen career paths and gives employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate the talent of prospective employees. The primacy of internship programmes is made apparent by lack of work experience and skills mismatch which has often been cited as one of the main causes of graduate unemployment globally. The South African government, like other countries, responded to this challenge by introducing an internship programme. However, its effectiveness in South Africa requires investigation. Therefore, this study assesses the effectiveness of the South African government internship programme as a strategy to improve graduate employability. This will be addressed through the following five specific aspects. These are the alignment of the graduate interns' basic qualification with assigned responsibilities, the mentorship management system put in place by host institutions, views and experiences of interns and mentors, challenges faced by graduate interns in relation to their career path and finally measures that may be enhanced to improve graduate interns' employability. The target population for the study constituted graduate interns who were currently serving in the internship programme at Thulamela Local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business studies sections). Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select research participants for collecting qualitative data in this group. Participants were randomly selected based on availability and willingness to participate in the study. The findings were thematically analysed using Atlas ti.8 computer package. The findings revealed that there was a flaw in the management of the internship programme in public institutions in South Africa. It was discovered that although in some research sites interns were properly placed, other institutions assigned interns responsibilities that overwhelmed them. This caused interns not to acquire the requisite skills that should have promoted their employability. It was also revealed that some institutions did not use the internship policy as a guide while mentoring graduate interns. This resulted in some mentors not assessing and giving interns feedback to know how they were performing. The findings also unveiled that most participants indicated that the government departments did not visit institutions to knowhow the internship programme was managed. As a result, the management system of mentoring graduate interns

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varied from institution to institution. In view of the above attributes, a further researches *on the causes of the challenges experienced by graduate interns, Implementation of the internship policy in the public institutions and the role of monitoring in the internship programme within the public institutions are recommended.*

Keywords: Employability; Graduates; Intern; Internship Programme, Mentor; Skills-mismatch.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BANKSETA	- Bank Sector Education and Training Authority
CEO	- Chief Executive Officers
CIPD	- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
DPSA	- Department of Public Service Administration
HCT	- Human Capital Theory
HEIs	- Higher Education Institutions
HWSETA	- Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
ILO	- International Labour Organisation
ISE	- Institute of Student Employers
KSAVs	- Knowledge Skills Abilities Attitudes and Values
MTA	- Manpower Training Act
NACE	- National Association of Colleges and Employers
NFVF	- National Film and Video Foundation
NYDA	- National Youth Development Agency
PSC	- Public Service Commission
QLFS	- Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SAQA	- South African Qualification Authority
SAsSETA	- Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority
SPSS	-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
StatsSA	- Statistics South Africa
TVET	- Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNIVEN	- University of Venda
WBL	- Work based learning
WIL	- Work Integrated Learning

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The changing world of work and technological advancements requires highly skilled individuals to tackle new emerging challenges (Noe *et al.,* 2017). Globally, employers are increasingly concerned with inadequately skilled graduates from higher education institutions (Liu *et al.*, 2016). Thus, governments and other employers across the globe have been forced to embrace internship programmes as a mechanism to prepare new graduates for recruitment in the job market. Furthermore, it is presumed to be a useful tool for improving graduate employability through enhanced skills development, on-the-job training, alignment of theory to practice, and the work experience employers require (Kinash *et al.,* 2015; Wohlin, 2015; Jogan, 2019). In many countries, internships are directly linked to corporate recruitment (Tan *et al.,* 2021). For example, in the United States, more than 70% of companies employ student interns as full-time employees, and about half of interns are promoted to full-time employees. Internships in the United Kingdom have been spreading rapidly since 2010, and participation in an internship program is a precondition for job recruitment in many companies (Tan *et al.,* 2021). However, young graduates continue to suffer from unemployment or underemployed even among those who completed the internship programme globally. Accordingly, it is not clear whether the blame should be placed on the internship programme or the implementation process.

Higher learning institutions and other training organisations offer opportunities to graduates to acquire job-related skills. One of the primary goals or mandate for these institutions is to ensure the employability of trainees at the end of the course (Kinash *et al.,* 2015). According to Clarke (2017), universities have applied competence-based education and included internships in study programmes to enhance students' work-related learning as well as their employment opportunities. However, graduates frequently find it difficult to match the requirements and needs of the job market (Cairo *et al.,* 2016). Globally, employers are increasingly becoming concerned with inadequately skilled graduates from higher education institutions (Liu *et al.*, 2016). That, to some extent, has perpetuated the skills mismatch challenge in the labour market (McGuinnes *et al.,* 2017). According to Prianto *et al.* (2021), the expectation for vocational high schools to produce graduates with good skills related to the demands of the workplace still faces a big challenge. Sasmito *et al.* (2015) support that assertion by stating that work experience can only be obtained if students are involved intensively in the internship program or directly involved in business or industry activities.

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Rothwell *et al.* (2017) defined employability as the ability to travel self-sufficiently to sustainable jobs within the job market to achieve capacity. The authors added that employability relies on the individual's knowledge, skills, and behaviour, on how they use and present these resources to the employers, and on the context in which individuals seek to work. To be competent and forceful in the job market, students should attain a set of soft skills for increasing employability skills (Atiqur, 2021). A commonly voiced concern in the literature is that higher education institutions should support both employment outcomes and employability of the graduates (Kinash *et al.,* 2015). It is believed that higher education syllabi, resources and services are not optimally well-suited to support graduate employability and employment outcomes; as such, universities should be made accountable for their students' employability development (Matherly *et al.,* 2019; Behle, 2020). One of the challenges was that students might not have given much thought to the learning potential of these experiences nor to the nature of their professional identity, career development and management and how to articulate what they could offer in job interviews or in the workplace itself (Oguro *et al.,* 2020). Internship denotes a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a real-life setting (Hora *et al.,* 2017). Internships give individuals the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in the fields they are considering for career paths and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent (National Association of Colleges and Employers - NACE, 2011). Bol *et al.* (2019) argued that the school-to-work transition depends not only on the graduates' skills they possess but also on the linkage strength of educational pathways between educational qualifications and occupations.

As a work-based learning that offers hands-on experiences in authentic, real-world contexts to complement academic program and classroom teaching acquired skills, internship programmes are commonly used as intervention measures employed to assist graduates to acquire market-related skills. Activities such as volunteering, internships, leadership programs, mentorship, and international study offer life-experience learning opportunities that provide the potential to facilitate employability development (Nghia, 2017). The programme is expected to afford graduates an opportunity to get real-world job experience, establish professional networks and translate theory into practice (Anjum, 2020). In addition, it is expected to provide students with formal, supportive, practical opportunities in the workplace (Crowell, 2016; Anjum, 2020). Those formal experiences develop graduates' technical skill-based capacities and graduate attributes such as career decision-making (Jackson *et al.,* 2019). However, many graduates fail to be absorbed in the labour market a long time after the programme is completed.

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The Institute of Student Employers – ISE (2018) reported employers in the Asia-Pacific region as least satisfied, identifying creativity skills as an area in which university preparation is potentially falling short. Similarly, employers in Eastern Europe are dissatisfied with problem solving skills, which seem to be a significant area of deficiency in students' training. Resilience in the workplace, dealing with conflict, and communication skills all receive a low satisfaction rating among employers in Western Europe (ISE, 2018). Yet, various countries have implemented internship programmes that reveal a critical measure of success, where employers use the graduate knowledge, skills and values to achieve institutional goals (Abas *et al.,* 2016), ultimately enhancing the graduate's employability. Hora *et al*. (2017) established that internships are central to addressing the graduate skills challenge such that newly trained workers would fill open positions, boost local economies, and essentially fix the many ailments facing local labour markets. In Japan, in response to employment issues at universities and companies, new policies have been introduced that promote the expansion and widespread acceptance of internships. Recently, the number of unemployed graduates has been increasing, thus causing educational institutions to turn their attention to internships to identify solutions and prevent the employment rate from falling below capacity (Tan *et al.,* 2021). In the initiation stage, the biggest obstacle was lack of industrial connections with the industries in Penang, Malaysia. The first step was to actively establish collaboration with industries (multinational firms, overseas Japanese branches and local companies) in Penang to participate in this internship program and host student interns. Industrial collaboration partnership with an established local university was also leveraged. Introduction to companies with established internship collaboration with a local university helps in the rapport building and understanding of the internship program (Tan *et al.,* 2021).

The situation in Africa reveals a different scenario where employers across the region identify inadequately skilled workforces as a major constraint to their businesses. Various ministries in Egypt conducted a survey with the cooperation of the International Labour Organisation-ILO (2015) to trace vocational school graduates' experience in entering the labour market and to gauge their employers' satisfaction. The results showed that only 17 per cent of the employers had found the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates able to meet expectations, signalling the existence of a mismatch between the skills of graduates and the demands of the labour market. Similarly, Bukaliya (2012) conducted a study in Zimbabwe and discovered that the poor relationship between the interns and some of the supervisors affected the acquisition of the interns' expected employability skills negatively. About 41% of all firms in Tanzania, 30% in Kenya, 9% in South Africa and 6% in Nigeria had indicated that graduates were not adequately equipped to deal with real-world business

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problems (Samans *et al.,* 2017). That pattern was likely to get worse in the future, which had already significantly impacted the employability potential of graduates negatively.

South Africa, like other countries across the globe, is facing escalating youth unemployment and employability challenges. Out of the 29% unemployment rate nationally, 72% of the unemployed are the youth. In the first quarter of 2019, the majority (85, 7%) of the young unemployed graduates had been new entrants into the labour market (StatsSÁ, 2019). The South Africa Higher Education Management Information System confirmed that fact because universities produce more than 190 000 graduates annually (Steynvaart, 2020), but the formal market only absorbs an estimated 41 000 graduates (StatsSA, 2019). Based on the figures, only a fraction of new graduates was supposed to enter the labour market. Although all unemployed youth are not graduates, a significant number of unemployed youth are graduates who are expected to join the workforce every year (Oluwajodu *et al.,* 2015; StatsSA, 2019). That calls for an ecosystem of quality jobs and future skills to match new graduate employment requirements to fully leverage the imperative demographics.

The government of South Africa approved the Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP) in 2002 to resolve the acute shortage of qualified and skilled workers in the public service (Motene, 2017). The PSIP replaced the apartheid graduate students training based on the Apprenticeship Act, No.37 of 1944 and the Manpower Training Act (MTA), 56 of 1981 (Republic of South Africa, 2016). The Internship Policy of 2012 has been put in place to focus on job hunting skills, marketing skills, preparation of curriculum vitae and presentations at interviews. However, the skills have been generic and have proved inadequate and did not address the on-the-job skills required to give graduates the required job experience. Unfortunately, graduate interns who completed their internship programme without the requisite skills set and experience often failed to secure employment (National Youth Development Agency – NYDA (2014). It is no wonder that graduate interns often complain about the short duration of the programmes citing those 12 months provided by the policy is insufficient to attain adequate skills and work experience considered by employers when recruiting.

According to Brunello *et al.* (2021), individuals who do not have the right skills have limited employability prospects and access to quality jobs. That concurred with the NYDA (2014) that low absorption rates in the job market reflected the continuing mismatch between the supply from tertiary institutions and the skills demands of the workplace in the economy. Brunello *et al*. (2021) further reported that genuine skills constraints could negatively affect employability and hamper the ability to innovate and adopt technological developments. According to Anjum (2020), internships were a bridge to link theory and practice by taking part in supervised and

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scheduled work. Those internship programs not only improve students' personal skills but also polish their professional growth and experience (Munishi, 2016; Anjum, 2020). Despite graduates participating in the programme, most of them remained unemployed for a long time after completing their internship programme, while others engaged in employment opportunities that did not match their qualifications (ILO, 2015). On that basis, this study assesses the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to improve graduate employability with a view to suggest measures that could be adopted to enhance the employability of the graduate interns.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Although the government of South Africa introduced the Public Service Internship Programme back in 2002 as a useful strategy to improve graduate employability, graduate interns complete the internship programme and still fail to get employed (Mc Kenzie *et al.,* 2016; Hwang, 2017; Motene, 2017). After completing the internship programme and failing to find employment, graduates are forced to take job opportunities which do not match their qualifications (Mohd *et al.,* 2020), a situation most employers rarely accepted to prevent any future risks. The mismatch between graduates' aspirations, employment requirements and the opportunities available has caused unemployment and underemployment among graduates, resulting in many graduates failing to get absorbed into the workforce (ILO, 2015; Mohd *et al.,* 2020). It has also been established that many interns work without mentors and were often involved in administrative duties which might not be relevant to the interns' career path (O'Higgins, 2018). The growing pervasiveness of internships has not yet been accompanied by systematic research on the extent to which conditions of internships provide an effective bridge to long-term stable employment (O'Higgins, 2018). Thus, based on foregoing arguments, this study was carried out to establish the effectiveness of the internship programme being implemented by the government of South Africa as a strategy to improve graduates' employability.

1.3 Justification/Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study was to carry out an analysis of the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to improve the employability of graduates in South Africa. The study would help to determine the extent to which the internship programme has met its objectives as indicated in the national policy. It would help the host institutions to set up effective interns' management systems with the potential to prepare new graduates for future employment opportunities that match their qualifications and ultimate absorption in the labour market. Through the study, the effectiveness of the graduate intern mentor's role in increasing the graduate's readiness for appropriate job markets would be established and remedial actions

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suggested. The challenges faced during the internship programme implementation, which led to graduates failing to be appropriately absorbed in the labour market would be interrogated with a view to make recommendations for improved implementation of future internship programmes. The findings of the study might help interns to establish ways of ensuring that they attain the skill sets and experiences required by employers. The findings might also benefit both the government and the employers in addressing the skills mismatch and failure of graduates to find employment for a long period after the internship programme is completed. It might also help to review policies and improve existing internship programmes to make them more effective in meeting their mandates and, ultimately, the expectations of the job market.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate intern's employability within Thulamela Local Municipality, South Africa. The following specific research objectives and associated research questions addressed the main objective.

Specific Objectives

1) To examine assigned graduate interns' responsibilities in relation to their basic qualifications,
2) To evaluate the management system put in place for mentoring the graduate interns at the institutional level,
3) To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns and mentors on the internship programme in relation to the interns' career path,
4) To examine the challenges encountered by interns during implementation of the graduate internship programme; and
5) To suggest measures that could be espoused to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate employability.

1.5 Research Questions

1) What are the graduate interns' assigned responsibilities in relation to their basic qualifications?
2) What is the mentor's management system put in place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institution?
3) What are the graduate interns' views and experiences on the internship programme in relation to their career path?
4) What challenges are encountered by interns during the implementation of the graduate internship programme?

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5) Which measures could be adopted to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme to improve graduate employability?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the Human Capital Theory (Schulz's, 1961). The Human Capital Theory (HCT) was developed further by Becker in 1964. The Human Capital Theory suggests that investing in people through education necessitates appropriate skills development and gaining of relevant knowledge to facilitate productivity in the individual's domain. That proposition is supported by Becker (1994), who added that the development of human knowledge and skills through education would positively contribute to increased individual incomes and standards of living from higher earnings. The human capital theory was suitable for this study because it examined the match between an individual's qualifications and the responsibilities contained in the job profile (Kang'ethe *et al.,* 2016). It was the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills, creativity and attitudes towards work that determined an individual's competitiveness in the labour market. Such competencies were also critical in solving the national socio-economic development needs. In this respect, the internship programme enabled individuals to gain first-hand exposure or on-the-job training in the world of work. It also allowed interns to harness the skills, knowledge, and theoretical practice they would have learnt from the institution of higher learning. An internship programme was viewed as an opportunity to integrate theoretical knowledge of strategies and methods and instructional aides to try out in real-life situations (Wohlin, 2015; Jogan, 2019). Ostensibly, both the Human Capital Theory and the internship programme emphasized the issue of skills acquisition, first-hand exposure or on-the-job training and experience, which made the Human Capital Theory the most crucial anchor to this study.

1.7 Operational, Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Internship: An internship is an official program offered by organisations to help train and provide work experience to students and recent graduates (Capital placement, 2021). It is a supervised learning experience where new graduates apply prior knowledge to develop new skills in a professional setting. In this study, an internship will be referred to as a temporary workplace for graduates with the purpose of increasing employability and exposure to future labour market.

Internship in the public service is a planned, structured, and managed programme that provides work experience for a specific period varying from three to twelve months. A designated mentor may support an intern in the public service. In South Africa internship is a practical programme to assist with the continuous development of people for future

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appointment in the labour market. It is directed at young people who are completing their studies or who have completed their studies and are unemployed (DPSA, 2006).

Intern: According to DPSA (2006) two categories of interns are identified, namely; a graduate intern and a student intern. A graduate intern is a person who has completed a qualification but has been unemployed and needs workplace exposure to enhance chances of future employment. A student intern is someone who is enrolled at a tertiary education institution for a SAQA registered qualification and is required to obtain practical experience as part of their study programme.

Internship programme: Internship program means a "partnership between students, institutions of higher education, and employers that formally integrates students' academic study with work or community service experience" through internships of specified and definite duration, and that evaluates each student's performance in the internship position from the perspective of both the institution of higher education and the internship employer (Law Insider Dictionary, 2023).

Mentor: Haran *et al.* (2019) define a mentor as someone in the workplace offering career guidance and psychosocial support to mentees. With their help and input, mentors enable mentees to quickly familiarize themselves with norms, strategies, and work approaches in their new settings. They can act as role models and confidants (Mitchell *et al.,* 2015; Parent and Olivier, 2015; Haran *et al.,* 2019), providing suggestions on how to deal with issues in the workplace (Inkson *et al.,* 2015*).* In this study, a mentor refers to an individual endowed with expert knowledge in a specific domain and who imparts such skills to new or novice members in an organisation.

Employability: depends on the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and values (KSAVs) which an individual possesses, the way they utilise them at the workplace, and the way they present themselves to employers (Baking *et al.,* 2015). In this study, employability will refer to being able to possess qualification knowledge coupled with hands–on – skills demanded by the labour market.

Skills mismatch: Skills mismatch at a micro level occurs when workers have a level of skills different from what is required for their jobs (Brunello *et al.* 2021). For this study, skills mismatch would mean a discrepancy in the knowledge the graduate has acquired from the college or university and the requirements of the advertised post.

Graduate: refers to anyone who has completed some form of tertiary education (Altberker *et al.,* 2013). In this study, a graduate is any youth who has completed a university degree or college diploma but is not yet employed.

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1.8 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 1 outlined the background of the study, the statement of the research problem, the justification of the study, research objectives and questions, the theoretical framework of the study and operational definitions of key terms and concepts. **Chapter 2** presented the review of relevant literature on the assessment of the effectiveness of internship programme with the main emphasis on the legislative pronouncement regarding internships, placement of interns in the internship programme, mentorship, skills development, absorption of graduates in the job market and finally a summary of literature review. **Chapter 3** was centred on the methodology and the research design. It clearly showed the description of the study area, research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis, ethical consideration and the expected outcome. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 presented the research findings. Chapter 4 focused on assessing the assigned responsibilities with the graduate intern's basic qualifications. Chapter 5 focused on the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institutional level. Chapter 6 presented the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme and the host agency concerning intern's career path. Chapter 7 focused on the challenges encountered by the intern, mentor and hosting institution during the implementation of the graduate internship programme, and Chapter 8 concluded with the synthesis of the research findings. The references used throughout the thesis are listed at the end of each chapter. Finally, appendices will follow providing supplementing information to the main thesis. This will include ethical clearance certificate, interview questionnaires, participants' letters of information and consent, letters of request to conduct research at Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital and Vhembe TVET College (Makwarela Campus) and lastly supplemental material such as images, graphs and tables.

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CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature for the study. In this chapter, literature on the internship programme as a strategy to improve graduates' employability was reviewed. A review of the internship as a concept and what necessitated its introduction by various countries was also provided. The global graduate employability, skills and labour market mismatch were reviewed. Additionally, the management systems of the intern mentors, experiences and views of interns, the challenges faced in the implementation and measures undertaken to address the challenges were reviewed. Finally, a summary of the literature review was provided at the end of the chapter.

2.2 The Concept of Internship

Scholars define the term internship in various ways. Internships provide students with the opportunity to apply the skills that they learnt in classroom settings in the world of work (Hassan, 2018). Internships serve as recruitment avenues where post-secondary or tertiary institutions provide professional industries access to graduates with a mixture of high quality theoretical and practical skills. An internship is a student's learning experience in a real-life working environment relevant to his/her major (Pan *et al.,* 2018). According to Kapareliotis *et al.* (2019), internship programs could reinforce technical competencies, improve analytical skills and most importantly, foster an awareness of the constant need for adaptability and creativity in a changing world. Schnoes *et al.* (2018) were also of the view that through mentors and colleagues, students learn about the organizational structure, nature of the work, and interpersonal environment. The above reporters also added that temporary workplace environments where interns were placed provide them with activities that were educationally enriching.

The internship programmes focus on personal career development and could be implemented over diverse time frames such as a semester or a year-long programme. The internship programmes enable graduates to acquire skills which could not be learned in the classroom environment while employers obtain access to low-cost labour and reduced recruitment costs (Cramer *et al.,* 2021). That helps interns to develop interpersonal skills, team-working skills, professionalism and customer management experience. Communication skills, confidence and self-efficacy are also improved. It was on that basis that Brunello *(*2021) claimed that graduates with internship experience were more likely to find jobs compared to those devoid of such

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experience. Internship programme related to a purposeful and structured temporary workplace practice involving a set of learning experiences that led to the acquisition of labour market competencies (Cramer *et al.,* 2021). Such programmes might be discipline-based, professional, career-focused, trans-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary. In South Africa, there are two types of internships programmes, these include the traditional graduate internships and student internships. They linked to professional development bodies or councils and the Department of Public Works South Africa. Graduate intern is a person who has completed a qualification but has been unemployed and needs workplace exposure to enhance chances of future employment. A student intern is a person who is enrolled in a tertiary institution for a SAQA registered qualification and is required to obtain practical experience as part of their study programme (DPSA, 2006). The focus of this study was on graduate internship programme that is linked to professional development of graduates.

As a key performance objective of the capacity development pillar of the Human Resource Development strategic framework for Public Service Development, the internship programme is described as a structured workplace experience programme which is negotiated between the intern and the supervisor who is a delegated authority by the department (DPSA, 2016) with ability to provide appropriate and relevant work experience that is commensurable with the intern's qualification (DPSA, 2006). Mentors are also expected to support the interns to nurture an environment that increases the realisation of future careers (Waxman, 2018). Nunley *et al.* (2016) provided evidence of a positive effect of graduate internship experience on increasing employment prospects that graduates who went through the internship experienced and increased the probability of being interviewed for a job with more positive returns and higher academic ability. O'Higgin *et al.* (2018) concurred with Nunley *et al.* (2016)'s views that internships under certain conditions could be associated with better post-internship labour market outcomes.

