



Employability of TVET Graduate Placement

Evaluation Study

Executive Summary

The current document outlines the process taken to carry out an evaluation study on the employability of TVET Graduate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme in the Safety and Security Sector from 2015/16 – 2017/18.

The overall aim of this study is to evaluate the employability of TVET graduates funded under SASSETA work integrated learning (WIL) programmes who have received their National Diplomas within three (3) years post certification. To identify employers who give employment opportunities to learners certificated on the SASSETA funded programme. The evaluation study was conducted through a process of telephonic interviews to graduates that were reported on the SQMR database. A questionnaire has been used during interview with Graduates to determine their employability status since they have completed the workplace programme. Respondents were afforded the opportunity to respond accordingly. The evaluation study findings and recommendations is incorporated in the final report.

Difficulties encountered during this study hampered by unforeseen circumstances such as a large number of learners that could not be reached for various reasons. Another difficulty experienced during this process was limitation to required information due to Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority movement to new offices where documents were kept offside.

Most of the Graduates appreciated being asked about their workplace learning, were interested in the study and were willing to provide detailed input. Overall a total number of n = 40/ 1355 interviews (response rate: 4%) was conducted.

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The challenges facing the country with regard to the skills shortage and employability has necessitated a fresh approach to addressing the skills constraints in the country. South Africa faces a critical challenge of skills shortage, which is seriously threatening economic growth and employment creation regard the situation as a paradox of skills shortages in the workplace and high levels of unemployment. A skilled workforce is a critical determinant of global competitiveness. In a time of global economic recession, debt crises and burgeoning unemployment, skills and capabilities are even more significant. The importance of doing this study is to determine if SASSETA is still in line with the mandate as stipulated in the Skills Development Act.

SASSETA is a training authority established in terms of Section 9 of Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998 as amended). SASSETA is mandate to promote and facilitate skills development for the safety and security sector. SASSETA has implemented many of WILL programmes between 2015/16 – 2017/2018. However, there is no track record indicating whether these Graduates have been employed or not after completing their qualification / Work Intergraded Learning programme.

This evaluation study will seek to determine where these Graduates are currently, whether they have found employment since they completed the work-intergated learning programme.

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is an umbrella term for any purposefully designed learning programme that integrates theoretical knowledge with authentic practice in the workplace. The purpose of WIL is to improve employability and develop competence, i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and skills to the demands of the workplace.

1.2 Background

The Department of Higher Education and Training has identified the need to capacitate public TVET Colleges, to become the preferred providers of occupational skills, as relevant, in South Africa. This need was identified to, amongst others, address the high unemployment rate amongst the age group 16 – 34.

It is expected that work experience will enhance the employability of unemployed persons, in particular if such work experience is:

- Related to and supports their field of study;
- Obtained in an environment with processes and structures in place to coach and mentor such persons;
- Obtained in the environment of a reputable employer;
- Of an adequate length to allow sufficient time to gain exposure and experience in a number of generic and specific skills.

In this context, Safety and Security Education Training Authority provides funding to employers registered with SASSETA and/or Public TVET Colleges through the Discretionary Grant Funding windows. Public TVET Colleges applying for a grant should ensure that learners are placed within SASSETA registered employers.

The funding is for Public TVET learners who have successfully completed the National N6 certificate and who are eligible to the National Diploma at NQF level 6, upon completion of 18 months' relevant work experience. SASSETA has provided funding for the following but not limited to areas:

- Safety in society
- Business Management
- Human Resource Management
- Engineering and related Design
- Education and Development
- Marketing Management
- Public Management

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are a central component of South Africa's skills development system. They provide vocational and occupational training programmes to prepare students for employment or for higher education.

Work-integrated learning combines teaching and learning inside and outside the workplace in a structured, coherent programme. It typically includes the study of work-related theory in an education and training institution, application of newly-acquired knowledge to practical tasks in a sheltered environment (such as a college workshop or company training centre) and, finally, a series of increasingly more difficult tasks in a 'real-world' workplace.

1.3 Literature review

There are various definitions of 'employability', the one adopted here is that of Yorke (2006):

“a set of achievements — skills, understandings and personal attributes — that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”

However, some researchers argue that knowledge and skills are simply not enough and that an additional focus should be placed on student experiences and opportunities to engage in measurable functions which would serve to enhance employability (Foskett, 2005).

Employability is a critical issue for both government and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Since the expansion in higher education institution and recent economic downturn, there is intense competition for jobs in the graduate employment market. The Summer Graduate Recruitment Survey 2009 (Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2009) indicated that on average there were 48 applications per graduate vacancy.