2.3 The State of Graduate Employment

The International Labour organization (ILO - 2019) reported that the world's working population of 5.7 billion is made up of women and men aged 15 years and above. However, only 3.3 billion people (58.4%) worldwide are employed. Both genders made up the global workforce, which stood at around 3.5 billion in 2018, with a share of 61.4% of the workforce. The remaining 2.2 billion people (38.6%) of working age were out of the workforce, including those in education. Those included the millions of young people around the world who were unemployed or underemployed at the same time some employers had available jobs that were not occupied (Deloitte, 2018). The

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challenge was partially rooted in the growing mismatch between youths' skills and employer need (Deloitte, 2018). Despite the global youth population increasing from 1 billion to 1.3 billion between 1999 and 2019, the number of young people who could potentially engage in the labour force decreased from 568 million to 497 million. In addition, the labour force participation rate of young people aged between 15–24 years continues to decline. Significantly, young people were three times as likely as adults 25 years and older to be unemployed. Although that was partly because their limited work experience worked against them when applying for entry-level jobs, there were also major structural barriers preventing them from entering the labour market (ILO, 2020). The global youth unemployment rate was projected to rise by 0.1% in 2020 and a further 0.1% in 2021. The United States Bureau of Labour Statistics recorded an unemployment rate of 3.8% before the COVID-19 pandemic, and by September 2020, the unemployment rate had increased to 7.9%. Although China was heavily affected by the COVID 19 pandemic, its unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2021 remained unchanged at 5 %. In Australia, the unemployment rate for November 2021 decreased to 4.6%. Unemployed people decreased by 69, 400 to 636, 700 which is 86, 600 lower than March 2020. The youth unemployment rate decreased by 2.2 points to 10.9% in November 2021 which was 0.6 points lower than in March 2020 (Labour Force Australia, 2021).

Youth unemployment in Northern Africa and the Arab States remained very high, at around 2.2 and 1.7 times the global rate, respectively. In the two sub-regions, youth unemployment rates have been considerably higher than those in the rest of the world since 1991, suggesting that structural barriers were preventing young people from engaging in the labour market (ILO, 2015). Despite having the lowest unemployment probability across all sub-regions, young people in sub-Saharan Africa and Northern America faced an unemployment rate of almost 9% in 2019 (ILO, 2015). In Egypt, the youth unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2021 was 7.4 %, down from 7.7% in the same period in 2020 but about 7.2 % in the previous quarter due to the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many countries in the African continent experienced the highest level of unemployment in 2021 mainly due to the COVID 19 challenge. These include Burkina Faso (77.00%), Syria (50.00%), Senegal (48.00%), Haiti (40.60%), Kenya (40.00%), Djibouti (40.00%), Republic of The Congo (36.00%), Marshall Islands (36.00%), Namibia (34.00%), Kiribati (30.60%) and South Africa (34.4%) among others.

The Cambodia's unemployment rate was the lowest compared to the rest of the world (Oem, 2013). The country's official unemployment rate decreased to 0.20 % in 2011 and recorded an

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average unemployment rate of 1.4% Africa Development Bank (ADB, 2023). The reason for the low number of unemployed youth was that over 80% were employed in the informal sector (ILO, 2015). Wages in the informal sector were often unregistered, unregulated and lowly paid (ILO, 2015). A typical example was agricultural or household-based work and small-scale industrial and handicraft enterprises. As one of the world's countries with the youngest population of 32% under the age of 15, Cambodia's youth employment has become an urgent priority. The number of people entering the labour market every year was 300,000-400,000 (Oem, 2013). The reason for the high number of youth employment in Cambodia was because the Learning Center graduation certificate was officially recognized by the government as of 2019 (Oem, 2013). Even though the salaries might be very low, there were some young people involved in the labour force. On the contrary, many countries in Africa depended on the government to create employment (Business Vision, 2020). For instance, graduates in South Africa spent years with degrees and diplomas without finding employment because they were trained to work for the government or private sectors and not to create jobs themselves (Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS, 2021). Consequently, the internship Programme had been introduced to solve the problem of skills-mismatch and labour market entry experience. However, the unemployment challenge for young graduates continued in the African continent. Thus, there is a need for systematic research to establish the effectiveness of the internship programme in meeting its intended objective.

2.4 The State of Internship Programmes Implementation

Rose (2020) maintained that globally internships were utilized to enhance the university learning experience and improve graduate employment. An appropriately planned, initiated and managed internship programme could play a critical role in preparing and increasing opportunities for graduate interns to be absorbed into the labour market (Newman *et al.,* 2016; Wu, 2017). That enabled graduate participating interns to apply knowledge and skills learned in their specific profession in classrooms (Teichler, 2017). The internship was described as an experience where the student was trained to become a professional, i.e. to develop skills and technical expertise and be socialized into the professional community (Ripamonti, 2018). In a tight graduate labour market, graduates recognise the importance of skills and work experience as a way of differentiating themselves from the large pool of applicants (Andrewartha *et al.,* 2017). In addition, many graduates believed the combination of qualification and relevant work experience enhanced the chance of success in the labour market. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) was also widely considered as an important way of enhancing employability while studying (Khampirat *et al*., 2016;

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Nagle *et al.,* 2018). Acquiring relevant work experience while at university was considered imperative. So, that was in line with the main objectives of the internship programme which emphasised skills and experience as a priority for enhanced employability.

Internships originated in the early 1900s (Ismail, 2018) in America. Those were work-based experiences modelled along specific jobs, occupations, positions and professions, tied to the curriculum and career-oriented activities of practical application (ILO, 2020). Multiple concepts were associated with that phenomenon, including apprenticeship, experiential learning and education, and individualised training. Ismail (2018) recorded that in its initial application, individuals had been released from institutions of learning for days, months or a year for practical work on a part-time basis in line with the objectives of the internship programme and the work environment.

As one of the leaders in internships, the United Kingdom traced it back to apprenticeships conducted in guilds or schools in medieval England. The tradition has continued to offer internship schemes both to university students and graduates (Times Higher Education, 2014). Work placements for students had been, however, optional but could be neatly built into a degree programme. On the contrary, the internships for graduates were provided after the completion of the degree programme as temporary work opportunities offered for a period of four to twelve weeks to young graduates during the summer months. Passaretta *et al.* (2015) examined the relationship between work experience during higher education and post-graduation occupational returns regarding employability, wages and skills mismatch in a cross-national perspective covering four European countries, Germany, Norway, Italy and Spain. In the Southern European countries, they found strong evidence that any kind of work experience during higher education increased future employment probabilities of four to five years after graduation. In contrast, only long-term work experience had no positive effect on post-graduation wages and job-skill mismatch.

Another recent study by Cerulli-Harms (2017) examined the impact of post-graduate internships on early labour market performance. The results revealed that internships had significant detrimental effects on the probability of finding employment one year after graduation, on post-internship earnings, and on work satisfaction. However, the negative effects vanished within five years. Research shows that prospective employers badly perceived internships due to asymmetric information and negative signalling (Cerulli-Harms, 2017). Employers assumed that post-graduate interns could not find jobs after graduation, accepting an internship as a substitute for further job search. The author concluded that short-term mandatory internships during higher education

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studies could be more beneficial than post-graduate internships (ILO, 2018). On the contrary, Cerulli-Harms (2017) asserted that employers assume that post-graduate interns have been unable to find jobs after graduation, whereas short-term mandatory internships during higher education could be more beneficial than post-graduate internships. This argument is supported by Passaretta *et al. (*2015) who found strong evidence that any kind of work experience during higher education increased future employment as compared to post-graduate internships. On examining the effectiveness of the internship programmes in various countries, ILO (2018) found that not all internships enhanced young people's subsequent employment prospects. On average, the effect of internships on the medium-term integration of young people into work appeared to be limited.

Like other continents, internships were gaining traction in the African continent mainly as a bridging gap between the classroom and the competitive labour market. In Ghana, polytechnics were designed to equip students with competencies that made them readily employable or allowed them to set up their businesses (Akomaning, 2019). The report revealed that government departments such as the Department of Hotel Catering and Institution Management engaged teachers in collaborative curriculum design to improve internship practices. The intention was mainly to allow interns to match their conventional academic learning with the experience of serving in the labour market (Akomaning, 2019). Once recruited, interns were attached to mentors who were professional practitioners within the organisation to work and support them in a collegial environment (Fleming *et al.,* 2012).

Internships in Kenya were designed to assist unemployed young graduates to attain skills, attitudes and competencies required in the workplace after completing their qualifications at colleges, universities and technical colleges. The implementation of internships was underpinned by various legal frameworks and instruments. They included the (ILO) Conventions, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Employment Act of 2007 and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act, of 2013, among others. The criteria for placement into the programme included attaining a certificate, diploma or degree from a reputable institution.

In keeping with the Kenyan Public Service Commission (2016), the body responsible for recruitment into the labour market, the inception of internships had been necessitated by a lack of vocational and entrepreneurial skills among new graduates. Consequently, various training institutions have been established to enable young graduates to acquire practical experience and

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enhance their potential for employment. Added to this, the Public Service Internship Policy established instruments to manage an effective and efficient internship programme to clog the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical professional delivery. In this respect, Garwe, (2013) asserted that public service policy was the main thrust to identify graduates with relevant qualifications to gain practical work experience and improve their competitiveness in the job market. Notwithstanding, implementation of the internships in the country faced challenges that included limited resources (Garwe, 2013). Additionally, interns were often overwhelmed by allocated responsibilities and duties that made it difficult to fully master key competencies related to their expertise post-on-the-job training engagement (Muthaura *et al.,* 2013). Despite the usefulness of the internships to the young graduates, those challenges were a stumbling block to the young graduates aspiring to join the labour market. The Government of South Africa enacted Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 to create a framework for the growth of skills, developed employees at work and unemployed graduates between 18-35 years. The main purpose of the Act was to ensure the skills in the public institutions were developed and improved. It was also expected to encourage public institutions as the employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment and an opportunity for new graduates to acquire skills and experience to enter the job market. The government also introduced the Public Service Internship Programme (PSIP) in 2002.

2.5 Challenges Faced During Implementation of the Internship Programme

According to Kraak *et al.* (2013), and supported by Singye (2020), the job market worldwide has become competitive, and employers expect graduates seeking employment to be competent and have some level of skills. However, despite the well-crafted internship policies to help students develop requisite skills and competencies, many graduates remained unemployable. Arguably, employers view that graduates qualified from higher education institutions lacked the skills and competencies required in the labour market (Institute of Student Employers (ISE, 2021). In many ways, the skills system mirrored the education system in prioritising the 'paper chase' for qualifications (Tan, 2016). Part of the reason for such allegation was the incentive systems that rewarded qualification more than proven competence (Hossain *et al*. 2018). Employers required people who were qualified and competent implying that the education system found ways to ensure that qualified people also had experience and proof of competence (Hwang, 2017; Olukayode, 2017). Some interns suffer due to a lack of mentorship or being mentored by disinterested mentors, a lack of mentors involving interns in the actual work and a lack of support

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from administrators (Birhan *et al*. 2021). Other students faced challenges relating to a lack of knowledge of the company's operating policies, products sold, and the language used to communicate with clients (Wu, 2017).

During the COVID-19 pandemic period, remote internship was introduced which proved challenging as it was associated with mastering communication skills and developing professionalism due to the virtual (internet-based) delivery mode (*Linkov et al., 2021*), which the interns were not conversant with before joining the programme. Remote internships or working online turned out to be the best way to build professional skills including learning to communicate well online, saving cost by working from home, flexible working hours, gaining knowledge of digital tools and programmes, and opportunity to work independently. The challenge with remote internship was that not all interns were able to access computers and networks. Other interns lacked technology know-how. As much as remote internship helped interns, it might not be an option to solve the challenges experienced in the management of the internship programme. Other graduate interns after going through the internship programme remained unemployed for a long time (NYDA, 2014). The NYDA (2014) also alluded to unfortunate experiences where some mentors only exposed interns to administrative activities such as signing their monthly attendance registers and quarterly reports. Although certain people have experience and practised at their place of employment for a long time, Nkomo *et al.* (2015) and Nichols (2016) asserted that such a period might not necessarily guarantee that any senior employee could automatically become a leader or a mentor. Bama (2013) noted a lack of career development plans and poor relationships between some interns and their managers as a major challenge to successfully implementing the internship programme. In some cases, the host organisations lacked resources, others gave interns many responsibilities that overwhelmed interns to master especially those that enhance their expertise resulting in skills mismatch. In some institutions, interns worked without clearly assigned mentors, resulting in interns working with the entire department or organisation which made it difficult to benefit from on-the-job training. Those challenges gave the impression that the execution of the internship programmes seemed to have a flawed planning and implementation process.

2.6 Experiences and Views of Interns on the Internship Programme

One of the key tenets of the internship programme was to provide exposure to the world of work. It was on this basis that Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2013) stated that work practice was one of the

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experiences that distinguished professional and non-professional practitioners. Internships offer undeniable benefits (Cramer *et al.,* 2021). They allowed students to evaluate host companies as future employment prospects, and vice versa. In a broader sense, internships could also allow students to identify if a job role or industry sector represented a strong fit for their career needs (Cramer *et al.,* 2021). Karunaratne *et al.* (2019) reported that through the internship programme, students were given an opportunity to practice. They further reported that since it seemed that industry preferred to absorb graduates with training experience, internship programmes helped the students secure their sooner employability. Researchers such as Marsono *et al.* (2017; Hardie *et al*. (2018) and Ozek (2018) confirmed that individuals who were mentored performed better and were promoted rapidly because they had learned and gained knowledge from their mentors. Mentoring helped to share working experiences and facilitated students learning (Birhan *et al.,* 2021). Additionally, it enabled them to become well anchored in the theories, beliefs, expertise and attitudes which were desired by the industry (Esia-Donkoh *et al.,* 2015). In contrast, some interns complained that their mentors gave them far too much work than they were required to manage (Dwamena, 2010). The interns' discontent might emanate from a skewed relationship between the interns and their mentors or supervisors (Callahan *et al.,* 2018).

Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2013) claimed that mentoring relationships could become dysfunctional during the internship period when they were characterised by resentment, deception, overdependence, and harassment. Putting in place a clear outline of tasks, roles and guidelines had the potential to offset or defuse such tensions and create a more cordial working environment. Zerihun (2019) also studied the challenges facing the internship program. The researcher reported that inadequate guidance, support, funds, and lack of enough time were the major challenges of the internship program. Likewise, Sisay *et al.* (2018) studied the impact of internship programs on engineering and technology education. The researcher found that lack of strict placement procedures, limitations of academic mentorship, and poor supervising practices in the industry were the major challenges of the internship mentoring program. The same fear had been confirmed by Esia-Donkoh *et al.* (2015) stating that interns experience inadequate services and equipment support needed to prepare them for future employment opportunities. Additionally, the shortage of training resources renders some institutions unfit to host the internship programme. As Esia-Donkoh *et al. (*2015) further revealed, both supervisors and interns acknowledged the shortage of mentors to teach and guide the growth and development of interns.

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2.7 The Skills Mismatch in the Internship programme

Skill mismatch (micro) instead, was typically measured by comparing the skills or qualifications of an employed worker with the skills or qualifications required by her or his job (Brunello *et al.,* 2021). Employers are constantly seeking potential employees with relevant skills. Most of such skills often referred to as 'soft skills' are rarely taught at the school level. They included communication, self-confidence, critical thinking, negotiation, strong work ethics, conflict resolution, adaptability, flexibility and accountability skills (Atiqur *et al.,* 2021). Lately, employers have been demanding their employees to practice soft skills (Atiqur *et al.,* 2021; Patacsil *et al*., 2017) because they often had positive performance on the part of the employees. Accordingly, employers expect new graduates seeking employment to possess such skills as well as technical skills. As defined by OECD (2017), skills were both cognitive and non-cognitive abilities that were specific to a certain job environment, occupation or sector. Brunello *et al.* (2021) explained cognitive skills as the ability to understand complex ideas, learn from experience, adapt effectively, engage in reasoning and overcome obstacles by thinking. The authors view non-cognitive skills as skills that cut across multiple domains, such as social, emotional and behavioural, which were not covered under cognitive skills. In addition, Brunello *et al.* (2021) explained technical skills as a combination of the cognitive and non-cognitive skills used to accomplish specific tasks. With the growing corpus of pervasive artificial intelligence in technology, the labour market was being forced to change frequently (Pastore, 2018; Ozer *et al*., 2020), causing a serious disruption with new graduates who had not as much been exposed to technology. Arguably, the situation necessitated disruption in the skills requirement in the job market, leading to skills mismatch.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - CEDEFOP (2014) and the ILO (2017) defined Skills mismatch as an incompatibility between the skills demanded by the labour market and those of the graduates of the educational system. Additionally, a study by Suna *et al.* (2020) indicated that skills mismatch resonated when there was an imbalance between the graduate educational qualifications and the existing labour market that created a significant imbalance. With skills requirements for jobs changing more frequently, companies across the world are facing challenges in finding a skilled workforce which forces graduates to work outside their field of expertise. With the fast-evolving artificial intelligence technology, the talent pool through which employers select workers is shrinking due to a declining workforce (Ozer *et al*., 2020). In a survey by the Manpower Group globally, 38% of employers faced some difficulty in filling job positions (Talent Shortage Survey, 2015). Compared to the global average, the challenge

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was higher for companies in Brazil (61%) and India (58%). At the same time, developed countries like Germany (46%) and Japan (83%) were also facing some challenges in finding skilled workers. However, that could be due to people opting for alternate jobs (Talent Shortage Survey, 2015). Compared to the global average, the survey revealed that 31% of employers in South Africa faced challenges filling employment positions while China faced 24%. In 2015, around 35% of the employers quoted the lack of available applicants as a major reason for the challenges experienced in filling the job positions. More than 34% of the employers mentioned the lack of candidates with required technical competencies (hard skills) as the next major reason for the talent shortage. In comparison, around 20% of the employers reported a lack of experience and lack of workplace competencies (soft skills) as the other main reason for the same (Prising, 2015).

2.8 The state of graduate unemployment in South African

In 2021, South Africa was ranked as the country with the highest unemployment rate in the world. The rate of joblessness was 34.4 percent and when considering people who are actively looking for jobs only were too high compared to the global unemployment rate (*Matyana et al. 2023*). According to the Stats SA (2025) report the working-age population increased by 130 000 or 0,3% in the first quarter of 2025 compared with the fourth quarter of 2024. The number of employed people decreased by 291 000 to 16,8 million in Q1: 2025, while the number of unemployed persons increased by 237 000 to 8,2 million compared with Q4: 2024, resulting in a decrease of 54 000 (down by 0,2%) in the labour force. The number of discouraged work-seekers increased by 7 000 (up by 0,2%), and the number of people who were not economically active for reasons other than discouragement increased by 177 000 (up by 1,4%) between the two quarters, resulting in a net increase of 184 000 in the not economically active population (Stats SA, 2025). Educated youths (graduates) are not necessarily guaranteed employment. This is corroborated by the following statistical evidence that in Quarter 1: 2025, graduates had an unemployment rate of 11,7% (up by 3,0 percentage points) compared with the previous quarter. Unemployment rates for those with matric or lower educational qualifications exceeded the national rate, whereas individuals with other tertiary qualifications and graduates had rates below the national unemployment rate (Van Aardt, 2012).

Unemployment challenges in the country have been a historical challenge. To address the unemployment challenge which is exacerbated by lack of skills and formal work experience, the Public Service Internship Programme was introduced by the Department of Public Service and

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Administration in 2006. This guideline document was intended to support the development of public service graduate internships designed and coordinated by all public sector departments for unemployed graduates. According to the Public Service Internship Programme guide, internship is a practical programme to assist with the continuous development of people for future appointment in the labour market. The programme was directed at young people who are completing their studies or who have completed their studies and are unemployed (DPSA, 2006).

2.9 South African policy on Internship Programme

The South Africa internship programme was established within the framework of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to address nine (9) key objectives. According to DPSA (2006) the main purpose of the internship programme was to alleviate high levels of unemployment among young graduates and provide them with opportunities to gain practical work experience. The programme is anchored on nine (9) key objectives which are: 1) To resolve the general shortage of qualified and skilled people in the workforce by encouraging graduates to equip themselves with the necessary practical experience. 2) To assist in meeting the strategic staffing needs of the public service by providing practical and accelerated work experience programmes that expose interns to specific occupations. 3) To provide unemployed graduates with valuable work experience and skills to enhance their employability. 4) To address the problem of youth unemployment, especially tertiary (universities and Technikons) graduates by providing them with work experience opportunities in the public service. 5) To provide opportunities to gain some practical experience for students who are required to do this to earn credits towards a qualification. 6) To contribute to accelerated service delivery by government through the improved introduction of skilled personnel in the public service. 7) To improve equitable access to public sector employment for rural and marginalised groups such as women and the disabled. 8) To contribute to lifelong learning. 9) To increase awareness among students of job and career opportunities in the public service.

The current study draws its focus from Objective 3) and 4) which aims to help unemployed graduates with valuable work experience and skills to enhance employability (*objective 3*) and address the graduate youth unemployment thereby enabling them access work experience opportunities in the labour market (*objective 4).* Thus, helping to reduce the high rate of graduates' unemployment in the country. The development of the internship programmes framework was informed by the following legislation and policies for the development and

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implementation: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the Public Service Act, 1994 as amended, the Public Service Regulations, 2001, the National Skills Development Strategy for South Africa, the Internship Framework for the Public Service, 2001, the Skills Development Act, 1998, White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service, 1998 and the White Paper on Human Resource Development in the Public Service, 1998.

The internship programme absorbs young graduate interns for a period of 12 months to gain skills and experience (Motene, 2017). However, the current lack of skills, experience and perceptions concerning the restrictiveness of labour regulations made some prospective employers reluctant to hire the new graduates (Munishi, 2016; Alkatheri *et al.,* 2019). That might explain the World Population Review report in early 2021 that the unemployment rate in the country stood at 26%. Although the internship was a pre-professional programme that aimed to provide graduates with the opportunity to gain work experience and exposure to the real world of work, there was rarely evidence depicting interns assigned specific tasks to perform and thus, enhance employability (Chambers, 2015). Instead, the quarterly labour force survey (QLFS) reported an increase in the rate of unemployed and underemployed graduates in the third quarter of 2021 to 40.3% (Stats SA, 2021). Those were new graduates aged between 25 and 35 years who had completed their college education. That was indicative of more graduates sitting at home unemployed. Hereunder, challenges faced during the implementation of the internship programme were discussed.

2.10 Summary of the Review of Literature

In this chapter, the term “internship” is defined as a strategy to provide opportunities for new graduates to transfer theoretical knowledge to a practical setting. It can be defined as any carefully monitored piece of work or service experience in which individuals had intentional learning goals and reflected actively on what they learnt throughout attachment. The literature revealed that the planning and implementation process of the internship programme seemed to be flawed. Many graduates remain unemployed for a long-time after the internship programme is completed despite the stipulated policies. It was revealed that some interns face challenges due to being assigned to disinterested mentors who failed to expose the interns to key learning opportunities. Additionally, some host organisations fail to provide adequate support to complete assigned responsibilities. Worst of all was a tendency to allocate interns responsibilities that were irrelevant to their expertise. It was also found that skewed relationships between the interns and their mentors or supervisors created discontentment.

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Although more work for interns would expose them to more learning, that sometimes became a challenge as interns were given more responsibilities. Sometimes the interns worried that the host organisations might not provide sufficient training resources to enhance their mastery of the industrial competencies. The question of skills mismatch remains a challenge to the internship programme. Employers demand new graduates to possess soft skills before they could be considered for employment. However, several interns cannot acquire the same during their internship programme period. That made it difficult for them to be considered in the job market. Accordingly, this study sought to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate employability.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents in detail the research methodology followed to conduct the proposed study. According to Jansen (2020), research methodology simply refers to the practical "how" of any given piece of research. More specifically, it is about how a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research aims and objectives are obtained. Research methodology is the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. It shows how these researchers formulate their problem and objective and present their results from the data obtained during the study period (Kassu, 2019).

3.2 Description of the study area

The research study was conducted at the Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Studies sections). Thulamela Local Municipality was established in 1994 when the first Democratic Government introduced local government in South Africa. Its main objectives are to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities. To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner and to promote social and economic development. During the time of data collection there were 546 municipal staff. Tshilidzini Hospital was established in 1958. The programmes. The hospital's main objective is to stabilize patients and ensure timely access to specialized emergency medical services. During the time of data collection in the year 2023 the hospital had 450 nurses, 35 doctors 17 of which were Cuban nationals, 27 Allied staff, 285 was for general workers, kitchen staff, porters and those doing clerical work.

The total number of employees was 804. Vhembe TVET College was established in 1963. Its main objectives are to be a national icon in producing the best technically and vocationally skilled professionals. It also seeks to enhance the quality of teaching and learning by providing adequate resources. During the time of data collection, it had 127 lecturing staff, 37 support staff, 35 general workers, 6 Head of Department and 1 campus manager. The total number of employees was 206. These study sites were chosen so that the researcher could see how various public sectors in South Africa manage their internship programme. For instance, Thulamela Local Municipality represents Department of Cooperative Governance, Tshilidzini Hospital represents the

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Department of Health and Welfare and finally Vhembe TVET College representing the Department of Higher Education and Training. Thulamela Local Municipality is located in Thohoyandou town whereas Vhembe TVET College is in Sibasa about 5 km north of Thohoyandou. Tshilidzini Hospital is about 8 km south of Thohoyandou along Punda Maria road. Thohoyandou town is about 70 km north of Louis Trichardt via Punda Maria road. Figure 3.1 presents the map of Thulamela Local Municipality.

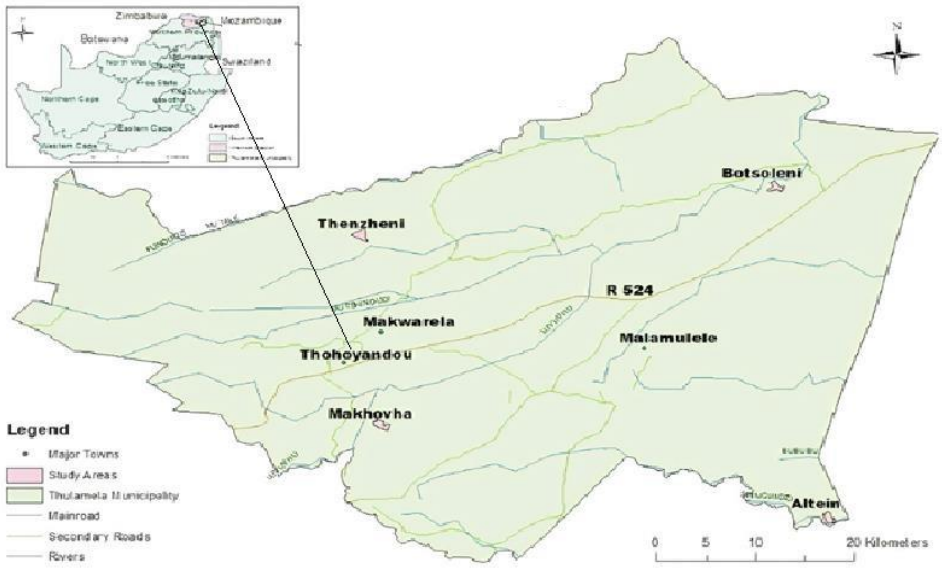


Figure 3: Map of Thulamela municipality showing the study areas.

Figure 3.1 Map of Thulamela Municipality showing study area. Source: Uhunamure *et al. (*2017)

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3.3 Research Design

A research design refers to the arrangement of methods for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure (Mc Leod, 2019). The researcher visited the Human Resource Offices of Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital and Vhembe TVET College to seek permission to conduct research. Copies of Ethical Clearance Certificate and Letter for Seeking Permission to Conduct Research were submitted to the managers of the Human Resources of the research sites. The topic of the research study and the objectives were explained to the Human Resource managers. A list of graduate interns who were in the internship programme at each study site was requested and with the managers' approval, those on the list were called for a meeting. Only those who were interested attended the meeting. Again, the topic, research objectives and why the research was necessary were explained. In the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section), 13 participants attended and all of them signed letters of consent. In the Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and OT) sections and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business studies sections), 8 and 15 participants attended, respectively and signed letters of consent.

Qualitative research method was employed to collect qualitative data. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using an interview guide and participants were recorded using a voice recorder as per their availability. Face-to-face interviews were chosen because the researcher wanted to see the emotions of participants when responding to the questions. Additionally, Face-to-face interviews were preferred because they save time for both the researcher and the participants. However, the challenge with Face-to-face interviews was that some participants were shy and they were not free to respond well to some of the questions.

3.4 Population

In this study, the research population constituted graduates who were currently in the internship programme, their mentors and administrators in three research areas namely, Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital clinical and OT sections and Vhembe TVET College Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business study sections. No academics in the institutions that enrolled these interns were involved. There was no engagement between the officials from the institutions with the academics or curriculum designers. At the Vhembe TVET College the internship committee which was constituted by the Student Support Services officials was only

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responsible for recruiting, placing and facilitating the induction for interns. Ryan (2016) refers to study population as the entire target population, or group, that an investigator is interested in studying.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select participants for gathering qualitative data. Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In other words, units are selected “on purpose” in purposive sampling. Also called judgmental sampling, this method relies on the researcher’s judgment when identifying and selecting the individuals, cases, or events that can provide the best information to achieve the study’s objectives (Nikolopoulou, 2023). Participants were randomly selected in each of the three institutional research sites. First the researcher addressed all participants who were willing to participate in the interviews in each study site as a group. After explaining the main objective of the research participants were asked to sign Research Study Participation Consent and they were given numbers so that they would know who would be first and the last to be interviewed. The Tshilidzini Hospital clinical and OT sections research site was initially estimated at 60 respondents, and 30% of those respondents were targeted to be randomly sampled, which would make 20 participants plus 1 supervisor. 30% of participants were chosen to save time and to avoid disturbing the hospital work schedule. 20 participants would give the researcher enough data to ensure data validity and reliability. However, during data collection time only 8 participants responded positively. Since the population was too small, 100% of respondents were sampled. Participants were randomly selected at Tshilidzini Hospital clinical and OT sections. Only willing participants formed part of the population in this group. In the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section**)** 13 participants were expected, and all of them were interviewed constituting a 100% response rate. In the Vhembe TVET College, 15 participants were expected 63, and all of them were interviewed, also constituting a 100% response rate. All together 36 participants and 5 mentors were sampled and interviewed in all the three above-mentioned research sites.

3.6 Data Collection

Prior to collecting qualitative data, desk review was undertaken throughout the research. This was necessary for the researcher to provide in-depth understanding of the specific field of the study, define the research design and arrive at relevant methods, techniques and tools for data collection

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and analysis. The Human Resource Training (HR) offices were consulted to assist with the list of interns currently in the internship programmes in the Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini hospital and Vhembe TVET College. The names and contact numbers of interns and supervisors were requested. The researcher consulted the supervisors first and explained the main objective of the research. After being given permission, interns were consulted at their workstations, and again, the main objective of the research was explained to them. A qualitative approach was used to collect qualitative data in all the three study sites. To collect qualitative data, semi structured interview guides with open-ended questions were used. The data collection tool was constructed informed by the research objectives and objectives 3 and 4 of the Public Service Internship Programme. Permission was sought from participants to allow the use of a voice recorder during interviews with key informants including the intern mentors. Participants were interviewed individually. The recorded information was stored safely in the voice recorder, waiting for the data analysis stage. However, during data collection the researcher experienced some challenges. One of the challenges was the time given to the researcher to conduct the research in all the institutions.

At the Tshilidzini Hospital the researcher was given only an hour for the interviews just after the morning briefing. The reason for that was because the hospital had shortage of staff. So, participants were required to take the rounds in different wards and that was also the reason why most interns could not be part of the research. At the Thulamela Local Municipality, the participants were the ones who were helping customers in their offices, so they were given little time for the interviews. At Vhembe College the researcher used the lunch time to conduct interviews, but the some participants felt that they were being robbed of their lunch break which they also use to take a rest. That also contributed to less participants willing to be part of the research study. Just because the researcher was given little time, two to three days were used in each research site to complete the data collection process. This was a learning curve that the researcher should ensure that when using Face-to-face interviews in qualitative method the data collection tool must be short and straight to the point so that it could be accommodated in a short period of time.

The objectives and their corresponding data analysis methods, techniques and analysis methods are summarised in Table 3.1.

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Table: 3.1 Summary of the Research Methodology per objective.

Research method:	Objectives	Variables	Population	Sampling methods	Data collection tool and techniques	Data analysis
Qualitative	1-4	Alignment, mentor's role, interns' perceptions, challenges and solutions	Serving graduate interns at Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital, Vhembe TVET College and Interns mentors/supervisors.	Non-probability Purposive sampling Stratified by research sites	Semi-structured interview guide; Voice recorder	Grounded theory Thematic analysis Atlas.ti version 8
Same as above.	1.To examine assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate interns' basic qualifications;	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Same as above.	2.To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate interns at the institutions level;	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Same as above.	3.To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme and the host agency in relation to interns' career path;	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.
Same as above.	4.To examine the challenges encountered by the interns, mentors and hosting institutions during implementation of graduate internship programme	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.

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3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is changing the collected raw data into meaningful facts and ideas to be understood either qualitatively or quantitatively. It involves breaking down existing complex factors into simpler parts and putting the parts together in new arrangements for the purpose of interpretation (Dawit, 2020).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Soon after the data collected, it was thematically analysed. In order to identify the themes, common responses of participants derived from objectives were assessed to analyse the views of the participants. Thematic analysis focuses on the content of the data. It involves coding and organizing the data to identify key themes. Atlas.ti version 8 software was used to analyse data. Atlas.ti software is used for framework analysis (Nechully *et al*., 2019). Framework analysis gives the flexibility to the researcher to do the data collection and analysis simultaneously or after data collection. The researcher does not have to analyse the volumes of data collected. Instead, the researcher can stop once all the information about the research question has been collected (Nechully *et al*., 2019). Themes and network diagrams were computed using Atlas ti. Version 8.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Firstly, ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee. Secondly, permission to collect data from interns was obtained from the relevant departments, institutes and centres before data collection. The researcher introduced himself and gave each participant a Letter of Information and Consent which explained the research topic, its main objective and the procedures to be followed when selecting participants. Participants were requested to sign a consent letter signifying their willingness to take part in the study. In addition to that, ethical considerations were adhered to by the researcher; that is, only participants who were willing to take part were interviewed. No one was forced to take part without his or her consent. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. The numbers issued to the participants were used to replace their names to ensure anonymity. Permission to use a voice recorder was sought and the reason for using it being that the recordings would only be used during the time of data analysis.

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3.9 Potential Impact

The findings of the study will introduce a framework that should aid policymakers and academics in thinking through the key parameters that are necessary to arrive at successful skills development. Readers will be able to see the potential barriers that are in the way of achieving an effective internship programme. Secondly, the study will respond to some key questions for skills development in the internship programme. The study will assist policy makers to see how they could improve the internship policy by studying the gaps in the programme, for instance, the policy does not provide a template for the assessment and monitoring of graduate intern's performance in the internship programme. Thirdly, the findings and recommendations will open a platform for further research on the internship programme. Finally, graduates will know how the internship programme should be managed in South Africa and beyond. Thus, it will be easy for them to enhance their skills of employability. The following chapter focuses on assessing the assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate interns' basic qualifications.

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CHAPTER 4: ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES TO GRADUATE INTERNS IN RELATION TO BASIC QUALIFICATION IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Abstract

This chapter presents results of data collected from three research areas, namely, Thulamela Local municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Clothing Production, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). Qualitative data was collected using open ended interview guide in all the three study sites. Altogether 36 participants who were currently in the internship programme were interviewed in all the above-mentioned research sites. Participants were randomly sampled in their different study sites and were recorded using a voice recorder. The findings were thematically analysed using Atlas ti.8 computer package. The main objective of this study was to examine the assigned responsibilities in relation to graduate interns' basic qualifications in the internship programme. The rationale for the study was to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme with a specific focus on the duties assigned to the graduate interns in the internship programme. The findings indicated that except for the Tshilidzini Hospital, the other two research sites, that is, Thulamela local municipality and Vhembe TVET College did not have policies or guidelines showing graduate interns what they had to do in the internship programme. However, graduate interns were inducted before they started their internship programme on what they should do daily. It was also discovered that in all the research sites, the placement of graduate interns aligned with their qualifications. Therefore, though there were some problems experienced in the internship programme, one could say that the assigned responsibilities of graduate interns in the three research areas matched the graduate interns' qualifications. However, this study recommends that the government should monitor the implementation of the internship programme at the institutional level.

Keywords: assigned duties, graduate, intern, internship, mentor.

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4.1 Introduction

The main objective of the internship programme emphasised skills and experience as a priority for enhanced employability. According to Kraak *et al.* (2013), supported by Singye (2020), the job market worldwide has become competitive, and employers expect graduates seeking employment to be competent and with some level of skills. Researchers such as Brunello *(*2021) claimed that graduates with internship experience were more likely to find jobs compared to those devoid of such experience. An internship is a student's learning experience in a real-life working environment relevant to his/her major (Pan *et al.,* 2018). According to Kapareliotis *et al.* (2019), internship programs could reinforce technical competencies, improve analytical skills and most importantly, foster an awareness of the constant need for adaptability and creativity in a changing world. The above researchers also added that the temporary workplace environment where interns were placed provided them with activities that were educationally enriching. However, other researchers reported that despite the well-crafted internship policies to help students develop requisite skills and competencies, many graduates remained unemployable. Suna *et al.* (2020) indicated that skills mismatch resonated when there was an imbalance between the graduate educational qualifications and the existing labour market created a significant imbalance. With skills requirements for jobs changing more frequently, companies across the world were facing challenges in finding a skilled workforce, which forces graduates to work outside their field of expertise. It was for that reason that this chapter sought to assess the responsibilities that were assigned to graduate interns in the internship programme. The rationale for this study was to examine whether the assigned responsibilities in the internship programme aligned with the graduate interns' qualifications to ensure effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate interns' employability. This study suggests that monitoring of the internship programme at institutional level should be strengthened to ensure the effectiveness of the internship programme.

4.2 Method

A qualitative method was employed to solicit qualitative data in three study sites, namely; Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Studies sections). The study sites are in the Thulamela Local Municipality in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. An interview guide with open–ended questions was used to solicit qualitative data. Participants currently in the internship programme were randomly sampled

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depending on availability. Participants were interviewed individually using a voice recorder to record their information. Only interested participants signed the participation consent form.13 participants from Thulamela local municipality, 8 participants from Tshilidzini Hospital and 15 participants from Vhembe TVET College were interviewed. Altogether, 36 participants were interviewed in all three study sites. To ensure that the researcher followed ethical principles, anonymity was ensured, names of participants were replaced by numbers. Hereunder the results of the findings are discussed. Details of the methodology followed are in Chapter 3.

4.3 Results

Study site 1: Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section)

Table 4.1 below illustrates the demographic information of participants currently in the internship programme in the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration) section. Thirteen (13) participants, both male and female and one female mentor, were interviewed, constituting a 100% participation rate. However, 8 participants were females, forming the majority at about 62% and 5 were males. Compared to males, female participants dominated because, unlike the males, they were not shy to express themselves in English. According to Table. 4.1, twelve (12) out of 13 participants had diploma qualifications making up about 93% of the total participants. This is because all the 12 participants were college graduates. Only 2 out of 13 participants, which is about 15% of the total number of participants were not funded because they were volunteers.

Table 4.1 below shows the assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications in the Thulamela local municipality. According to Table 4.1, all 13 participants mentioned that they were given the following duties to perform daily: registration of residential sites, compiling monthly reports, collecting building plans for residential sites, typing, filing and writing confirmation letters. Participants 3, 8, 10 and 13 added that there was no duty rooster to show what they were supposed to do, however, the above-mentioned duties would depend on the customer or clients' needs at that particular time.

The mentor was a female of age between 39-45 years old. She had worked for the Thulamela municipality in the Land and Registration section for eight (8) years. According to the mentor, interns were expected to do customer service work. They did administrative work like filing and copying documents, registering businesses, renewing licences, opening files of residential sites and assisting clients with the drafting of business plans. Graduate interns also delivered letters and other documents to different offices, and they were expected to compile monthly reports.

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Table. 4.1 Demographic information of participants in the internship programme in the Thulamela Local Municipality

VARIABLES	Description and frequencies											Total
1. Gender	Male	5 (38%)	Female	8 (62%)	Other	0						13 (100%)
2. Age	18 years	0	19-23 years	3 (23%)	24-28 years	7 (54%)	29-33 Years	3 (23%)	34-38 years	0	39 years and above	13
3. Qualification	Certificate	0	Diploma	12 (93%)	BA	1 (7%)	Honours	0	Masters	0	PhD/Doctorate	13
4. Year of graduation	2019	0	2020	2 (13%)	2021	5 (38%)	2022	6 (46%)	2023	0		13
5. Organisation funded internship programme	HWSETA	8 (62%)	SASETA	0	Volunteer	2 (13%)	SERVICESETA	2 (13%)	BANKSETA	1 (7%)		13
6. Stipend	Yes	11 (85%)	No	2 (13%)								13

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Qualification	Institution	Year of graduation
1	F	23 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
2	F	23 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
3	M	24 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2021
4	F	25 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2020
5	F	24 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
6	M	26 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2021
7	F	23 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Capricorn TVET College	2022
8	M	26 yrs.	(BCom) in Finance	University of Johannesburg	2020
9	F	25 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2021
10	M	30 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Sekhukhune TVET College	2021
11	F	24 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
12	M	24 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	University of Venda	2021
13	F	28 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022

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Table 4.1.2 Assigned responsibilities to graduate interns in relation to their qualifications in the Thulamela Local Municipality

ASSIGNED RESPOSIBILITIES	PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE	
Registration of residential sites	13	100%	
Collecting building plans	13	100%	
Compiling monthly reports	13	100%	
Typing and filing	13	100%	
Writing confirmation letters	13	100%	
Duties depend on customer's needs	4	31%	

According to the mentor, in case interns failed to accomplish what they were expected to do, they were shown by the mentor how they should do the task. *"Interns would be asked to observe while those who understand that particular task do it or I, as the supervisor, will show him or her how it is done",* continued the mentor.

When asked about the milestones that interns were expected to achieve at the end of the internship programme, the mentor had this to say; *"At the end of the internship programme interns are expected to have acquired the basic knowledge on how to deal with the public harmoniously. They must be able to solve clients' problems and know the general administration of the Land and Registration section of local government".*

Study site 2: Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections)

Table 4.2 below illustrates the demographic information of participants currently in the internship programme at the Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections).
Eight (8) participants, both male and female and one female mentor were interviewed. There were many graduate interns in the hospital; however, due to the shortage of senior doctors in the hospital, only 8 participants were willing to be part of the interviews. According to Table 4.2, three (3) participants were males, and five (5) were females forming the majority at about 63%. That is because female nurses and female doctors dominated the clinical section. All the 8 (100%) participants had a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) qualification. The reason is that anyone who wants to qualify as a medical practitioner should have (MBChB) qualification. All eight (8) participants received a stipend and were all funded by the Department of Health. Figure 4.2, on the next page shows the positive experiences encountered by graduate interns in the internship programme.

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According to Figure 4.2, eight (8) participants were interviewed. Seven (7) participants were interviewed in the clinical section and only one (1) was interviewed in the Occupational Therapy Section**.** She was the only graduate intern in the Occupational Therapy Section then. All seven (7) participants from the clinical section mentioned that they were divided into four (4) groups, namely, Paediatric (Children's ward), Maternity (C-section), Casualty (emergency situations) and Surgery (simple surgical procedures). They also indicated that they rotated in those four sections mentioned above as per the logbook which showed activities to be done on a particular day. "We see patients depending on the rotations", replied to participant 2.

Participant 3 indicated that as interns, they were expected to stop bleeding patients and manage malnutrition to keep babies alive.