The youth aged 15–24 years are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market as the unemployment rate among this age group was 55,2% in the 1st quarter of 2019. Among graduates in this age group, the unemployment rate was 31,0% during this period compared to 19,5% in the 4th quarter of 2018 – an increase of 11,4 percentage points quarter-on-quarter. However, the graduate unemployment rate is still lower than the rate among those with other educational levels, meaning that education is still the key to these young people's prospects improving in the South African labour market. (Stats SA)

One of the key reasons why many students invest in university education is to improve their employment prospects. However, whilst achievement of good academic qualifications is highly valued, it no longer appears sufficient to secure employment (Yorke, 2006).

The South African Parliament approved the Skills Development Act in 1998, which established the SETA system. The SETA system was created in order to develop a series

of sector skills plans within a defined framework of the National Skills Development Strategy. The SETA was established to overcome deficit of skills in the South African economy in the form of inter alia, learnership.

All SETAs were to be responsible for both private and public sectors within their own sector as a whole. In terms of The Skills Development Levies Act, All SETAs are to collect levies from employers in each sector. This will serve as funding for SETAs for the establishment and operation of amongst others, learnership programmes and work integrated learning.

The functions of SETAs include the establishment of learnership and promotion and registration of those learnership. These functions are to be performed in accordance with the Skills Development Act and its constitution. Each SETA is funded by levies collected from businesses in its sector (Skills Development Act, 1998). Other funds are from the National Skills Fund, income earned from surplus money deposited or invested, income earned on services rendered and grants, and donations and bequests made to it. The funds are then used to fund the performance of its function and to pay for its administration.

1.4 The problem statement

The purpose of WIL is to improve employability and develop competence, i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and skills to the demands of the workplace. However, the programme still faces various challenges such as the lack of support from senior management of the employers, commitment from mentors, lack of capacity to host the learners, and recruitment processes that are not transparent. Such challenges are likely to play a large role in hindering the success of the programme in ensuring that the graduates eventually acquire the skills they require to enter the workforce.

Based on the background above it has been noted that SASSETA has implemented many of WILL programmes between 2015/16 – 2017/2018. However, there is no track record indicating whether these graduates have been employed or not after completing their qualification / Work Intergrated Learning programme.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The aim of the evaluation

The overall aim of this project is to evaluate the employability of TVET graduates funded under SASSETA work integrated learning (WIL) programmes who have received their National Diplomas within three (3) years post certification.

Two major desired outcomes are embedded in the overall objective: successful placement of learners after completion of their work integrated learning and enhanced productivity in the workplace. The entire programme, however, involves processes, products, and people or direct beneficiaries. The specific objectives therefore are to evaluate:

- To track and trace learners who received certificates for SASSETA funded work integrated learning from 2015 to 2018.
- To identify employers who give employment opportunities to learners certificated on the SASSETA funded programme
- To measure the percentage of reported Graduates that have found employment through SASSETA funded programme.

2.2 Evaluation design

A combination of both a qualitative and quantitative design will be used in this evaluation. The quantitative design will be used for statistical calculations for analyzing and interpreting the results. On the other hand, the qualitative design will focus on understanding a phenomenon, i.e. making sense of, or interpreting, issues in relation to the WIL programme. In essence, the qualitative and quantitative design provided an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and in the context of TVET programme.

A questionnaire has been designed and used during telephonic interview with Graduates in an attempt to determine their employability status since they have completed the workplace programme. Respondents were afforded the opportunity to respond accordingly.

2.3 Key Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were raised to respond to the objectives detailed above;

1. Have you received a service certificate upon successful completion of the Work Integrated Learning Placement?
2. Did you obtain your certificate / Diploma after completion of the WIL programme?

If not, why?
3. Did you manage to get employment after completed the SASSETA WIL programme?
If yes, name of employer if applicable.
4. Is your placement related to your field of study?
5. Were your skills, knowledge and capabilities used in your placement?
If no, what challenges have you experienced? (Interview ends here for unemployed learners)
6. Have you been employed by the employer who trained you for the Work Integrated Learning?

2.4 Population

The population is made up of TVET Graduates whom completed their work intergrated learning between 2015/16 – 2017/18 financial years. The total of completion is 1355 of the TVET Graduates.

2.5 Sampling

The SQMR list therefore serves as the sampling frame for this study. It is important to note that data will be collected from the entire population (1355 graduates) and the sampling techniques to be use will aid arranging the population for systematic collection of data.

2.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection process

The entire list of Graduates were phoned from top to bottom without any further selection procedures applied. Phone calls were made over a period one month during weekdays from 10:00 am and from 15:00 – 16:30 pm, as these proved to be the most successful times for reaching the the Graduates. At the beginning of every interview, a short introduction to the survey was given, the individual's identity verified and his / her willingness to partake explicitly confirmed. Interviews were conducted in English, depending on the indicated preferred language by the individual respondent.