Table. 4.2 Demographic information of the participants in the internship programme at the Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections)

VARIABLES	Description and frequencies												Total
1. Gender	Male	3 (38%)	Female	5 (62%)	Other	0							8 (100%)
2. Age	18 years	0	19-23 years	3 (38%)	24-28 years	5 (62%)	29-33 years	0	34-38 years	0	39 years and above		8
3. Qualification	Certificate	0	Diploma	0	BA	0	Honours	0	Masters	0	MBChB	8 (100%)	8
4. Year of graduation	2019	0	2020	0	2021	2 (25%)	2022	6 (75%)	2023	0			8
5. Organisation funded internship programme	HWSETA	0	SASETA	0	Dept. of Health	8 (100%)	SERVICESETA	0	BANKSETA	0	AGRISETA		8
6. Stipend	Yes	8 (100%)	No	0			0						8

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Qualification	Institution	Year of graduation
1	F	23 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022
2	F	23 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022
3	M	24 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022

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4	F	25 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022
5	F	24 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022
6	M	26 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2021
7	F	23 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2022
8	M	26 yrs.	MBChB	Medunsa	2021

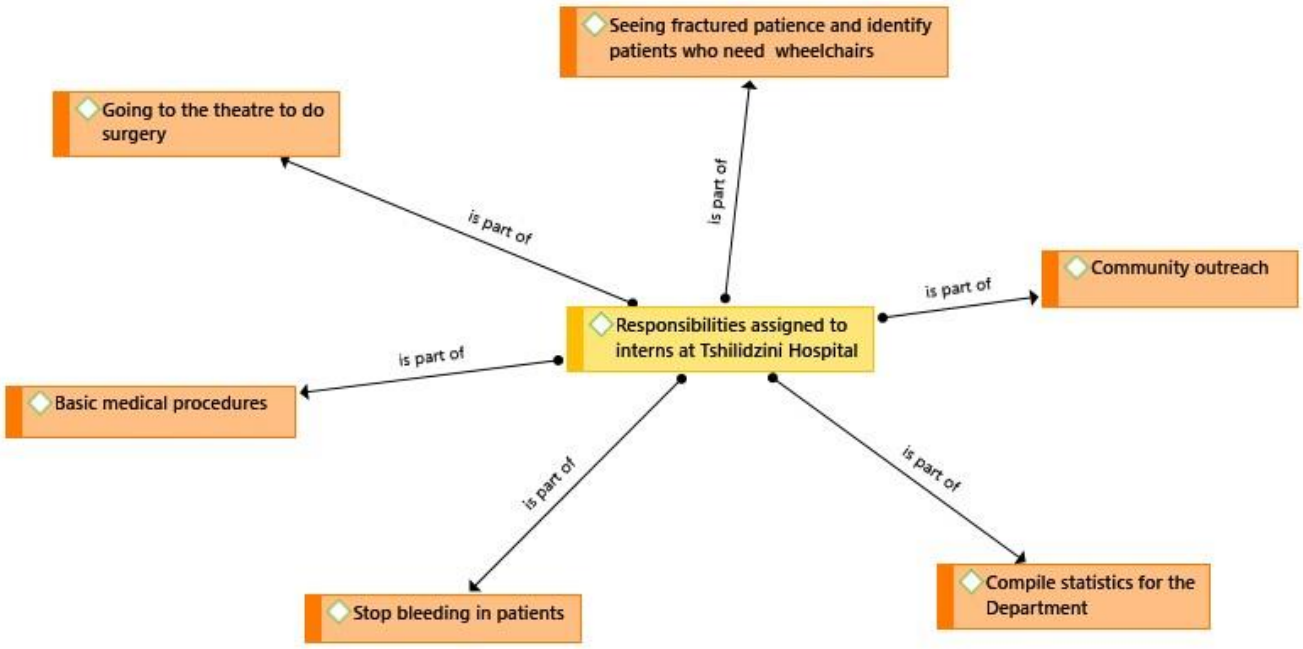


Figure 4.2 Assigned responsibilities in relation to interns qualifications at the Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections).

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Participants 4, 5 and 6 indicted that they were expected to see patients and do basic procedures. Participant 7 mentioned that he was expected to check the management plan daily to know what was to be done. Participant 8, who was interviewed in the Occupational Therapy section mentioned that her assigned duties were among the others to see patients and manage malnutrition in the children's ward (Paediatric), doing community outreach in the community clinics to monitor patients and compile statistics for the Department. *"I also visit all the wards, that is, female, male and children's wards to manage fractured patients",* continued participant 8. At this study site, one (1) female mentor between 39 – 45 years of age with 13 years of work experience at the Tshilidzini Hospital Occupational Therapy (OT) department was interviewed. It was not possible to interview other mentors especially in the clinical section because they were ever busy due to the problem of shortage of doctors at the hospital. However, according to the mentor in the (OT) department, mentors' experiences in all four departments were reported to be nearly the same since the same interns rotated in those four departments. She was the relevant person to be interviewed because she was once supervised in the clinical section before she moved to (OT) department.

According to the mentor, interns were expected to perform the following duties: treat the patients, do observations and conduct interviews with patients in all four sections, that is, surgical where they must be able to do simple surgical procedures, paediatric where they must treat children more especially those who suffer from malnutrition, casualty where they see patients who come and leave the hospital daily and maternity where they deal with expecting mothers. Interns were expected to be able to give a report of the previous day work about patients. *"Interns were also expected to do administrative work and compile statistics",* reported the mentor.

Study site 3: Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support Group and Business Study sections).

In the Vhembe TVET College research site three sections namely, Fashion Design, Technical Support Group and Business Study sections were sampled and a total number of 15 participants was randomly interviewed using an open-ended questionnaire and a voice recorder.

Fashion Design section

Table 4.3, below shows the demographic information of the participants in the internship programme at the Vhembe TVET College Fashion Design section. Eight (8) participants, both male and female and one mentor were interviewed in this section.

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Five (5) female participants were the majority, comprising about 62% of the total number of participants and three (3) were males. That is because the Fashion Design section was dominated by female students. Some male students regard Fashion Design as a profession for female students. All 8 (100%) participants had diploma qualifications and received stipends from different funders. HWSETA dominated other SETAs by funding 4 participants which is 50% of the total participants. Figure 4.3 hereunder illustrates assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications in the Fashion Design section.

According to Figure 4.3, all eight participants mentioned that they cut clothes, sewed work suites, sewed workers' dresses, and ironed completed clothes. According to participant 3, they are not given a chance to try something as designers so they can compete with any competent designer in the country. "We only sew work suites and workers' dresses, nothing more. I feel like the college is owing us an explanation why we are limited to (Personal protective equipment) PPEs for Engineering students", said participant 4. Participant 5 indicated that they sometimes worked overtime to complete the number of work suites they had been ordered to sew. "We sometimes work overtime to complete the orders, but they don't pay us for the overtime", complained participant 8. The mentor in this section was a female between the age of 33 and 39. During the interview, she had an experience of six (6) years supervising eight (8) graduate interns. When interviewed about the assigned duties graduate interns were supposed to perform daily, the following emerged. According to the mentor graduate interns were limited to sewing PPEs (overalls and work suits) for the engineering students and support staff, that is, cleaners and gardeners. This response concurred with participants' number 3 and 4 responses who indicated that they only sewed work suites and workers' dresses, nothing more.

In view of the above responses, Graduate interns in the Fashion Design section of Vhembe TVET College were not given a chance to try something as designers so that they could compete with any competent designer in the country. In other words, their learning was limited. When asked what was done If the graduate intern did not accomplish the key milestones expected she indicated that she often stayed in the afternoon with those who failed to do something to show them how it was supposed to be done. *"Sometimes I walk around to see if someone needs my help, and I teach them what they should do"*, continued the mentor. When asked what key milestones were expected to be achieved or accomplished by interns at the end of the internship programme, the mentor responded that at the end of the internship programme interns were expected to have acquired the basic knowledge of how to cut patterns, sew different clothing products and be able to use different sewing machines. *"Clothes designers are creative people.*

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That's what I expect my students to be when they complete the internship programme", said the mentor.

Table 4.3 Demographic information of the participants in the internship programme at the Vhembe TVET College Fashion Design section.

VARIABLES	Description and frequencies											Total
1. Gender	Male	3 (38%)	Female	5 (62%)	Other							8 (100%)
2. Age	18 years	0	19-23 years	2 (25%)	24-28 years	2 (25%)	29-33 years	3 (38%)	34-38 years	1 (13%)	39 years and above	8
3. Qualification	Certificate	0	Diploma	8 (100%)	BA	0	Honours	0	Masters	0	PhD/Doctorate	8
4. Year of graduation	2019	0	2020	0	2021	5 (62%)	2022	3 (38%)	2023	0		8
5. Organisation funded internship programme	HWSETA	4 (50%)	SASETA	0	NRF	0	SERVICESETA	3 (38%)	BANK SETA	1 (13%)	AGRISETA	8
6. Stipend	Yes	8 (100%)	No	0								8

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Qualification	Institution	Year of graduation
1	F	23 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
2	F	23 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
3	M	24 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
4	F	25 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
5	F	24 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
6	M	26 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2021
7	F	23 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
8	M	26 yrs.	Clothing Production Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2021

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Figure 4.3 Assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications (Fashion Design section)

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B. Technical Support Group

Two (2) male and one (1) female participants and one mentor were interviewed in the Technical Support Group. As shown in Table 4.4, the male participants form the majority at 67% of the total respondents. Table 4.4 shows demographic information of the participants currently in the internship programme at Vhembe TVET College (Technical Support section). According to Table 4.4 two male and 1 female participant were interviewed. The reason for male dominance was because male students dominated the technical support section. All the 3 participants had diploma qualifications. Two (2) participants completed their diplomas in 2021.Two participants were funded by HWSETA and one (1) by SERVICESETA. Figure 4.4 shows assigned responsibilities in relation to intern qualification (Technical Support section).

According to Figure 4.4, participant 1 responded that graduate interns were supposed to manage all the technical problems experienced in the computer laboratory. *"My responsibilities are to check technical problems that computers have in the laboratory, I must also connect printers and watermarks",* said participant 1. Participant 2 replied that he fixed computers and attended to all other technical problems experienced in the computer laboratories. Participant 3 responded that she fixed watermarks, connected printers and installed pastels. *'We just attend to the problem arising in the laboratory at that moment',* replied to participant 1 when asked whether there was a guide or policy which guided them on what they should do in the internship programme.

The mentor in this section was a male of between 34 and 39 years. By the time he was interviewed, he was completing his fifth year as a supervisor. When asked what graduate interns under his supervision were assigned to do, he indicated that all the graduate interns were expected to know how to solve any technical problem that computers might have. According to him, interns should be able to connect printers and watermarks. He also added that graduate interns should be able to fix simple problems with computers. In case the graduate intern did not accomplish the key milestones expected, the mentor had this to say*, "If any graduate intern fails to do any given work, I either show him or her how to do it or ask the one who knows to show him or her if I am busy",* replied to the mentor. The mentor also said that he requested those who struggled to do the work to observe while others were doing it. According to the mentor, at the end of the internship programme, interns were expected to have acquired the basic knowledge of how to solve any computer technical problem. In conclusion, the responses of the mentor and those of the graduate interns regarding the assigned responsibilities given to the graduate interns are similar.

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Table 4.4 Demographic information of the participants who were currently in the internship programme at Vhembe TVET College (Technical Support section).

VARIABLES	Description and frequencies											Total
1. Gender	Male	2 (67%)	Female	1 (33%)	Other	0						3 (100%)
2. Age	18 years	0	19-23 years	0	24-28 years	3 (100%)	29-33 years	0	34-38 years	0	39 years and above	3
3. Qualification	Certificate	0	Diploma	3 (100%)	BA	0	Honours	0	Masters	0	PhD/Doctorate	3
4. Year of graduation	2019	0	2020	1 (33%)	2021	2 (67%)	2022	0	2023	0		3
5. Organisation funded internship programme	HWSETA	2 (67%)	SASETA	0	NRF	0	SERVICESETA	1 (33%)	BANKSETA	0	AGRISETA	3
6. Stipend	Yes	3 (100%)	No	0								3

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Qualification	Institution	Year of graduation
1	F	23 yrs.	Information Technology Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
2	F	23 yrs.	Information Technology Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
3	M	24 yrs.	Information Technology Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022

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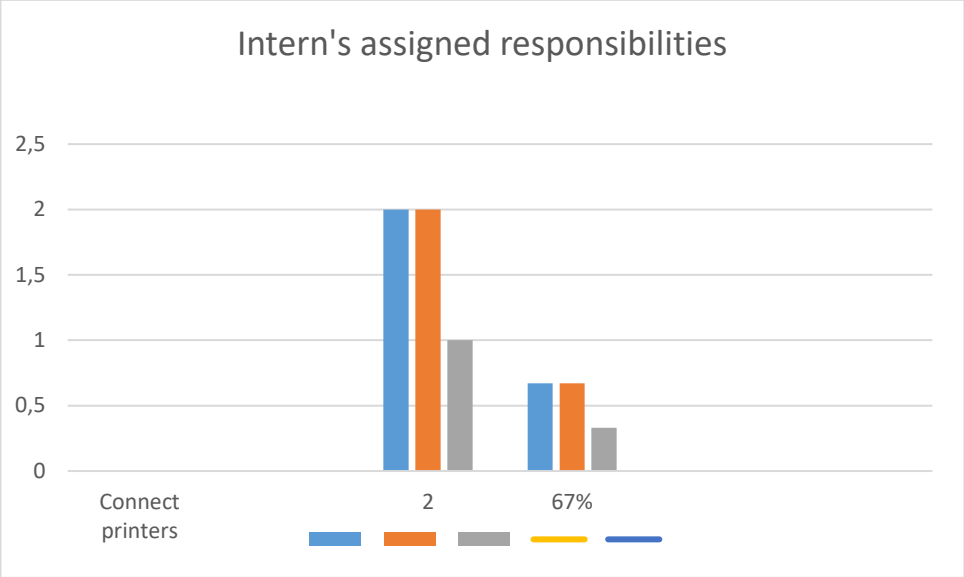


Figure 4.4 Assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications (Technical Support section)

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C. Business Study section

Four participants, both male and female and one mentor were interviewed in this section. Three (3) females, signifying 75% of the total number of participants and one (1) male were interviewed. Table. 4.5 below shows the demographic information of the participants currently in the internship programme at the Vhembe TVET College in the (Business Studies section). According to Table 4.5, only four (4) graduate interns responded positively because many graduates are shy to express themselves in English. All 4 participants received stipends from different funders. Figure 4.5 presents assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications in the Business Studies section.

As shown in Figure 4.5, all four participants indicated that their assigned duties were to do the general administrative work in their offices. According to participant 1(one) the assigned duties were to do typing, capture students' attendance registers, and do all the administrative work. Participant 2 responded that she did administrative work, captured student attendance registers and make test copies for the lecturers. Participant 3 mentioned that she did administration work, writing minutes for her Head of Department at meetings and delivering correspondence for the staff members. *"I do everything. I deliver any new information to members of the staff, write emails for my supervisor, do typing work, make test copies and capture attendance registers for students",* replied to participant 4.

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Table. 4.5 Demographic information of the participants in the internship programme at the Vhembe TVET College in the (Business Study section).

VARIABLES	Description and frequencies											Total
1. Gender	Male	1 (25%)	Female	3 (75%)	Other	0						4 (100%)
2. Age	18 years	0	19-23 years	1 (25%)	24-28 years	2 (40%)	29-33 years	1 (25%)	34-38 years	0	39 years and above	4
3. Qualification	Certificate	0	Diploma	4 (100%)	BA	0	Honours	0	Masters	0	PhD/Doctorate	4
4. Year of completion	2019	0	2020	2 (40%)	2021	1 (25%)	2022	1 (25%)	2023	0		4
5. Organisation funded internship programme	HWSETA	2 (40%)	SASETA	0	NRF	0	SERVICESETA	1 (25%)	BANKSETA	1 (25%)	AGRISETA	4
6. Stipend	Yes	4	No	0								4

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Qualification	Institution	Year of graduation
1	F	23 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
2	F	23 yrs.	Public Management Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
3	M	24 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022
4	F	25 yrs.	Management Assistant Diploma	Vhembe TVET College	2022

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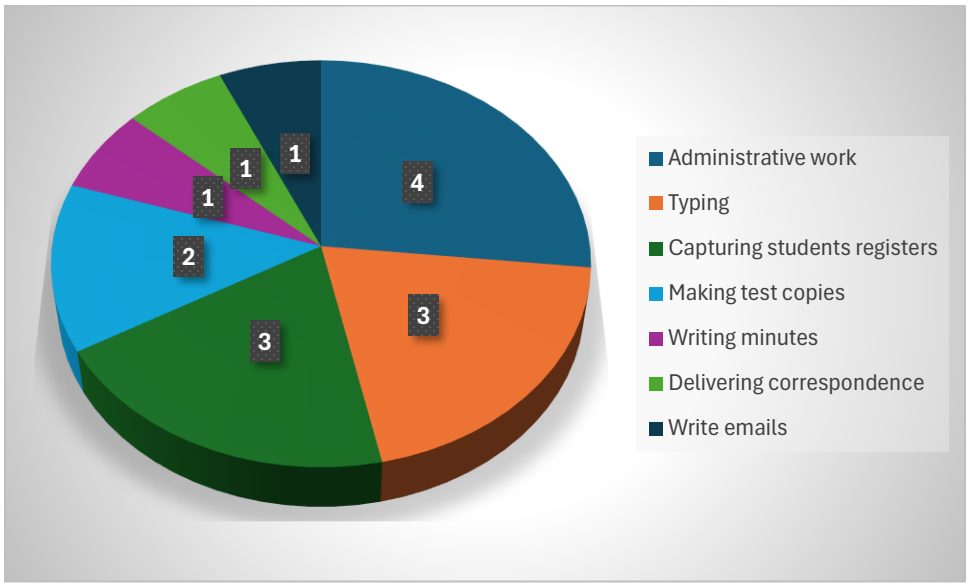


Figure 4.5 Assigned responsibilities in relation to interns' qualifications (Business Study section)

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4.4 Discussion

The assigned duties were related to the graduate interns' qualifications for most participants in all three study sites, that is, Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). This was also supported by the mentors who indicated that the participants were placed and assigned duties that matched their qualifications. These results concur with the study by Pietersen *et al.,* (2022), who analyzed the efficacy of internship programmes in the context of the achievement of policy imperatives, the provision of work experience and the contribution of such programmes to graduate employability. All the three research sites also adhered to the principles of the internship programme which advocated that the programme should provide appropriate and relevant work experience commensurate with the intern's qualification. The good thing is that if placement of interns matched their qualifications, then they easily gain on the job skills and experience which gives that more courage for securing permanent job opportunity.

The findings revealed that 62,5% of the sample indicated that graduate interns appreciated the effectiveness of the graduate internship programme. This is because researchers reported that an internship programme is expected to afford graduates the opportunity to get real-world job experience and establish professional networks and translate theory into practice (Anjum, 2020). The findings were further supported by Munishi (2016), who maintained that internship programs not only improve students' personal skills but also polish their professional growth and experience. The findings also revealed that other participants responded that they were assigned office administration work in general. This is in line with the report by Galloway *et al.,* (2014), who maintained that Internships were perceived to be particularly effective in enhancing communication skills, teamwork, customer service skills and creativity, especially by employers. In other words, when given office administration in general, graduates can gain soft skills such as communication, time management, problem solving skills and many others.

The internship policy advises that after recruitment an intern should be awarded a competent mentor or supervisor who would guide the intern as he or she performed their duties in the internship programme. The internship policy indicates that mentors are supposed to enter into performance agreements with the intern. This was evident in all three study sites. Interns were supervised by mentors which means that the host agencies complied with the internship policy. Mentors are also expected to oversee the training and mentoring of the intern.

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The findings revealed that some mentors, especially in the Vhembe TVET College Business Study section left interns on their own and never bothered how they were performing their responsibilities. The same scenario was noted in the Fashion Design section of the same college that interns were restricted to creating their own designs. They were only instructed to sew overalls for workers. Those graduate interns were denied the opportunity to show excel in their specific talents as designers who should compete with other designers in the whole world. This negates the objectives of the internship policy. However, the Tshilidzini Hospital and Thulamela Local Municipality were compliant on this issue. We can safely say that issue was partially adhered to by mentors. It was observed that Mentors rarely provided supportive environment for the intern by playing a facilitative and mediating role to ensure the intern's development. Finally, mentors were expected to conduct monitoring and assessment of the intern and submit performance reports. This was not done and was also not regarded as important. Except The Tshilidzini Hospital, all the other study sites did not have formal assessment records. This resulted in mentors failing to give interns feedback about their performance because they were not evaluated. That was a serious challenge that did not only contravened the internship policy but also disadvantaged the graduate interns in terms of their performance. Absence of evaluation of interns made it difficult for them to know whether they were or not making positive progress. Some Interns ended up perceiving internship as a programme that wasted their time.

Unlike other forms of employment, an internship is any carefully monitored work or service experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience (Ryan *et al.,* 1997). These reports by the above-mentioned researchers suggest that graduate interns will acquire on-the-job skills and experience if they are well placed in the internship programme. That is, graduate interns should be assigned responsibilities that match their qualifications so that they gain on-the-job experience. At the Tshilidzini Hospital, participants from the clinical section mentioned that they were divided into four (4) groups namely, Paediatric (Children's ward), Maternity (C-section), Casualty (emergency situations) and Surgery (simple surgical procedures). They also indicated that they rotated in those four sections mentioned above as per the logbook which showed activities to be done on a particular day. This aligns with the report by Ismael (2018), who stated that Internships are traditionally core components of academic programmes in the business, hospitality and health fields. However, these findings contradict Mabeba's (2019) results, who conducted research to assess the impact of internship programme on skills development. Secondary to the aim, the article examined the relationship between internship programme and skills development.

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According to Mabeba (2019), other participants claim not to be satisfied with the nature of the duties they were expected to perform during work hours, as some of the tasks did not add any value to skills development. Mabeba's (2022) findings might differ from this study because the management of internship programmes at the institutional level differs according to the institution. Hence, it was discovered in this study that of the three research sites, only the Tshilidzini study site had a logbook and roster that guided interns on how to perform their duties. In contrast, the other two research sites did not have anything to guide their graduate interns on what must be done. However, most researchers concurred with this study's findings.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings revealed that the assigned responsibilities of graduate interns in the internship programme matched their qualifications. The only challenge identified in this study is that there are no specific templates or manuals which are used in the internship programme to make sure its management is common in all public institutions. In addition to that, internship programmes should have guiding principles or policies that guide graduate interns on how they should perform their responsibilities in the internship programme. Internship policy maintains that mentors must conduct ongoing monitoring and assessment of the intern and submit a performance report (DPSA, 2006), however, this was not done by some research sites except the Tshilidzini Hospital. Monitoring, assessment of interns and performance report are factors that promote effectiveness and efficiency in the internship programme as outlined in the internship policy (DPSA, 2006). Without these factors, there will be a challenge regarding graduate interns' skill acquisition in the internship programme.

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CHAPTER 5: EVALUATING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IMPLEMENTED TO MENTOR GRADUATE INTERNS IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Abstract

Researchers discovered that in some institutions the managers and the supervisors did not manage the internship programme according to the guidelines of the internship policy. It is, however, not known whether this failure to comply with the internship policy was one of the reasons why graduate interns remained unemployed even after completing the internship programme. It was with this view that this study sought to evaluate the management system implemented to mentor graduate interns in the internship programme. The rationale was to suggest measures that would strengthen the internship policy at institutions in South Africa. A qualitative method was employed to collect data from three research areas, namely, Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Clothing Production, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). Altogether, 36 participants were interviewed in all the above-mentioned research sites using an open-ended interview guide. Participants were randomly sampled in their different study sites and were recorded using a voice recorder. The data were thematically analysed using Atlas ti.8 computer package. The findings revealed that the Tshilidzini Hospital management system for mentoring interns aligned with the logbook and the Medical and Dental Profession Board manuals. In other words, Tshilidzini Hospital used the logbook and the Medical and Dental Profession Board manuals to guide mentors and graduate interns on how to perform their duties. On the contrary, the Thulamela local municipality and the Vhembe TVET College depended on induction to manage their graduate interns in the internship programme. The findings also revealed that these two research sites did not have an assessment plan, no supervision of internship programme and interns were not given feedback about their performance. This challenge, therefore, raised concerns as to whether internship programmes were managed effectively without using the internship policy as a guide. It is, therefore, recommended that the government ensure that mentors and managers of institutions understand and apply internship policy guidelines when managing internship programmes at institutions in South Africa.

Keywords: guiding principles, intern, internship policy, internship programme, mentor, mentoring system.

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5.1 Introduction

According to the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) performance management systems should recognize contributions made by managers to support the internship programme. This requires structured assignments coupled with appropriate supervision, evaluation, and feedback. It is beneficial to have clear job duties that identify the learning objectives or a defined project scope that demonstrates how the learning objectives for everyone will be met. According to Lubega *et al.* (2022) before placing graduates in the workplace, the availability of qualified supervision must be emphasised. The supervisors must be trained to coach and transfer skills without fear of losing their jobs to the interns they are training. Researchers such as Marsono *et al.* (2017); Hardie *et al*. (2018), and Ozek (2018) confirmed that individuals who were mentored performed better and were promoted rapidly because they had learned and gained knowledge from their mentors. Mentoring helped to share working experiences and facilitated students learning (Birhan *et al.* 2021). Additionally, it enabled them to become well anchored in the theories, beliefs, expertise and attitudes desired by industry (Esia-Donkoh *et al.,* 2015). On the contrast, some interns complained of their mentors giving them far too much work than they were required to manage (Dwamena, 2010).

The mismatch between graduates' aspirations, employment requirements and the opportunities available had caused unemployment and underemployment among graduates resulting to many graduates being unabsorbed into the work force (ILO, 2015; Mohd *et al.* 2020). Some interns suffered due to lack of mentorship or being mentored by disinterested mentors, lack of mentors involving interns in the actual work and lack of support from administrators (Birhan *et al*. 2021). As a result of this ineffective management of mentoring in the internship programme, many graduates remained unemployable. This study sought to assess the management system put in place for mentoring the graduate interns in the internship programme. The rationale for this study was to ensure effectiveness of the internship programme by establishing proper management system of mentoring graduate interns in the internship programme to enhance their employability. Hereunder is the method used to collect data from the three research sites, namely, Thulamela Local Municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Study sections).

5.2 Method

Qualitative method was employed to solicit qualitative data in three study sites, namely, Thulamela Local Municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections)

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and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Study sections). The study sites are in the Thulamela Local Municipality in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. An interview guide with open–ended questions was used. Participants were interviewed individually, and a voice recorder was used to record their information. In all three study sites, participants were randomly sampled depending on availability. Only interested participants signed the participation consent form. About 13 participants from Thulamela local municipality, 8 from Tshilidzini Hospital and 15 from Vhembe TVET College were interviewed. Altogether, 36 participants were interviewed in all three study sites. To adhere to ethics, names of participants were replaced by numbers. Hereunder the results of the findings are discussed.

5.3 Results

According to the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023), effective management of the internship programme should include the following key aspects: *guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties, an assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns and feedback given to interns about their performance.* These three key aspects were used as sub-themes to evaluate the management system implemented by Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital and Vhembe TVET College research sites.

Study site 1: Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section)

Thirteen (13) participants interviewed in this chapter were the same participants whose Demographic information was presented in Chapter 4, Table 4.1. Eight (8) participants were females forming the majority at about 62%, and 5 were males. The same participants were interviewed for the next key aspects *guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties, assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns and feedback given to interns about their performance.* For more demographic information, please refer to the above-mentioned chapter.

A. Guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties

Figure 5.1 illustrates guiding principles/policies used to advise interns on how to perform their duties in the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section).

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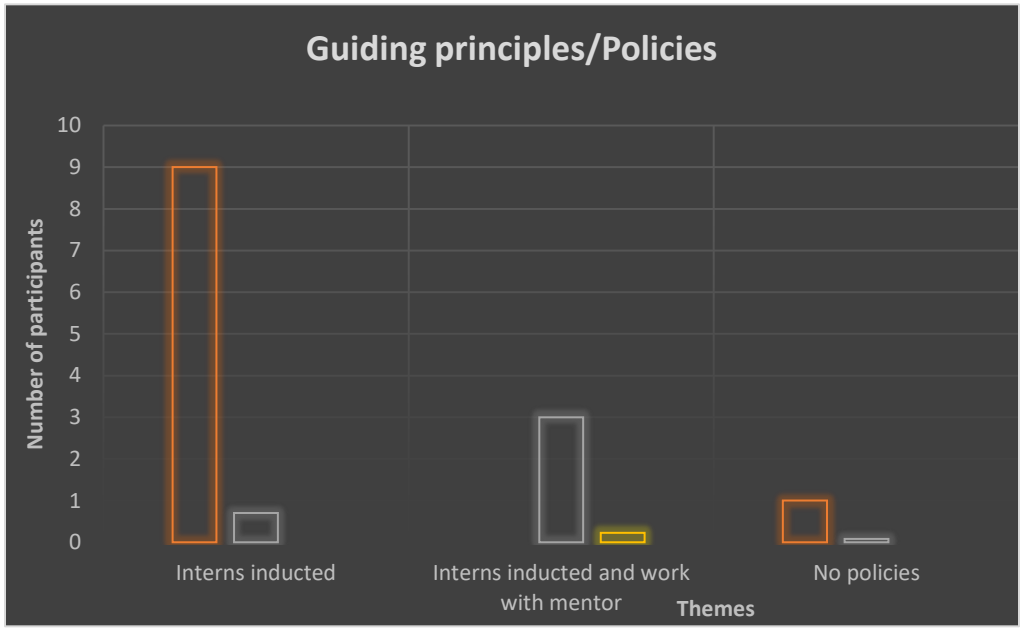


Figure 5.1: showing policies/guiding principles advising interns at Thulamela local municipality

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According to Figure 5.1, above, participant 1 indicated that the mentor did not give them any guiding principle or policy, but she was inducted before she started performing her duties. This participant reiterated that the mentor showed her how to monitor a register and compile a monthly

report. Participant 2 indicated that her mentor and the management inducted her when she arrived to acquaint her with her expected duties. Participants 3, 4 and 5 responded that they were inducted and they also worked together with the supervisor. '*My mentor guided me and advised me how I must do my work*', added Participant 5. '*She also corrected my mistakes where I did something wrong*', stated Participant 6. Participant 7-13 all responded that they were inducted before they started their jobs. When asked about the management system used for mentoring graduate interns in her section the mentor had this to say; '*I work with them. If there is something which is challenging any intern, I quickly attend to it. We don't have policies or guidelines to guide interns, but they are always inducted before they are placed'*, stated the mentor.

B. Assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns

Demographic information of participants in the internship programme in the Thulamela Local Municipality is presented in Table. 4.1.

Figure 5.2 demonstrates the assessment plan used to evaluate intern performance in the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section) and the type of assessment implemented to evaluate intern acquired skills. As shown in Figure 5.2, participant 1,6, 9 and 13 responded that they were asked what challenges they were experiencing every morning before they started their duties. Participants 10 and 11 indicated that they were told by the mentor that they were doing well. *'She sometimes tells us how we are performing'*, responded participant 10. Participants 2,3,4,5,7,8 and 12 responded that they were not assessed. *'They have never given us a test or some kind of exam',* replied to participant 7. The mentor responded that there was no written assessment given to the interns. '*You can easily see how they are performing when given tasks. That's how we assess them'*, said the mentor.

C. Feedback given to interns by the mentor

Thirteen (13) participants, both males and females and one female mentor, were interviewed, constituting a 100% participation rate. However, 8 participants were females, forming the majority at about 62% and 5 were males. Figure 5.3 depicts the type of feedback given to the intern by the mentor in the Thulamela local municipality (Land and Registration Section).

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It also shows the type of feedback given to interns by the mentor about their performance in the internship programme. According to Figure 5.3, participant 1,4 and 7 responded that the mentor motivates the hard workers at the meeting by praising them. *'Sometimes the mentor would request everyone to clap their hands for appreciation if some people are doing well'*, responded participant 1. Participant 2,5,10,11, and 13 answered that there was no formal feedback given by the mentor about their performance. Participant 3 indicated that the mentor called him and showed him how to do something he did not understand. Participant 6 revealed that she asked others to show her how to do what she did not understand. '*I can see for myself what I don't know and learn from others*'. Participants 8, 9 and 12 responded that they themselves asked the mentor how they were performing. '*I sometimes go to her office and ask her how I was performing*', responded participant 12. When asked about the type of feedback she gave to her interns, the mentor answered that she concentrated on the best and also the bad performers and addressed them individually in her office. '*I usually call the bad performers to my office and address them individually. Those who did well I even announce them at meetings in order to motivate others*', concluded the mentor.

Study site 2: Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections)

Eight (8) participants, both male and female and one female mentor, were interviewed on this research site. Five (5) out of 8 participants were females forming the majority at about 63% because the clinical section was dominated by female nurses and female doctors. The same participants were interviewed in all three key aspects *guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties, assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns and feedback given to interns about their performance* in the Thulamela local municipality. For more demographic information, please see Chapter 4 Table 4.2.

A. Guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties

Figure 5.4, on the next page shows the guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties in the internship programme. As shown in Figure 5.4, all 8 (100%) participants responded that they were guided by the roster and logbook, which showed them where to go and what to do at what time. *'We are guided by the work roster which assigns us to four different sections, namely, Paediatric (Children's ward), Maternity (C-section), Casualty (emergency situations) and Surgery (simple surgical procedures)',* said participant 2. Participants 3 and 7 also indicated that they rotated in those four sections mentioned above as per the logbook which showed activities to be done on a particular day. *'We see patients depending on the rotations', replied participant 7.*

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Participants 6 and 8 mentioned that they checked the management plan daily to know what was to be done. The mentor indicated that they were guided by the health and safety regulations, log book and time roster, which guided her on how graduate interns should behave and manage the four different wards in the hospital. *'We have rules and regulations that advise us on what should be done and how to manage the interns',* said the mentor.

B. Assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns

Figure 5.5 shows the assessment plan used to evaluate graduate intern performance in the internship programme at Tshilidzini Hospital. As reflected in Figure 5.5, below all 8 participants indicated that they were always assessed to see if they were doing the right thing. Participants 1, 6 and 8 indicated that they were assessed by senior doctors through observation while they performed practically. *'You are given time to see the patients, diagnose the problem and prescribe the medication while the senior doctor is taking the rounds with you. If you make a mistake, the senior doctor intervenes immediately and advises you what you should do'*, explained participant 1. Participants 2, 3 and 5 replied that every day in the morning before they went to the wards there was a morning briefing where the senior doctor would be correcting the mistakes that he had noticed and advised us to also consult our manuals where we did not understand. *'If you knew that on a particular given date you would be evaluated performing say, for instance, a surgery, you had to prepare by reading from the manual how to do it. By doing that it is like you are preparing for any type of assessment such as exams,* added participant 7. *'Interns are always assessed because every time they go to the wards, senior doctors observe how they are treating the patients. We also give them scheduled assessments where each individual knows when they will be assessed on which section',* concluded the mentor.

C. Feedback given to interns by the mentor

Figure 5.6 shows that all 8 participants responded that they received feedback at the morning briefing from the senior doctor. *'All the mistakes that have been noticed by the senior doctor at wards are corrected in the morning briefing before we go to our different sections. This is done to avoid interns repeating the same mistakes again'*, said participant 5. Participant 7 indicated that while treating patients, the senior doctor gave them feedback when they completed the rounds. *'It depends on the type of task the intern is assigned to do. In theatre every step will be monitored thereby giving feedback because there is no room for mistakes when doing surgery'*, commented the mentor.

Study site 3: Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support Group and Business Study sections)

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To evaluate the management system implemented for mentoring graduate interns in the internship programme at this research site, only the Fashion Design section was randomly selected because it had the majority (8) out of the total of 13 participants making up about 62% of the total number of participants in all the three sections. Another reason the Fashion Design section was selected was that all the graduate interns in the three sections mentioned above on this research site were recruited and inducted by one Student Support Services (SSS) which controlled all the interns at that college. So, whatever was happening in one section was common to all the other sections in terms of the management system used for mentoring graduate interns.

Fashion Design section

Eight (8) participants, both male and female were interviewed. Five (5) female participants were the majority, comprising about 62% of the total number of participants and males were three (3). The same participants were interviewed in all three key aspects *guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties, assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns and feedback given to interns about their performance* in the Vhembe TVET College.

A. Guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties

Six (6) out of eight (8), making up about 75% participants, indicated that there were no policies or guiding principles in the Fashion Design section. *'We are only taught how to cut patterns and sew clothes, no policies',* replied participant 1. Participants 3 and 7 responded that they did not know anything about policies. The mentor mentioned that they only work by the instruction given from the top management. *'I am controlled by the top management how the interns should work. If they say they need say 200 work suits, it means that the interns must work until they reach the due date without rest. There are no policies written in black and white which we follow',* explained the mentor.

B. Assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns

All participants, including the mentor indicated that no assessment was given to graduate interns. *'We are always sewing. There is no time for other things'*, replied participant 1. The mentor indicated that her daily activity was to see that interns were sewing whatever the management wanted them to sew*. 'There is no time for anything else other than sewing because we work under pressure. Management gives you due dates and you must comply without fail'*, revealed the mentor.

C. Feedback given to interns by the mentor

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Six (6) out of eight, signifying about 75% of the total number of participants, indicated that there was no feedback given to them because they were not even assessed.

'The feedback we get is when our supervisor corrects or teaches us how to do something, for instance, when she is teaching us how to cut a new pattern', replied to participant 2. *'We are not evaluated like writing tests or exams. That is why there is no feedback',* responded participant 8. The mentor also commented that she only responded when something was done wrong by showing them how it should be done. *'There is no formal feedback given because we don't assess them',* concluded the mentor

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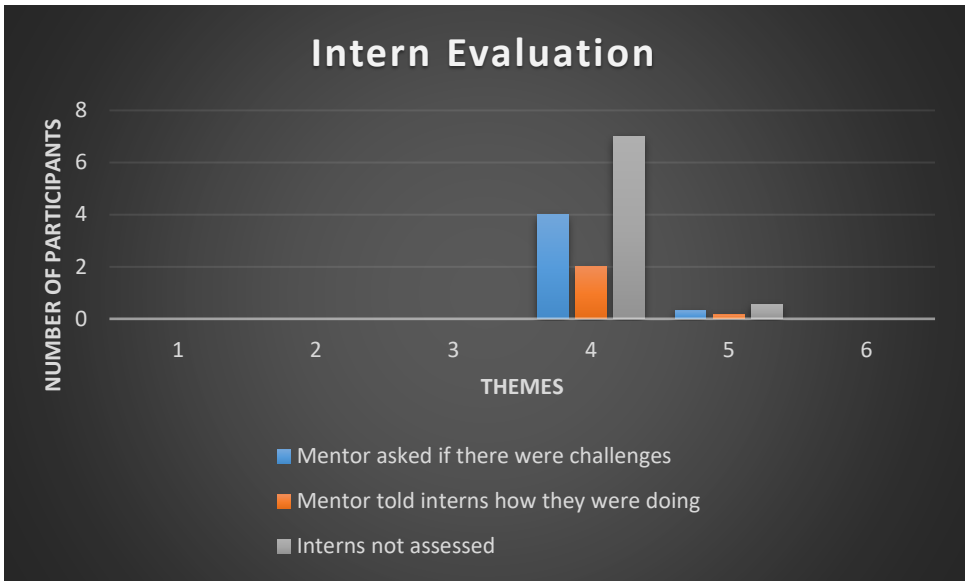


Figure 5.2: showing how interns are assessed at Thulamela local municipality

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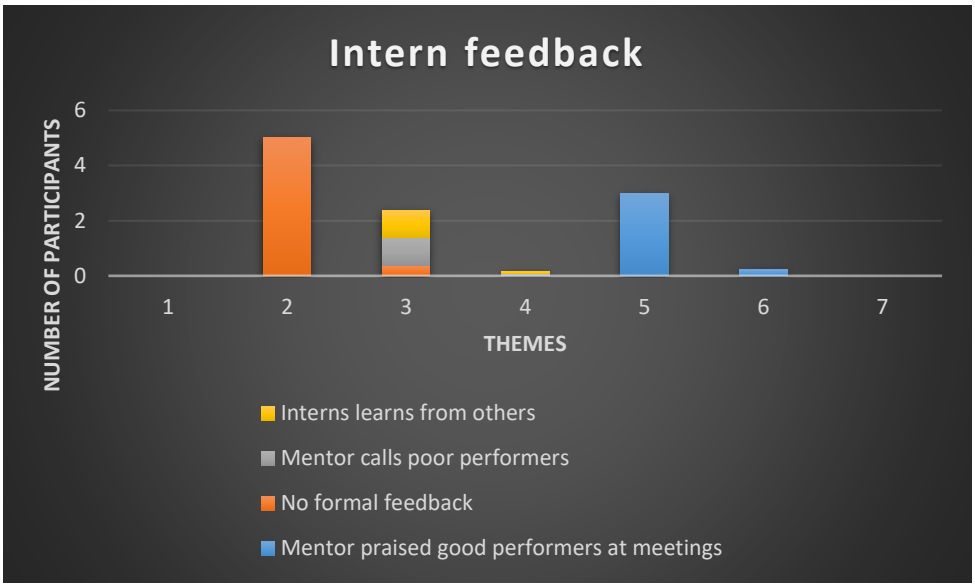


Figure 5.3: showing intern performance feedback at Thulamela local municipality

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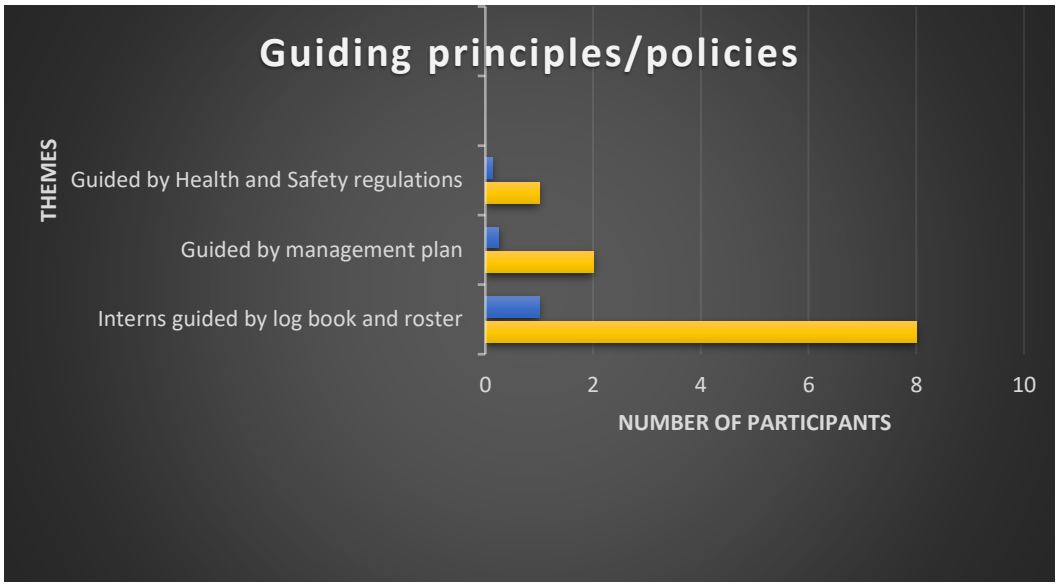


Figure 5.4: showing policies or guiding principles used by mentors when managing interns at Tshilidzini Hospital

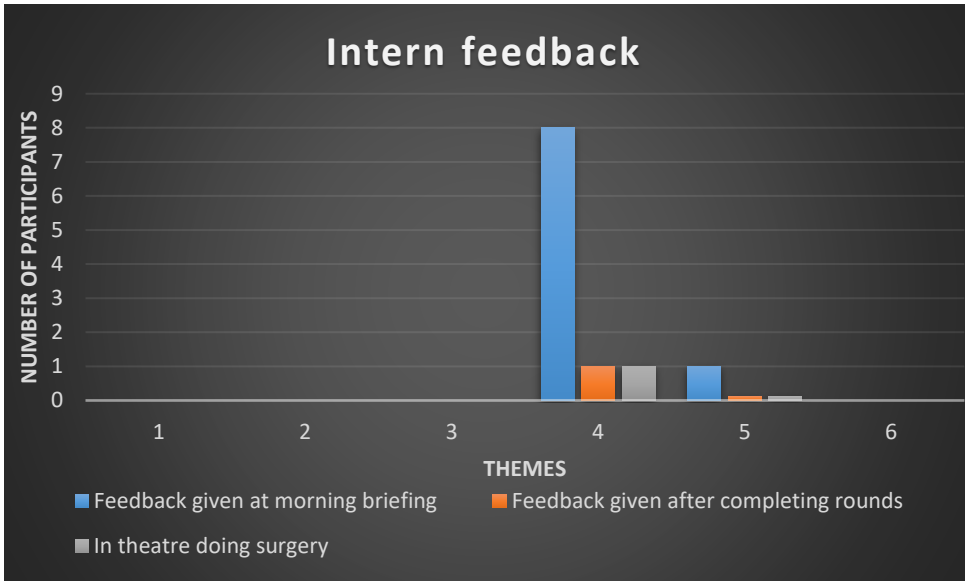


Figure 5.6: showing how mentors give feedback to interns after evaluation at Tshilidzini Hospital

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5.4 Discussion

The results of the data collected from the three study sites which are; Thulamela Local Municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design) revealed that the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern varied from institution to institution. The findings revealed that only the Tshilidzini Hospital had logbook, which according to the Medical and Dental Profession Board should be used in conjunction with the Handbook for Internship Training. The two documents have all the details concerning intern supervision, rotations in different domains, assessment, feedback and all other guiding principles. This, therefore, means that the Tshilidzini Hospital management system for mentoring interns was in line with the logbook and the Medical and Dental Profession Board regulations. This concurs with the report by Ramoolla *et al.* (2024) who maintained that a detailed logbook records clinical competencies achieved at the end of the training period. According to Hutton *et al.* (2024) medical managers, clinical managers, and intern curators at accredited facilities are responsible for ensuring that the Health Professional Council of South Africa HPCSA's requirements are met. The Thulamela local municipality and Vhembe TVET College used induction as their guiding principle or policy. Both research sites did not have formal guiding principles or policies that guided interns and supervisors on how interns should be managed. Although the issue of induction of graduate interns before they begin with their assigned responsibilities was emphasised in the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023), apparently, without guiding principles or policies that guide interns and mentors on how to perform their duties, induction alone cannot be enough. Although the Tshilidzini Hospital used the logbook and the Handbook for Internship Training to guide them in monitoring their work, no one from the Health Department came to monitor their internship programme. This was contrary to the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) which advocated that to ensure effectivity, the government must monitor the internship programme. Undoubtedly, a lack of government involvement in the management of the internship programme will result in many challenges experienced by both the interns and the management.

According to the DPSA (2006) internship policy and the Policies and Procedures Manual (2023), internship programmes should develop their assessment plan which will show how graduate interns would be assessed. As per the findings, only Tshilidzini Hospital had an assessment plan, but the other two, Thulamela local municipality and Vhembe TVET College did not have any formal evaluation taking place. This contradicts the findings by Adaimi *et al.* (2022), who opined that assessing the internship is, therefore, a continuous process based on qualitative and

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quantitative performance measurements, followed by gap identification and corrective actions. Anjum (2020) upheld that to achieve success in an internship, appropriate feedback from both the corporate supervisor and the institutional supervisor is a vital element in upgrading and maintaining the performance and professional development or refinement of learning goals to ensure the intern's progress. Surprisingly, only the Tshilidzini Hospital interns were given feedback about their performance. The other two research sites did not have feedback because they did not assess their graduate interns. This, therefore, raised the question, how did Thulamela local municipality and Vhembe TVET College graduate interns know whether they were progressing or not? Sasmito *et al.* (2015) stated that work experience can only be obtained if students are involved intensively in the internship program or directly involved in activities in the business or industry. Sasmito *et al.* (2015) statement suggests that proper management of the internship programme will bring about good results for the graduate interns.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study the management system put in place for mentoring graduate interns in the internship programme was examined. The findings revealed that only one research site, Tshilidzini hospital used the logbook and roster to guide graduate interns on how to perform their daily duties. The other two research sites did not have specific guiding principles or policies. This, therefore, means that this study discovered that the management system for mentoring graduate interns at the institution level varied from institution to institution. Some institutions depended on induction to mentor their interns without giving them formal assessment and feedback. During the induction of the graduate interns, they were taught mainly the ground rules of how to behave in the internship programme in terms of respecting their supervisors, honouring time for starting and ending. Nothing regarding intern's qualification and specific skills were discussed or explained. These findings suggest that majority of government institutions in South Africa could be undermining the directives of the internship policy, perhaps not only in the issue of management system put in place for mentoring graduate interns in the internship programme, but the entire internship at large.

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CHAPTER 6: EXPLORING VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF GRADUATE INTERNS ON THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Abstract

Researchers concur that internship programmes are a platform to bridge the gap between the education and labour systems by providing the requisite work experience to improve the graduates' employability. Many graduates believed that the combination of qualification and relevant work experience enhanced the chance of success in the labour market. However, researchers reported that despite graduates participating in the programme, most of them remained unemployed for a long time after completing their internship programme, while others engaged in employment opportunities that did not match their qualifications. For that reason, this study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme to see if it promoted graduate employability. Qualitative data was collected from three research areas, namely; Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Clothing Production, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). Altogether, 36 participants who were currently in the internship programme were interviewed using an open-ended interview guide. Participants were randomly sampled in their different study sites and were recorded using a voice recorder. The findings were thematically analysed using the Atlas ti.8 computer package. The main objective of this study was to explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme. Also, the host agency's views about interns' career path. The findings indicated that graduate interns and their mentors believed that internship programme enhanced the graduate interns' employability because they gained on-the-job skills and experiences. However, the challenge was that the management system of the internship programme varied from one institution to another. As a result of that challenge, some graduate interns completed their internship programme without the requisite skills and experiences required by the job market. This study, therefore, suggests that more research studies should be conducted to examine the implementation of the internship policy in the internship programme in South Africa.

Keywords: Employability, graduate, Intern, Internship programme, perceptions.

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6.1 Introduction

Some researchers believe that a combination of qualifications and relevant work experience enhance the chance of success in the labour market. They also reported that work Integrated Learning (WIL) was widely considered an important way of enhancing employability while studying (Khampirat *et al*. 2016; Nagle *et al.* 2018). Pan *et al.* (2018) upheld that internships serve as recruitment avenues where post-secondary or tertiary institutions provide professional industries to graduates with a mixture of high quality theoretical and practical skills. The internship was described as an experience where the student was trained to become a professional, that is, to develop skills and technical expertise and be socialized into the professional community (Ripamonti, 2018). Karunaratne *et al.* (2019) further reported that since it seemed that the industry preferred to absorb graduates with training experience, internship programmes helped the students secure their sooner employability. Although many researchers who reported in favour of the internship programme, in contrary, Cerulli-Harms (2017) examined the impact of post-graduate internships on early labour market performance. The results revealed that internships had significant detrimental effects on the probability of finding employment one year after graduation, on post-internship earnings, and on work satisfaction. Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2013) also claimed that mentoring relationships could become dysfunctional during the internship period when they were characterised by resentment, deception, overdependence, and harassment. Apparently, there are mixed feelings among researchers regarding the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate employability. It was for that reason that this study sought to explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme about interns' career path. Hereunder the method used to collect data is discussed.

6.2 Method

A qualitative method was employed to solicit qualitative data in three study sites, namely; Thulamela Local Municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Study sections). The study sites are found in the Thulamela Local Municipality in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. An interview guide with open – ended questions was used. Participants were interviewed individually, and a voice recorder was used to record their information. In all the three study sites participants were randomly sampled depending on availability. Only interested participants signed the participation consent form. About 13 participants from Thulamela local municipality, 8 from Tshilidzini Hospital and 15 from Vhembe TVET College were interviewed.

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Altogether, 36 participants were interviewed in all the three study sites. To adhere to ethics, names of participant were replaced by numbers. For more details, refer to chapter 3 of this document. Hereunder the results of the findings are discussed.

6.3 Results

Study site 1: Thulamela local municipality

Thirteen (13) participants and one female mentor who were interviewed in this chapter were the same participants whose demographic information was presented in Chapter 4, Table 4.1. Eight (8) of the participants were females, forming the majority at about 62% and 5 were males. For more demographic information, please refer to the above-mentioned chapter. Figure 6.1 below shows the positive experiences of graduate interns in the internship programme at the Thulamela local municipality. According to Figure 6.1, ten (10) participants, constituting about 80% responded that skills related to their qualifications were acquired because they were well placed. They also added that because of their good placement, they gained good skills and experience to prepare them for permanent jobs. Participants 3 and 10 responded that they thought their placement partially met their qualifications because they had Financial Management Diplomas but they were not dealing with finance. *"I am doing what I have learnt practically, and I am well placed"* responded Participant 5*." What I like about the internship programme is that I am doing something which is related to my qualification",* replied Participant 9. The mentor responded that she was happy with her interns because they were gaining on-the-job experience.

Study site 2: Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections)

Eight (8) participants, both male and female and one female mentor were interviewed on this research site. Five (5) out of 8 participants were females forming the majority at about 63%. That is because the clinical section was dominated by female nurses and female doctors. For more demographic information, please see Chapter 4 Table 4.2. Figure 6.2 on the next page shows the positive experiences encountered by graduate interns about the internship programme. As reflected in Figure 6.2 all the 8 participants, making up 100% response rate indicated that what they liked about the internship programme was that they learned in a practical way while getting paid and that they learned what was related to their qualifications*. "I like the way our supervisors supervise us, seniors are always there to guide us",* added participant 2. Participant 4 indicated that the internship programme allowed her to learn more and made her acquire skills and experience. Participant 5 replied that she liked exposure to make her learn from theory to practice.

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Participants 6, 7 and 8 mentioned that the internship made them to be able to work independently. All eight participants indicated that there was nothing bad about the internship programme.

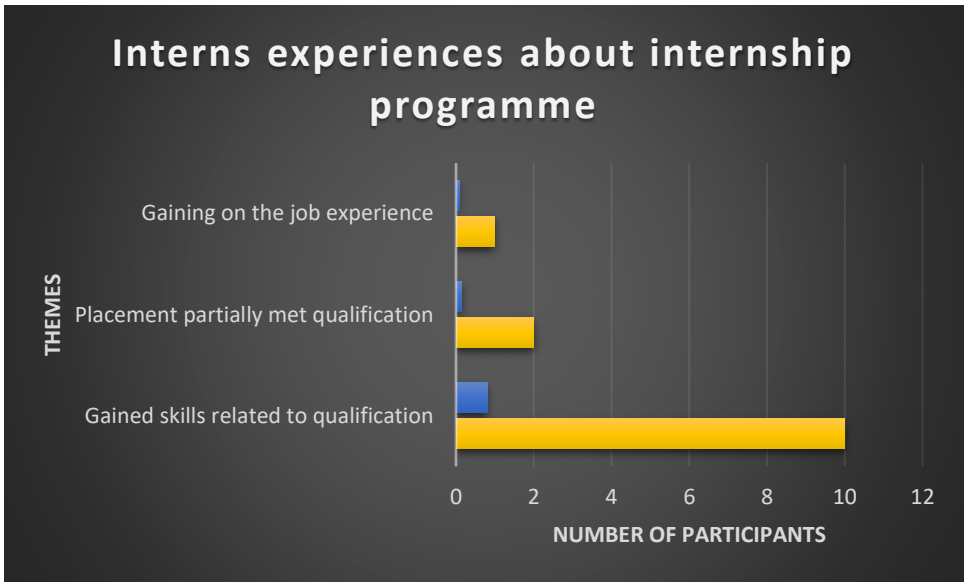


Figure 6.1, shows positive experiences of graduate interns about the internship programme at Thulamela local municipality

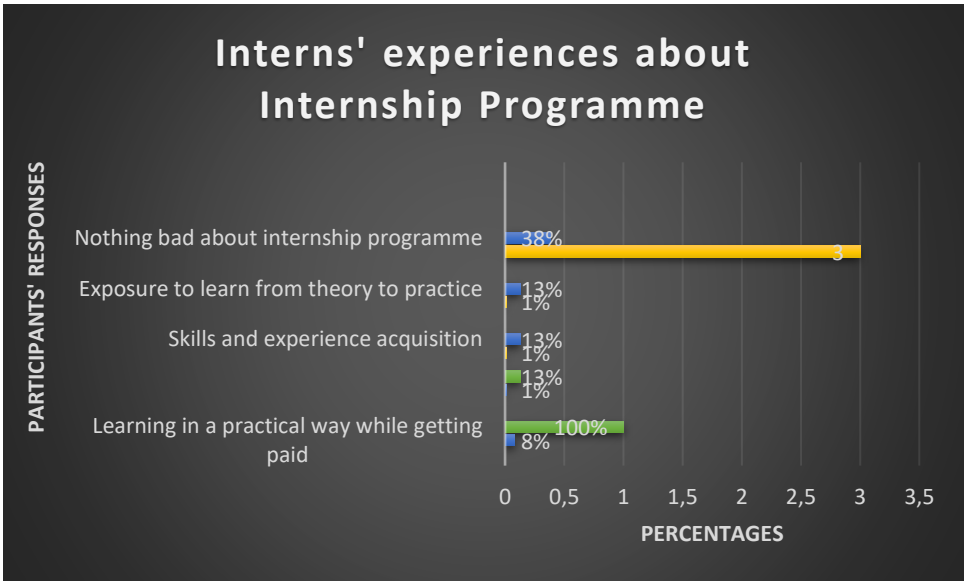


Figure 6.2 Positive experiences of graduate interns about the internship programme at Tshilidzini Hospital

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According to the mentor, the internship programme is helpful and it must be supported. When asked about her perception of the internship programme regarding promoting graduate interns, the mentor responded that graduate interns were basically repeating what they have learned at the universities. *"There is nothing better than doing what you learned in class in a practical way"*, responded the mentor.

Study site 3: Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support Group and Business Study sections)

A. Fashion Design section

Eight (8) participants, both male and female and one female mentor were interviewed. Five (5) female participants were the majority, comprising about 62% of the total number of participants and males were three (3). For more demographic information, please see Chapter 4 Table 4.3. Figure 6.3 displays the positive experiences of graduate interns about the internship programme. According to Figure 6.3, above, participants 1,3, 7 and 8 responded that they liked practising what they learnt at school. Participant 2 indicated that she enjoyed learning new patterns in the internship programme. *"Internship is good because it makes you do what you have learnt in a practical way",* replied to participant 3. Participant 4 responded that he would not have known how to cut patterns and sew clothes if it were not for the internship programme. *"What I liked about the internship programme is that the supervisor shows you how to do things if you don't understand",* replied to participant 5, According to participant 6, the internship offers opportunities to learn, share ideas and work with people from diverse backgrounds. Despite the good responses about the internship programme, some graduate interns indicated that there were also issues of concern they were not happy about in their section. The mentor also mentioned that there were issues that should be resolved to create a warm environment for interns. The participants were not happy with their stipends as they received different amounts. This was due to the fact that the interns were funded by different SETAs that paid stipend using different rates. Some SETAs paid better than rates than others. They also complained about the responsibilities assigned to them which was only sewing work suites and workers' dresses. *"We don't get the same stipend. Some of us get less stipend than others",* complained participant 3. Participant 2 indicated that she did not like sewing work suites and workers' dresses only as this does not allow her to be creative. The mentor also agreed with what the graduate interns were complaining about. The mentor had this to say: *"It is true. There is nothing they sew from their own creation because our work programme requires them to sew work suites and gowns for workers. There is no time for own creation"*.

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B. Technical Support Group

Three participants were interviewed in this section. Two (2) males representing 67% of the total number of participants, one (1) female participant and one female mentor, were interviewed in the Technical Support Group. For more demographic information, please refer to chapter 4, Table 4.4. Figure 6.4 shows positive experiences of graduate interns about the internship programme in the Technical Support Group section. According to Figure 6.4, above, participant 1 responded that internship was good because you learn in a practical way. Participant 2 responded that he enjoyed practising what he learned in class. He said: *"I like internship programme because it makes me learn new things like networking and Information Technology (IT) support with the help of my supervisor"*. The mentor mentioned that the group of graduate interns he was mentoring was happy with what their tasks and they were gaining more experience. *"I don't teach them much because they are quick learners.* They learn from each other even without my involvement", responded the mentor.

C. Business studies

Four participants, both male and female and one female mentor were interviewed in this section. Three (3) females, signifying 75% of the total number of participants and one (1) male were interviewed. For more demographic information, please see Table 4.5, in Chapter 4. Figure 6.5 hereunder shows graduate interns' feelings about the internship programme. As shown in Figure 6.5, above, two out of four participants indicated that they enjoyed practising what they learnt in class. Participant 1 stated that: *"I'm practically doing what I learned in class gaining experience, but there are also things I don't like"*. Participant 4 had this say: "*Internship programme is good, but sometimes we are loaded with work which is not part of our duties"*. When asked about the experiences of graduate interns in the internship programme, the mentor indicated that they enjoyed the programme very much and were gaining experience. She never said anything negative she experienced in managing the internship programme. According to participant 1, she was sometimes asked to do tasks which were not related to her qualification, like marking scripts for the mentor and invigilating students when they were writing tests. Participant 2 responded that there was nothing much she did not like about the internship programme. *"I felt like I did not have a mentor because he was always attending meetings and I had to do things without his supervision, that's what I did not like",* replied to participant 3. *"I did not know what I will be doing tomorrow; you are just told at that time what you are supposed to do. There is no work roster",* replied to participant 4.

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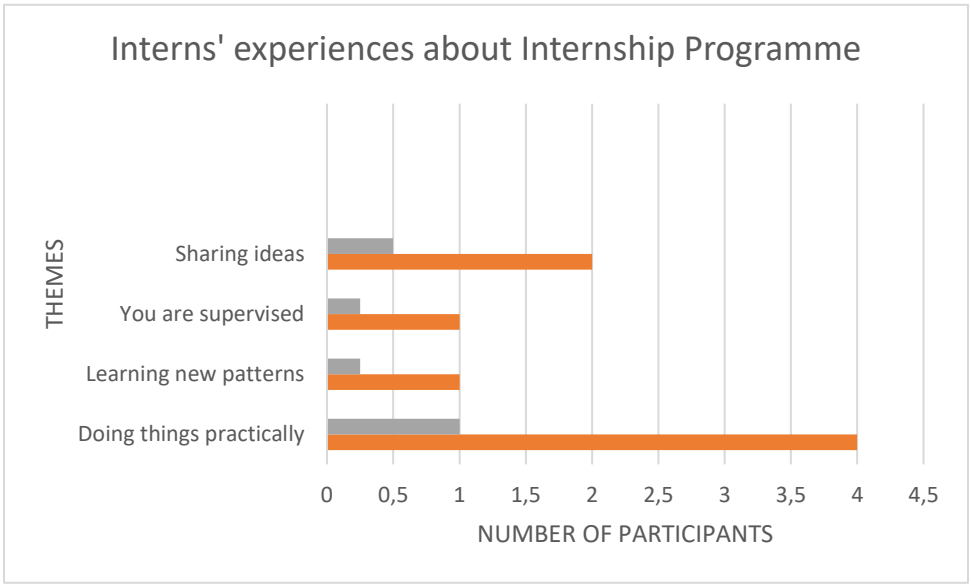


Figure 6.3 Interns' experiences about internship programme at Fashion Design section

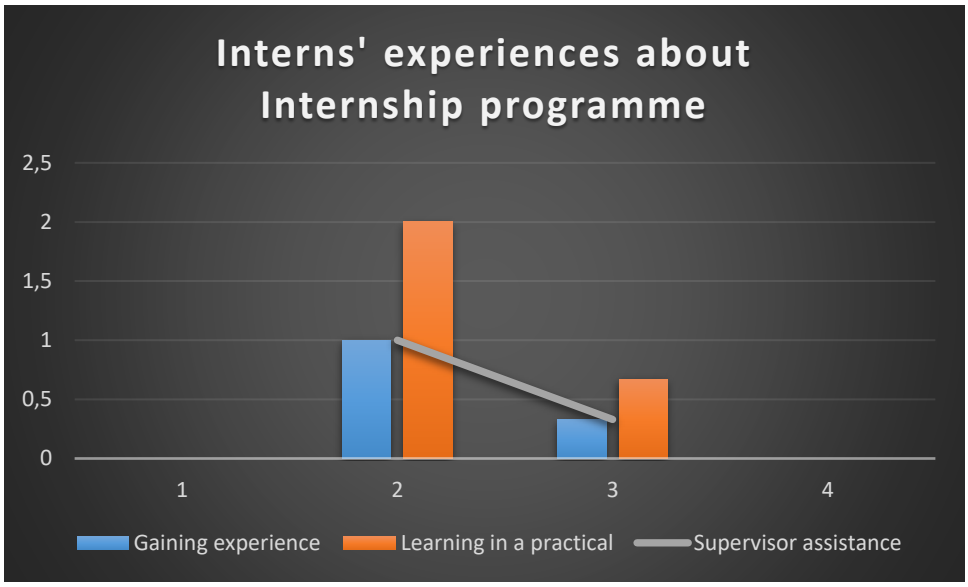


Figure 6.4 Positive experiences of graduate interns about the internship programme at the Technical Support section

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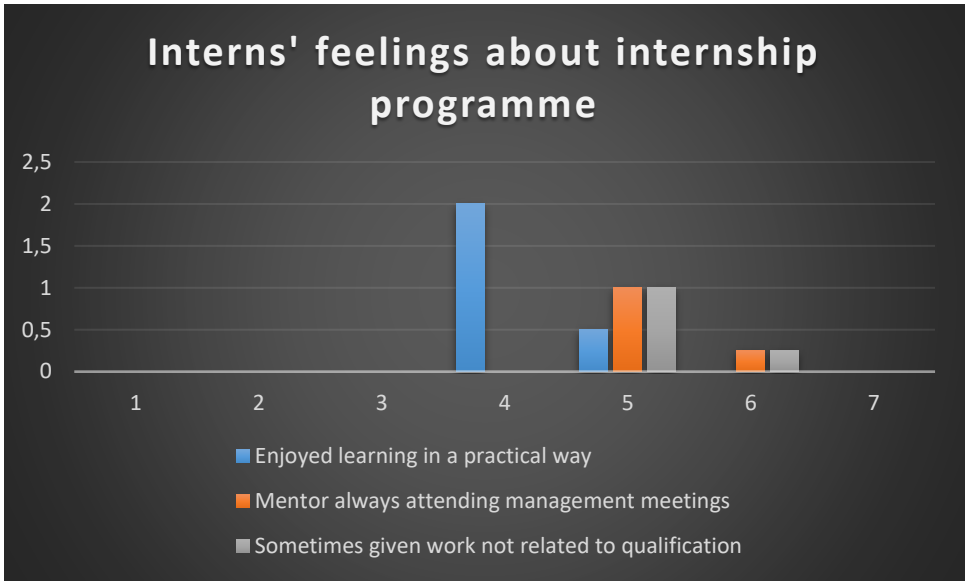


Figure 6.5 showing interns' feelings about the internship programme at Business studies section

6.4 Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that majority of the research participants in all three study sites responded in favour of the internship programme. According to the participants, the internship programme was good, and it helped them to gain on-the-job experience. This concurred with

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Osei-Owusu *et al.* (2013) who stated that work practice was one of the experiences that distinguished professional and non-professional practitioners. This was further supported by Hora *et al.* (2019), who reported that internships provide students with the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and allow employers to guide and evaluate talent. Similarly, Cramer *et al.* (2021) also reported that internships offered undeniable benefits and allowed students to evaluate host companies as future employment prospects, and vice versa. In a broader sense, internships could allow students to identify if a job role or industry sector represented a strong fit for their career needs (Cramer *et al.* 2021).

Participants at the Thulamela Local Municipality responded that skills related to their qualifications were acquired because they were well placed. They also added that due to their good placement, they gained good skills and experience to prepare them for permanent jobs. At the Tshilidzini Hospital study site all 8 participants indicated that what they liked about the internship programme was they practised what they learned while getting paid and that they learned what was related to their qualifications. These findings were in line with what other researchers, such as Hassan (2018) who, reported that internships provide students with the opportunity to apply the skills that they learnt in classroom settings in the world of work. Internships serve as recruitment avenues where post-secondary or tertiary institutions provide professional industries access to graduates with a mixture of high quality theoretical and practical skills. Pan *et al.* (2018) discovered that an internship is a student's learning experience in a real-life working environment relevant to his/her major. According to Kapareliotis *et al.* (2019), internship programs could reinforce technical competencies, improve analytical skills and most importantly, foster an awareness of the constant need for adaptability and creativity in a changing world.

Although an overwhelming majority of participants and their mentors viewed the internship programme as a good learning environment that promoted graduate work experience, there were a few other participants who perceived the internship programme as having more challenges than benefits. For, instance, some participants in the Vhembe TVET College (Business studies) indicated that they did not see the value of the internship programme because of how they were treated by the institution. This concurred with the report by Esia-Donkoh *et al.* (2015) who stated that lack of strict placement procedures, limitations of academic mentorship, and poor supervising practice in the industry were the major challenges of the internship mentoring program. Sisay *et al.* (2018) conducted a study on the impact of internship programs on engineering and technology education. The researcher found that the lack of strict placement procedures, limitations of

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academic mentorship, and poor supervising practice in the industry were the major challenges of the internship mentoring program. Based on these findings it is important to note that there are mixed feelings of the graduate interns on the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote their employability. However, it must also be noted that the majority of participants perceived the internship programme as beneficial to them. Apparently, one would conclude that the feelings of the graduate interns on the internship programme depend on how institutions manage the internship programme.

6.5 Conclusion

In this study, the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme and the host agency about interns' career path were examined. The findings revealed that most participants responded in favour of the internship programme. According to participants, the internship programme promoted their employability because they acquired on–the-job experience. However, other participants who formed the minority revealed that although the internship programme was good, the problem was with the management system in their institutions. This, therefore, means that it was not the internship programme that was a problem, but the management system of some institutions. The biggest question is, why do institutions which should be adhering to the directives and guidelines of the internship programme have different management systems for monitoring the internship programme? Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the internship policy is adhered to at the institution level? This study, therefore, suggests that more research should be conducted to examine the implementation of the internship policy in the internship programme in South Africa.

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CHAPTER 7: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY GRADUATE INTERNS AS THEY SERVED IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Abstract

Employers held the view that graduates who qualified from higher education institutions lacked the skills and competencies required in the labour market. Others believed that the purpose of the internship was to address lack of practical work experience and exposure to the realities of the world of work and reduce youth unemployment. However, there are many challenges and opportunities in the programme. On the contrary, it was discovered that a lack of career development plans and poor relationships between some interns and their managers were a major challenge to the successful implementation of the internship programme. As a result of the above-mentioned attributes, this study sought to examine the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme. A research study was conducted from three research sites, namely: Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Clothing Production, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). The main objective of this study was to examine the challenges encountered by interns during the implementation of the graduate internship programme. A qualitative method was employed to collect data using open-ended interview guide in the study sites. Altogether 36 participants who were currently in the internship programme were interviewed in all the above-mentioned research sites. Participants were randomly sampled in their different study sites and were recorded using a voice recorder. The findings were thematically analysed using the Atlas ti.8 computer package. The rationale for the study was to suggest measures that can be espoused to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate employability. The findings indicated that the challenges experienced in the internship programme gave the impression that the execution of the internship programme seemed to have a flawed planning and implementation process. The researcher also discovered that in some cases, the host organisations lacked resources, and interns were given many responsibilities that overwhelmed them master some skills to solve the problem of skills mismatch. This study, therefore, recommends that more research should be conducted to investigate the causes of the challenges experienced by graduate interns in the internship programme.

Keywords: Challenges, graduate, intern, Internship, skills development.

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7.1 Introduction

Researchers believed that internship programme was a useful tool for improving graduate employability through enhanced skills development, on-the-job training, alignment of theory to practice and the work experience employers require (Kinash *et al.* 2015; Wohlin, 2015; Jogan, 2019). An internship is a student's learning experience in a real-life working environment relevant to his/her major (Pan *et al.,* 2018). According to Kapareliotis *et al.* (2019), internship programs could reinforce technical competencies, improve analytical skills and most importantly, foster an awareness of the constant need for adaptability and creativity in a changing world. However, other researchers reported that although the internship programme has been recommended as a useful strategy to improve graduate employability, graduate interns completed the internship programme and still failed to get employment (Mc Kenzie *et al.* 2016; Hwang, 2017). It was for this reason that this study was carried out to examine the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme. The rationale for the study was to suggest strategies that can be espoused to improve the implementation of the internship programme. Hereunder, details of the methodology followed to collect data is discussed.

7.2 Methods

A qualitative method was employed to solicit qualitative data in three study sites, namely, Thulamela Local Municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections) and Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support and Business Study sections). The study sites are in the Thulamela Local Municipality in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. An interview guide with open – ended questions was used. Participants were interviewed individually, and a voice recorder was used to record their information. Participants were randomly sampled depending on availability. Only interested participants signed the participation consent form.13 participants from Thulamela local municipality, 8 participants from Tshilidzini Hospital and 15 participants from Vhembe TVET College were interviewed. Altogether, 36 participants were interviewed in all three study sites. To ensure anonymity, participants' names were replaced by numbers. For more detail, refer to chapter 3 of this document. Hereunder the results of the findings are discussed.

7.3 Results

Study site 1: Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section)

Thirteen (13) participants, both male and female and one female mentor were interviewed on this study site. Eight (8) participants were females, forming the majority at about 62% and 5 were

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males. For more demographic information, refer to chapter 4, Table 4.1. Figure 7.1, shows the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Thulamela Local Municipality (Land and Registration Section). As shown in Figure 7.1, thirteen participants indicated that there was no assessment or evaluation of graduate interns, no monitoring of the internship programme by officials from the government and there was a problem of inconsistency regarding the date of payment by SETA. Participant 1 indicated that the challenge she experienced was that some residential sites were not captured on the system and that some people bought stands that had already been bought. Participant 3 indicated that some clients were rude. She added that there is another challenge of getting employment after the internship programme. Participant 4 responded that the challenge she experienced was that there was no assessment or evaluation in the internship programme. *'You don't even know if you are excelling in your work or not,'* she added. *'We don't see any new employed graduates; you are not sure whether you will be employed when you complete the internship programme,'* replied Participant 5. Participant 9 indicated that when they went out for community service, citizens mocked them because they expected they were there to offer them jobs. Another problem was that they did not have name tags to show they were officials from Thulamela Local Municipality. Participant 10 responded that her challenge was that load shedding delayed her in meeting the deadlines of some submissions. Participant 11 indicated that sometimes SETA paid them late and she could not afford to pay transport fare and buy lunch at work. All participants indicated that there was no monitoring of the internship programme and evaluation of graduate interns. When asked about the challenges experienced in the internship programme the mentor had this to say, *'the challenge we experience is when graduate interns leave for other job opportunities without notice. It becomes very hard for us to find their replacement',* complained the mentor.

Study site 2: Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy Sections)

Eight participants, both male and female and one mentor were interviewed on this site. Five (5) out of 8 participants were females forming the majority at about 63%. For more demographic information, refer to Chapter 4, Table 4.2. Figure 7.2, shows the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme at the Tshilidzini Hospital.

As shown in Figure 7.2, participant 1 said she was experiencing challenges such as load shedding. She also mentioned that sometimes the network made it difficult for them when they wanted to call a senior doctor to come and assist in the ward. Participant 2 indicated that they were not given time to rest as they worked more hours because the hospital faced underemployment problems. Participant 3 mentioned that her biggest problem was to see patients

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die. She also added that if one graduate intern got sick, it always became too difficult for the three graduates to manage four departments. *'If you are sick they don't believe you are really sick'*, continued participant 3. *'There is too much work. We are always tired'*, grumbled participant 4.

Participant 5 responded that due to the shortage of doctors at the hospital, they were sometimes left alone in the ward without experienced doctors. According to participant 6, they worked more time without rest. *'You don't even get time for a break'*, she emotionally explained. Participant 7 mentioned that the period given to the internship programme is too short to master all the basics from four different departments. She also mentioned that another challenge they faced as graduate interns was that when they completed their degrees they were not given a chance to choose where they would like to be placed. *'When you complete your programme, they place you at the hospital of their choice without consulting you',* said participant 7. According to participant 8 in the Occupational Therapy (OT) department they were faced with many problems such as: budgeting problem, old infrastructure, lack of toys for the children's ward, insufficient number of wheelchairs for patients who needed that help, poor roads in communities which made the community outreach programme ineffective and lastly people did not know (OT) department. *'When you introduce yourself in the communities, people always wonder whether you are coming from the hospital or whether you are a private company. To make matters worse even some people who work here at the hospital don't know us'*, complained participant 8. The mentor also emphasised the challenge of graduate interns working long hours due to underemployment of senior doctors in the hospital. She also mentioned the problem of lack of resources and poor infrastructure which made their work difficult to perform. *'Our responsibilities are to save lives. If we don't compromise and do our best even in these bad situations, lives would be lost'*, continued the mentor.

Study site 3: Vhembe TVET College (Fashion Design, Technical Support Group and Business Study sections)

A. Fashion Design section

Eight (8) participants and one mentor were interviewed in this section. Five (5) participants were females, forming the majority, comprising about 62% of the total number of participants, and three (3) were males. For more demographic information, refer to Chapter 4, Table 4.3. Figure 7.3, shows the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Fashion Design section.

As shown in Figure 7.3, all the participants indicated that their big problem was that there was no support given by the institution to those who completed the internship programme to start their

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own businesses. *'We always hear those who completed complaining that the college does not help them to start their own businesses',* said participant 1. Participant 2 indicated that the challenge she experienced was that when people from other organisations came to benchmark, they were told that when graduate interns completed their internship programme they were given sewing machines to start their businesses. *'When we ask those who completed before us about this they say it is a lie they are not even consulted to see whether they are working or not',* explained participant 2. Participants 3, 6 and 8 complained about the problem of load shedding which delayed them when they were sewing. *'We are bound to stop working even if we have many orders because of lack of electricity. Another thing is that when you complete the internship programme, you are on your own the college does not bother to know what is happening with you'*, added participant 3. Participants 4, 5 and 7 indicated that if there were too many orders to be sewn, the college called those interns who had completed their internship programme to come and assist, but the college did not pay them or assist them in starting their businesses. When the mentor was interviewed about the challenges graduate interns were experiencing in her section she had this to say; *'Our work programme is a big challenge because it does not allow graduate interns to sew anything out of their creation. There is nothing I can do as a supervisor because there is no time to allow own creation because there is too much work. We even work overtime',* responded the mentor regretfully.

B. Technical Support Group

Three participants were interviewed in this section. For more demographic information, refer to Chapter 4, Table 4.4. Figure 7.4, shows the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Technical Support section. According to Figure 7.4, participant 1 mentioned that she felt like she was just wasting her time because there was nothing new she was learning. She also indicated that another challenge was that people confused technical support groups with end-users, the one-year programme which introduced learners to PCs (personal computers) and equipped them with word processing and office skills.

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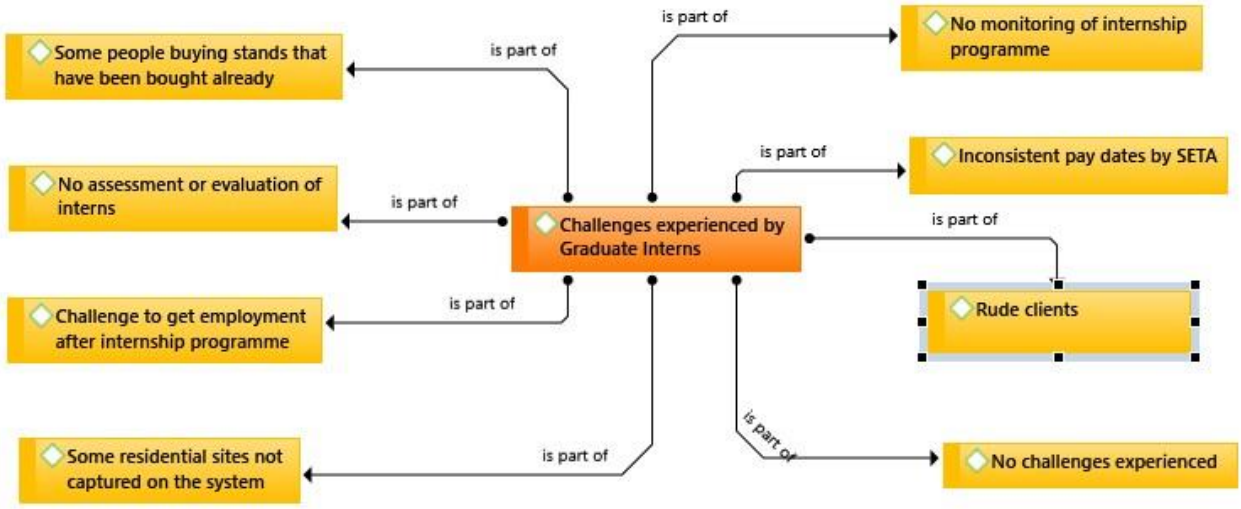


Figure 7.1: Challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme at Thulamela Local Municipality

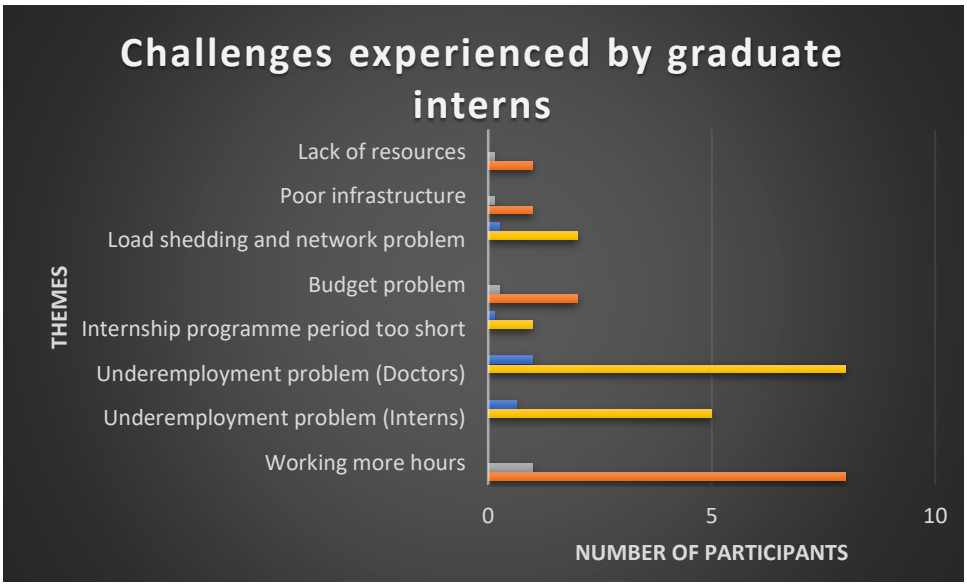


Figure 7.2: showing challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served at Tshilidzini Hospital

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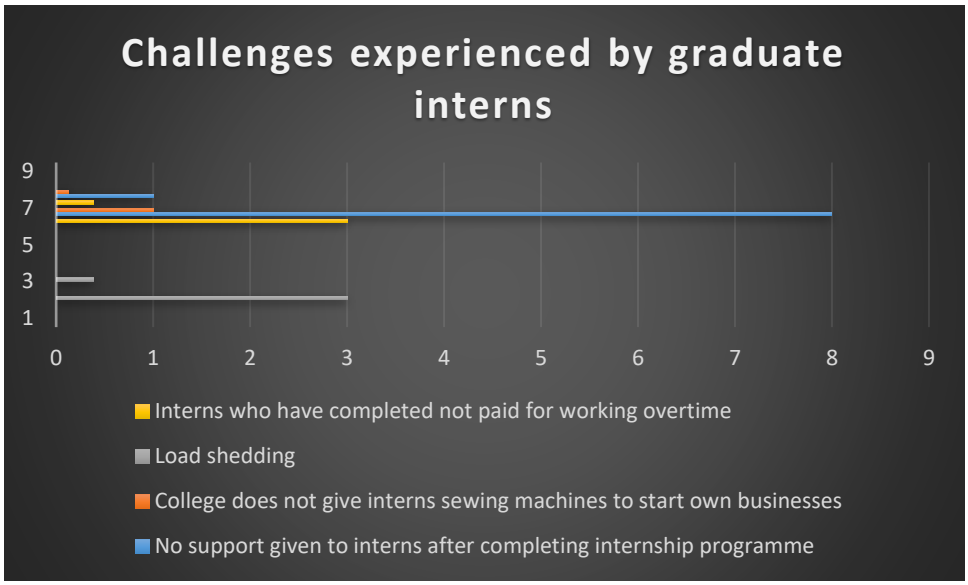


Figure 7.3: Challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Fashion Design section

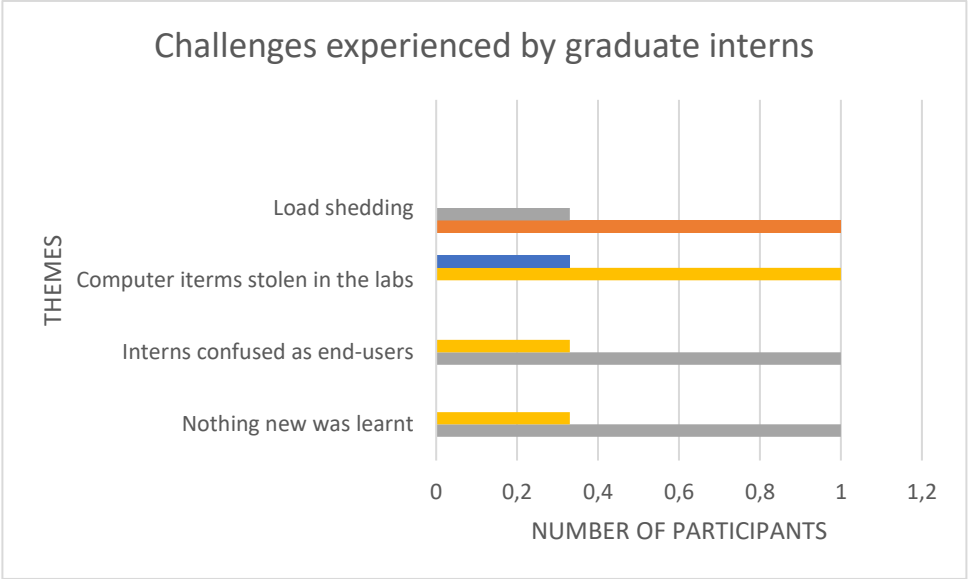


Figure 7.4: Challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Technical Support section

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C. Business studies section

Four (4) participants, both male and female and one mentor were interviewed in this section. For more demographic information, refer to chapter 4, Table 4.5. Figure 7.5, shows the challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Business Studies section. According to Figure 7.5, participants 1 and 4 indicated that the internship programme period which was 18 months was too short for the graduate interns to acquire the required skills and experience needed by the employers. According to them, the employers required three years of job experience as a minimum requirement, therefore, 18 months and three years did not match. According to participant 2, working without a duty roster sometimes resulted in her performing tasks which were not related to her qualifications. *'Sometimes I was given test scripts to mark which was not what I was supposed to do',* complained participant 2. Participant 3 responded that as an intern, she was not given time for presentations so that she could know how she was performing as a graduate intern. *'Internship programme is too short. You don't have enough time to master everything in the office in 18 months. Again we are not evaluated to see if we have acquired the right skills or not'*, responded participant 4. *'The challenge I see is that the18 months period given to interns is too short for them to gain more on the job experience'*, responded the mentor when she was asked about the challenges she was experiencing when mentoring the graduate interns in the internship programme.

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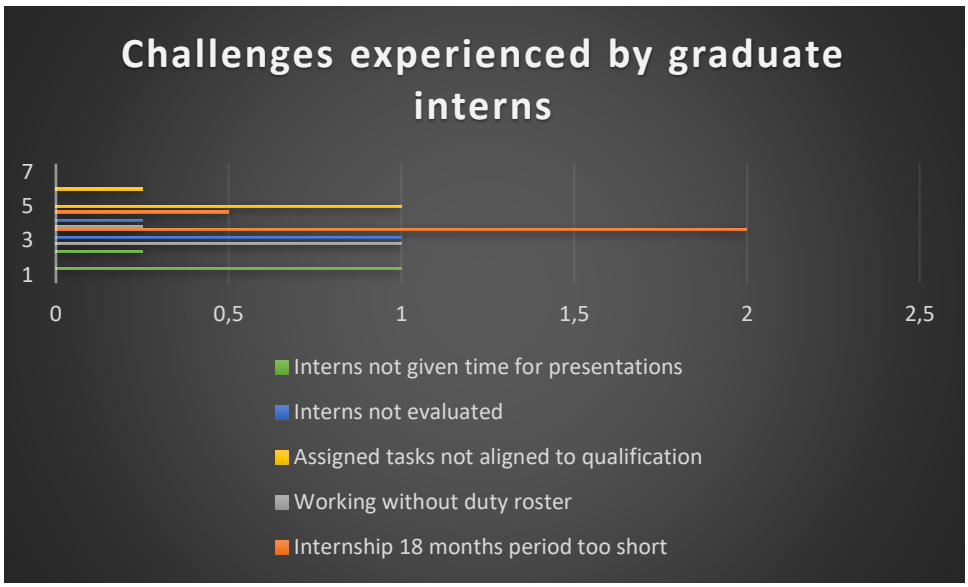


Figure 7.5: Challenges experienced by graduate interns as they served in the internship programme in the Business studies section

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7.4 Discussion

Despite the well-crafted internship policies to help students develop requisite skills and competencies, many graduates remained unemployable after completing the internship programme. This was also revealed by participants who were interviewed from Thulamela Local Municipality and Vhembe TVET College, who indicated that after completing the internship programme graduates who completed before them were seen roaming the streets without jobs. This concurs with the findings by Molobela (2024) who posits that unemployment is a national problem, therefore, even after completion of 12- and 24-months' internship programmes, graduates can still struggle to secure employment because no jobs are awaiting them. The study also discovered that another challenge which was common to all three study sites was the period given to the graduate intern to serve in the internship programme. Participants complained that the 18 months' internship programme period was too short compared to the 3-year requirement of the employers. This challenge was also reported by Maake- Malatji (2021), who mentioned that the period for which an internship extends has proven to be a problem. According to Maake-Malatji (2021), normally, internships last anything from three months to two years; but there are exceptions. In other words, the period of 18 months' internship programme given to the graduate interns is not good enough to make graduate interns gather enough skills and experience required by the job market.

The findings also revealed that the Tshilidzini research site was experiencing underemployment of senior doctors, interns working long hours, lack of resources and poor infrastructure as challenges faced by graduate interns. This concurs with the report by Dwamena (2010) who indicated that some interns complained that their mentors gave them far too much work than they were required to manage. Bama (2013) also discovered that in some cases, the host organisations lacked resources, and others gave interns many responsibilities that overwhelmed interns to master some skills to solve the problem of skills mismatch. This problem was further discovered by Mchunu *et al.* (2020) who reported that internship programmes are prone to challenges that could deter the attainment of their broader objectives. According to the above-mentioned researchers, some organisations exploit interns by giving them too much work. As we have heard from the responses of the participants at the Tshilidzini research site, graduate interns who were supposed to be learning from the senior doctors, were left alone with the patients without the guidance of the senior experienced doctors due to the problem of underemployment. Yet, graduate interns were supposed to save people's lives without experience. Hence, there was

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one participant at this study site who mentioned with regret that her biggest challenge as an intern was to see patients dying.

According to these findings participants in the Vhembe College Business studies section experienced the challenge of lack of duty roster or policies. The same challenge was also reported by Wu (2017) who indicated that other students faced challenges relating to lack of knowledge of the company's operating policies, graduate interns not given feedback about their progress, graduate interns not given time to do presentations and graduate interns not evaluated amongst others. This was contrary to the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023), which reiterated that the department must regularly review the duties performed by student interns to ensure that they are engaged in meeting their learning. All these challenges contravened the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) which advocated that the department must regularly review the duties performed by student interns to ensure that they are engaged in meeting their learning objectives. According to the above-mentioned manual, it is recommended that the student intern provide a presentation at the end of the internship or at appropriate intervals to demonstrate how the learning objectives were met. Regretfully, that was not done in the research sites mentioned above. If communicating with the intern to review progress, share observations, answer questions, assess overall performance, suggest areas of improvement and provide general support and encouragement as suggested by the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) is not done in the internship programme, how can the host agencies be sure whether the intern has acquired on-the-job skills or not?

The DPSA (2006), supported by the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) suggest that a system for monitoring, evaluating and supporting the internship programme must be implemented. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of supervisors, mentors and their line managers responsible for the internship programme. Performance management systems should recognise contributions made by managers to support the internship programme. Section 3(5)(a) of the Public Service Act 1994, stipulates, among other things, that the intern must enter into a mentorship agreement with a mentor or coach assigned to them. The agreement must include a work plan used as a tool for measuring their development, and interns must be evaluated using the approved '*Internship Reporting Tool'* (Stewart *et al.* 2018). However, on the contrary, participants in all three research sites indicated that there was no monitoring by the government and no evaluation of performance taking place in the internship programme. This, therefore, implies that the effectiveness of the internship programme regarding improving graduate employability is questionable.

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7.5 Conclusion

A major lesson that has emerged from the findings of this study is that there was a lack of monitoring of the internship programme at institutions. As a result of this lack of monitoring, some institutions did not manage internship programme in accordance with the regulations of the Internship Policy. Hence, many challenges experienced by graduate interns are discussed above. Another disturbing challenge reported by the majority of the participants was that they were not evaluated after completing their programme to see if they had acquired the required skills. Except for the Tshilidzini Hospital research site, all the other research sites did not give graduate interns feedback and the opportunity to present. In conclusion, some researchers reported that it was not clear whether the internship programme or its implementation process prevented the programme from meeting its intended objectives. To clear that doubt by some researchers, the findings of this study revealed that the implementation of the internship programme was the challenge that made the internship programme not to meet its intended objective, that of promoting graduate employability.

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CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

In order to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate intern employability, the following specific objectives were devised and used as themes to evaluate how internship programme was managed in various government institutions. These are; *To examine assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate interns' basic qualifications; To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate interns at the institution level; To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns and mentors on the internship programme in relation to their career path; To examine the challenges encountered by interns during the implementation of a graduate internship programme and; To suggest measures that could be espoused to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate employability*. A research study was conducted at three research sites, namely; Thulamela Local municipality (Land and Registration Section), Vhembe TVET College, Makwarela Campus, (Clothing Production, Technical Support and Business Studies sections) and Tshilidzini Hospital (Clinical and Occupational Therapy sections). The main objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate interns' employability. A qualitative method was employed to collect data using an open-ended interview guide in all three study sites. Altogether 36 participants who were currently in the internship programme were interviewed in all the above-mentioned research sites. Participants were randomly sampled in their different study sites and were recorded using a voice recorder taking cognisance of their consent. The findings were thematically analysed using Atlas ti.8 computer package. The rationale of this study was to address the problem of mismatch between graduates' qualification skills and the employment requirements, which resulted in many graduates being unabsorbed into the workforce even after completing the internship programme. Hereunder the key findings per objective are presented.

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8.2 Key findings

The following key findings were obtained:

Objective 1: *To examine responsibilities assigned to graduate interns in relation to their basic qualifications.* It was revealed that in all the research sites, the placement of graduate interns was in line with their qualifications. Although there were some problems experienced in the internship programme; one could then say that the assigned responsibilities of graduate interns in the three research areas matched the graduate interns' qualifications. In Thulamela local municipality and Vhembe TVET Colleges, interns were each placed in section based on their qualifications. At the Planning and Development Section of the Thulamela Local Municipality, all 13 participants were supervised by one female mentor. The interns were distributed into three offices where each office had one leader who reported directly to the mentor. At the Occupational Therapy (OT) and Clinical sections in Tshilidzini Hospital, all interns where under the supervision of two senior officials, a lady and a gentleman. The (OT) which belonged to the Allied Section of the hospital, had only one intern who was supervised by one female mentor. The clinical Section had t 23 interns supervised by one senior doctor as their mentor. However, out of the 23 interns at the section, only 8 respondents agreed to be interviewed. In the Clinical section, interns were evaluated by senior doctors as they were seeing patients. At each section in the Vhembe TVET College, Fashion Design hosted 8 interns, Technical Support were 3 interns and Business Study hosted 4 interns. Each intern was assigned one mentor. Interns were inducted before placement to acquaint them with their responsibilities in each section. Each mentor supervised his or her interns as they performed their responsibilities. The findings revealed that placement of graduate interns in the internship programme was fairly done, the common thing in all the study sites was that interns were placed and assigned responsibilities that matched their qualifications and all interns had mentors to supervise them. In all the study sites, there were skills which were common to all the interns such as; time management, computer literacy (typing, reading and sending emails), office administration in general and teamwork. Office administration was very evident at the Thulamela Local Municipality; interns were in charge of offices working with customers.

However, the challenge lies with how various institutions managed their internship programme. It is, therefore, not clear why public institutions in the same country in the same local municipality, which should be guided by one policy have different management systems for mentoring graduate interns. Failure of some institutions to evaluate and give feedback to graduate interns to see how they were progressing is one of the reasons that the internship

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policy was not considered. This study, therefore, recommends that future research should be conducted evaluating the importance of assessment and feedback on mentoring interns in the internship programme.

Objective 2: *To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institutional level*

To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institution level, the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023) was used as a guide and the three key aspects *guiding principles/ policies advising interns how to perform their duties, assessment plan implemented to evaluate graduate interns and feedback given to interns about their performance* were used as sub-themes to evaluate the management system implemented by Thulamela local municipality, Tshilidzini Hospital and Vhembe TVET College research sites. The findings revealed that the Tshilidzini Hospital's management system for mentoring interns aligned with the logbook and the Medical and Dental Profession Board manuals. In other words, the Tshilidzini Hospital used the logbook and the Medical and Dental Profession Board manuals to guide mentors and graduate interns on how to perform their duties. Whereas, in contrary, the Thulamela local municipality and the Vhembe TVET College depended on induction to manage their graduate interns in the internship programme. The findings also revealed that these two research sites did not have an assessment plan, or strict supervision of the internship programme and interns were not given feedback about their performance. Again, the problem of disregarding the internship policy by some institutions has become an issue that raised many questions. This is because if every institution adhered to the guidelines of the internship policy, there would not be any challenge of assessment, giving feedback and giving interns time for presentations. This study recommends that future research should be conducted on the implementation of the internship policy in public institutions in South Africa.

Objective 3: *To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns and mentors on the internship programme in relation to interns' career path.*

The main objective of this study was to explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme. The findings revealed that graduate interns and their mentors in all the study sites believed that the internship programme enhanced the graduate interns' employability because they gained on-the-job skills and experiences. However, the challenge was that the management system of the internship programme varied from one

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institution to another. As a result of that challenge some graduate interns completed their internship programme without the requisite skills and experiences required by the job market. It is so disappointing to learn that some graduate interns completed their internship programme and left without having gathered the on- the- job skills that internship programme was meant to provide. If institutions are supposed to do one thing that has guidelines in a different way, it really raises questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the internship programme regarding enhancement of graduate employability. If every institution adhered to internship policy, why variety in the management system? Again the challenge of disregarding the internship policy by government institutions is clearly obvious. This study recommends that further research about the role of monitoring internship programme in the public institutions in South Africa should be conducted.

Objective 4: *To examine the challenges encountered by the intern during implementation of graduate internship programme*

The main objective of this study was to examine the challenges encountered by the intern during implementation of the graduate internship programme. The findings revealed that the challenges experienced in the internship programme gave the impression that the execution of the internship programmes seemed to have a flawed planning and implementation process. The findings also show that in some cases, the host organisations lacked resources, and others gave interns many responsibilities that overwhelmed them to master some skills to solve the problem of skills mismatch. Apparently, poor planning comes because of ignorance of guiding principles advising how mentors and managers should manage the internship programme. These findings reveal a serious disregard for the internship policy in public institutions in South Africa. It was also noted that the regulatory framework underpinning internship programme, such as the internship policy (DPSA, 2006) and the Internship Policies and Procedures Manual (2023), were not adhered to by the majority public institutions. To address this problem, this study recommends that future research investigating the causes of the challenges experienced by graduate interns in the internship programme should be conducted. Hereunder Figure 8.1, shows a suggested effective internship programme that will promote graduate employability.

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Figure 8.1: showing suggested effective internship programme

8.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that the internship programme had a positive impact by giving exposure and transferring the necessary skills to graduate interns. Some institutions did not adhere to the internship policy and manual procedures. The policy and regulatory framework seemed to be a common problem in all the objectives. Unfortunately, ignorance of the regulatory framework was the key resultant of the many challenged bedevilling graduate internship programme. As per the internship policies and Procedure manual, there is need for responsible department to emphasis monitoring of the internship programme implementation. The findings revealed that in all three research sites, the department responsible for policy implementation did not emphasise on monitoring the internship programme implementation processes.

8.4 Recommendations

This study was encored by Human Physical Theory, which suggested that it was the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills, creativity and attitudes towards work that determined an individual's competitiveness in the labour market. The internship programme has been

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recommended as a useful strategy to provide skills and experience that is required by the job market. In contrary, instead of the internship programme to promote graduate employability, employers cited a skills mismatch between graduate interns' qualifications with the skills required by the employers as the reason graduates remained being unabsorbed into the work force even after they completed the internship programme. For this reason, this study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme as a strategy to promote graduate employability. With the guidelines of the internship policy four objectives discussed above were used to assess the effectiveness of the internship programme to see how it promoted graduate employability. The findings revealed some gaps in the implementation of the internship programme at public institutions. The two main common gaps identified were: lack of monitoring of the internship programme by government and that of some institutions not adhering to the internship policy when managing interns in the internship programme. Except for the Tshilidzini Hospital, the other two study sites; Thulamela Local Municipality and the Vhembe TVET College had a common challenge of not giving interns formal feedback. They both did not have an assessment plan. This study, therefore, recommends that a common assessment and feedback plan be provided for use and at a specified period, like fortnightly or quarterly. This would ensure that all host agencies assess and give feedback to interns within a specified timeframes across the board. It is further recommended that in case an intern is assigned tasks not aligned to his or her qualification, the intern should report the matter to the Internship Committee or Human Resources manager of the host agency. The government department responsible should also develop a monitoring tool and appoint monitors who would monitor internship programmes timeously. It is paramount to have mentors who are competent and understand the requisite guidelines of the internship programme. To ensure effective implementation of the internship programme, It is vitally importance that the responsible government department enforce adherence of the internship policy by introducing a zero tolerance to non-compliance with the policy for public institutions and also ensure that mentors are conversant with the programme policies. Table 8.1 presents a summary of the findings per objective.

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Table 8.1: summary of the findings per objective

Objective	Findings	Gaps	Suggestions	Recommendations for future research
1. *To examine assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate intern's basic qualifications.*	Placement matched qualification	There were challenges with management of the internship programme	- Adherence to internship policy - Internship monitors	Placement of graduate interns in the internship programme in public institutions.
2.. To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institutions level.	Tshilidzini Hospital used a log book and other health manuals to guide mentors	Other sites depended on induction and no policies	- Adherence to internship policy - Internship monitors	Implementation of the internship policy in the public institutions in South Africa.
3. To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns and mentors on the internship programme in relation to intern's career path.	Interns and mentors responded in favour of the internship programme	The management system varied from one institution to another	- Adherence to internship policy - Internship monitors	about the role of monitoring internship programme in the public institutions in South Africa.
4. *To examine the challenges encountered by the intern during implementation of graduate internship programme*	The execution of the internship programme seemed to have flawed planning	Lack of resources. Interns given overwhelming responsibilities by other host organisations	- Adherence to internship policy - Internship monitors	Investigating the causes of the challenges experienced by graduate interns in the internship programme should be conducted.

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9. APPENDICES

9.1 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: CASE OF THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION TOOL:

GROUP 1: GRADUATE INTERNS CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Code: _____

Date: _____

Name of the Host Agency: _____

SECTION A: Respondents Profile

*Every response you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality. May you please provide and complete required information either by inserting a cross **[X]** on the block provided or by writing the information as required.*

1. Gender: Male **[ ]** Female **[ ]** Other **[ ]**
2. Your age: <18 years **[ ]** 19-23 Years **[ ]** 24-28 Years **[ ]** **29-33** Years **[ ]** **34-38** Years **[ ]** 39 & above years **[ ],** Specify the year **[_____]**
3. What is the name of the District Municipality you come from? **[_____]**
4. What year did you graduate? **[_____]**
5. What where you awarded when you graduated? State it in full **[_____]**
6. Which year did you join the internship programme? 2018 **[ ]** 2019 **[ ]** 2020 **[ ]**
7. When are you completing the internship programme: 2019 **[ ]** 2020 **[ ]** 2021**[ ]?**
8. Which organization funded your internship: BANKSETA **[ ]** HWSETA **[ ]** Service SETA
9. **[ ]** SASETA **[ ]** AGRISETA **[ ]** NRF **[ ]**
10. Were you paid any stipend: Yes **[ ]** No **[ ]**
11. Who paid the stipend: Funding organization **[ ]** Host Agency **[ ]** Other (specify): [_____

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SECTION B: Open Ended Questions

11) **To examine assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate intern's basic qualifications.**

vii. As a graduate intern, what activities are you assigned to perform?

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

viii. List the specific activities that you perform every day from the time you arrive to the time you leave your work station?

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____ _

ix. List any three things that you are given by your mentor/supervisor to guide you when performing your duties in the internship programme

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

x. What would you suggest should be done to improve the internship programme?

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____ _

12) **To explore the views and experiences of the graduate interns on the internship programme and the host agency in relation to intern's career path.**

i. How were you received when you first reported at the host agency?

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

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ii. What was done to help you familiarise with the host agency after you joined the programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iii. In relation to your degree/career, what do you like most about the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iv. In relation to your degree/career, what did you not like about the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

v. What would you suggest should be done to improve the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

vi. List the positive experiences you have so far encountered with your internship mentor/supervisor?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

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vii. List the negative experiences you have so far encountered with your internship mentor/supervisor?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

viii. What else would you suggest should be done to improve the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

13) To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institutions level

vi. Has the agency/mentor given you an internship policy, procedure, process and practice to guide you in performing your internship?

a. _____ ___

vii. List the key milestones you are expected to achieve at the end your internship programme.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

viii. What kind of feedback do you get from your mentor to make you know how you are performing in the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

ix. If you fail to achieve the important milestones you are expected to perform, how are you assisted by your mentor/supervisor to ensure that you accomplish them?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

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x. What more do you think should be done to make the implementation of the internship programme better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

14) **To examine the challenges encountered by the intern, mentor and hosting institution during implementation of graduate internship programme;**

i. List the challenges you have faced so far as you serve in the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

ii. How are the challenges you are facing being addressed?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iii. List the challenges you are facing with your mentor/supervisor?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iv. How are the challenges you are facing with your mentor/supervisor being addressed?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

v. List the challenges you may have encountered with the internship host agency?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

vi. How were the challenges with the host agency addressed?

a. _____

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b. _____

c. _____

vii. What else would you suggest to be done to make the internship programme better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

15) **To suggest measures that can be promoted to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate employability.**

vi. What do you think could be done to make the internship programme better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

vii. What would you suggest should be done to make experiences with the mentors better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

viii. What would you suggest should be done to make the internship programme implementation better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

ix. What would you suggest should be done to make the experiences with the host agency better?

d) _____

e) _____

f) _____

x. What would you suggest government should do to impr0ve the implementation of the internship programme in South Africa?

d) _____

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e) _____

f) _____

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: CASE OF THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION TOOL

GROUP 2: GRADUATE INTERN MENTORS/SUPERVISORS

Code: _____

Date: _____

Name of the Host Agency: _____

SECTION A: Respondents Profile

*Kindly note that every response you provide below will be treated with utmost confidentiality. May you please provide and complete required information either by inserting a cross **[X]** on the block provided or by writing the information as required.*

1. Gender: Male **[ ]** Female **[ ]** **Other [ ]**
2. Age: <18 years **[ ]** 19-23 Years **[ ]** 24-28 Years **[ ]** **29-33** Years **[ ]** **34-38** Years **[ ]** 39 & above years**:** Specify the year **[_____]**
3. Which District Municipality do you come from? **[_____]**
4. How long have you been in this institution? **[_____]**
5. What position do you currently hold at the intern host agency? [_____]
6. Which organization funded the internship programme: BANKSETA **[ ]** HWSETA **[ ]** Service SETA **[ ]** SASETA **[ ]** AGRISETA **[ ]** NRF **[ ]**

SECTION B: Open Ended Questions

7) **To examine assigned responsibilities in relation to the graduate intern's basic qualifications;**

i. What specific activities that are often assigned to the graduate intern in your institution?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

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ii. What do the interns do from the time of arrival until the time he/she leaves?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____ iii. What specific milestones are interns expected to achieve or accomplish at the end of the internship programme?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iv. How do you ensure the graduate intern completes his/her assigned responsibilities?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

v. What would you suggest should be done to improve the effectiveness of the internship programme in your host institution?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

vi. What more would you suggest should be done to make the internship programmes better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

8) To evaluate the management system put in-place for mentoring the graduate intern at the institutions level

i. Does the host agency maintain a graduate intern's mentorship management system? (If possible, may you kindly provide a copy)?

a. _____

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ii. What are the key requirements of the management system in relation to the intern career development?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iii. List the key milestones that a graduate intern is expected to accomplish before the internship programme is completed.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

iv. If the graduate intern did not accomplish the key milestones expected in 7) iii above, what is done in order to assist him/her to accomplish them?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

v. What would you suggest should be done to make the effectiveness of the internship programmes better?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

9) To examine the challenges encountered by the intern institution during implementation of graduate internship programme;

i. As the graduate intern mentor/supervisor, what challenges have you encountered in mentoring the intern?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

ii. How were the challenges you listed in number 3) i. above addressed?

a. _____

b. _____

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c. _____

10) **To suggest measures that can be promoted to enhance the effectiveness of the internship programme in improving graduate employability.**

i. What do you think should be done to make the internship programme better?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

ii. What would you suggest should be done to improve the relationship between the graduate internee and the mentor/supervisor in the internship programme?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

iii. List negative experiences you have so far encountered with your internship graduate intern.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

iv. How were the negative experiences you have experienced with your internship graduate intern in 7) iii above addressed?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

v. What else would you suggest to be done to improve implementation of the internship programme?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

END OF QUESTIONS

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9.2 ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mr TV Netshilongwe

STUDENT NO:
9410200

PROJECT TITLE: Effectiveness of the Internship programme as a strategy to improve graduate Employability: Case of Thulamela municipality.

ETHICAL CLEARENCE NO: FSEA/22/IRD/19/2811

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Dr BM Kilonzo	UNIVEN, Institute for Rural Development	Supervisor
Dr MM Manjoro-Mwale	UNIVEN, Institute for Rural Development	Co-Supervisor
Mr TV Netshilongwe	UNIVEN, Institute for Rural Development	Investigator – Student

Type: Doctoral Research
Risk: Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)
Approval Period: November 2022 – November 2025

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: November 2022

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof TS Mashau

Signature

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