- The data collecting method used is interview administered questionnaires that has been structured as follows:
 - If participant is employed
 - If employed, ask for the name of the employer
 - for position held
 - Duration of contract- if permanent or fixed (what that term is)

2.7 Data Analysis

Database analysis comes from SQMR 2015/16 to 2017/18 financial years which was analysed according to the graphs below:

Figure 1, Illustrates total population of completed TVET Graduates for 2015/16

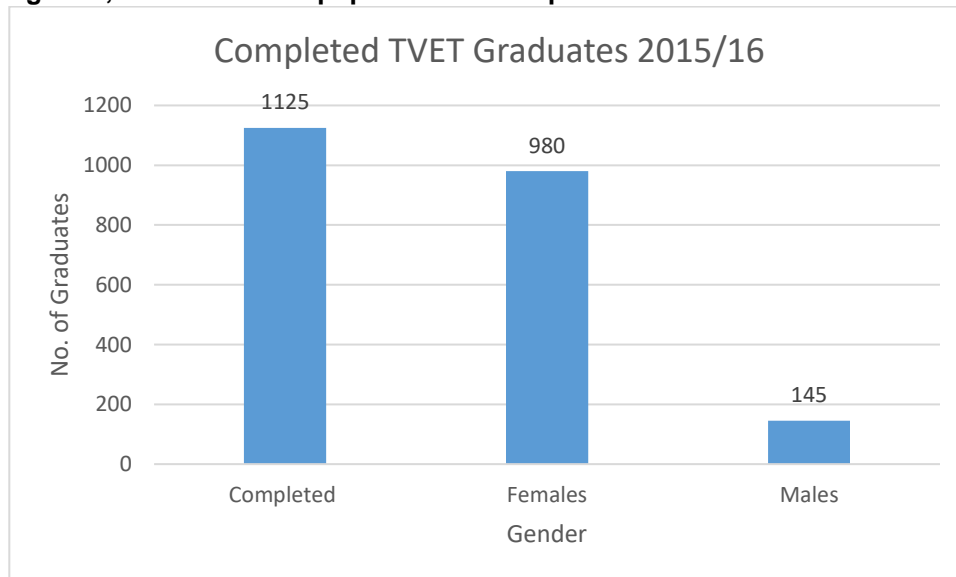


Figure 1.1, Illustrates total population of completed TVET Graduates for 2016/17

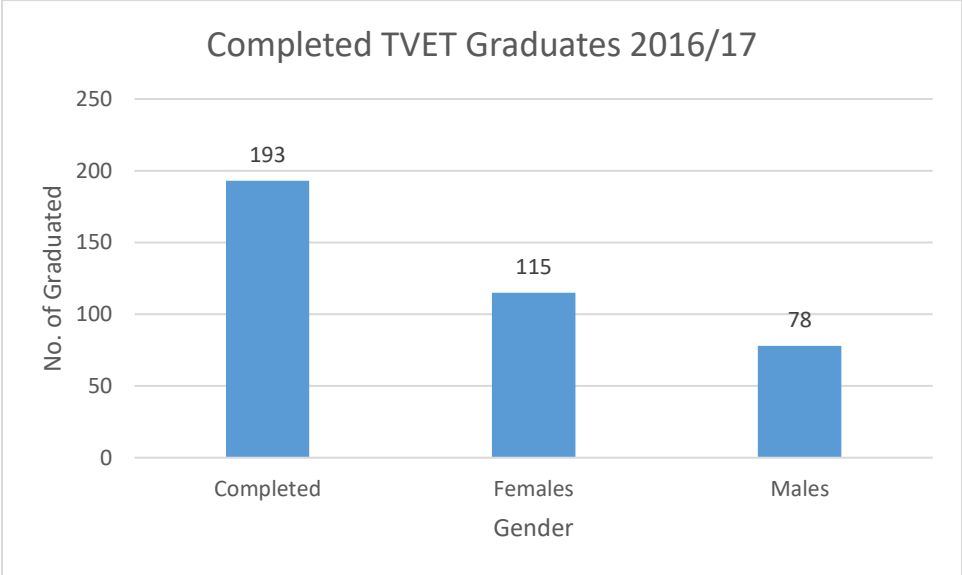


Figure 1.2, Illustrates total population of completed TVET Graduates for 2017/18

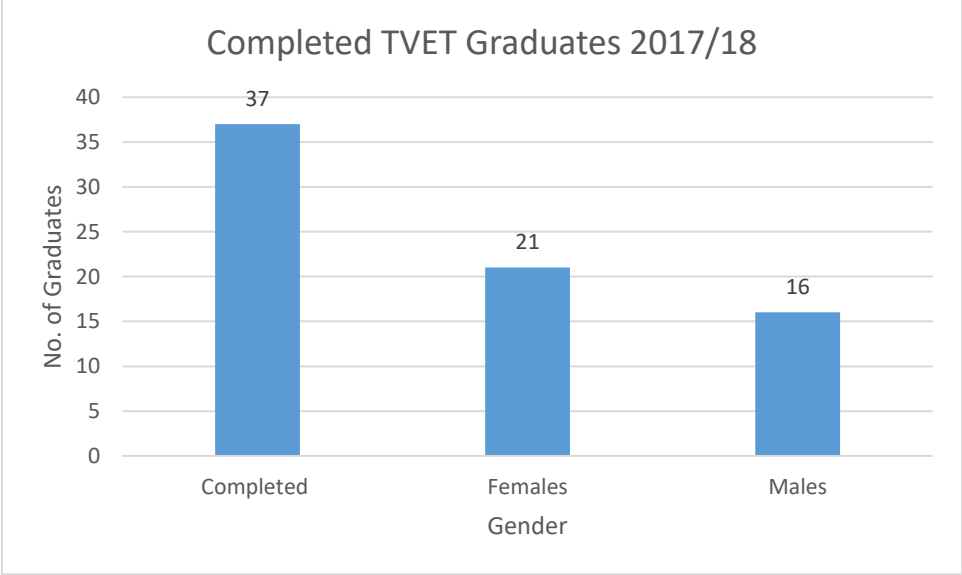
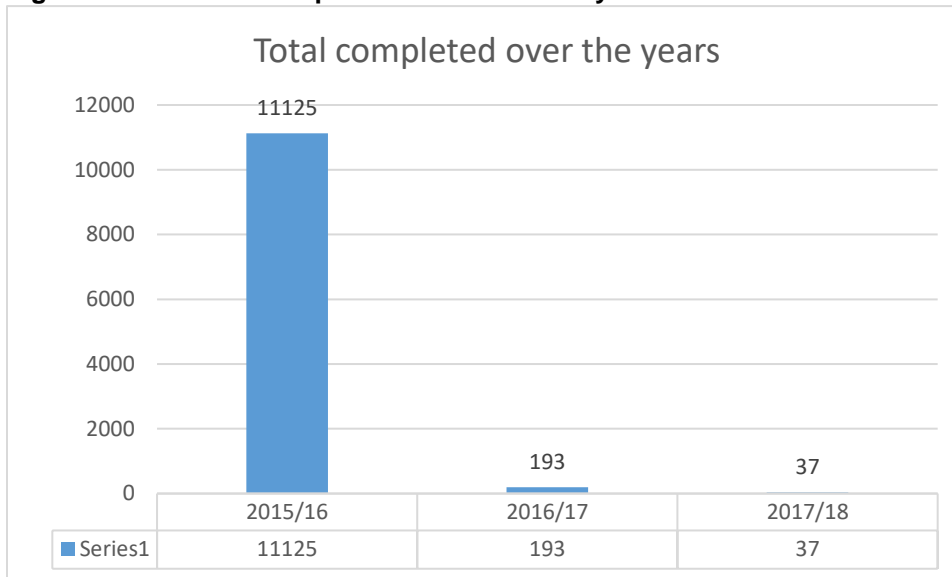


Figure1.3 Illustrate total performance over the years.



2.8 Limitations of the Evaluation

A large number of learners could not be reached for the following reasons: (1) not available, not answering the phone, voicemail; (2) although there are numbers for some graduate, they are unreachable and in some instances, telephone numbers provided are incorrect; (3) entirely wrong number. In the case of reason number (1), learners were phoned up to three times.

The non-availability of telephone numbers has made it difficult to reach learners for the telephonic interviews. Another difficulty experienced during this process was limitation to required information due to Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority movement to new offices where documents were kept offside.

Most of the Graduates appreciated being asked about their workplace learning, were interested in the study and willing to provide detailed input. Overall a total number of n = 40 / 1355 interviews (response rate: 4%) was conducted.

2.9 Ethics

Ethical issues are the concerns and dilemmas that arise over the proper way to execute research, more specifically not to create harmful conditions for the subjects of inquiry, humans, in the research process (Schurink, 2005: 43).

It is a big responsibility to be sensitive and respectful of research participants and their basic human rights and fully endorse the Ethical Code. It is extremely important to ensure that participants voluntarily agree to take part in the research before conducting a study. Participants will be informed that they are free to decline to take part and withdraw at any point in the research process.

The purpose and benefit of the research would be briefly described with the participants to ease and improve the cooperation. The rights of the participant and research will always be protected so that participants do not suffer physical harm or embarrassment, or loss of privacy.

Participant would not be allowed to participate in the study without their consent, they will be made aware of the type of information needed from them and why information is being sought, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study, and of how it will directly or indirectly affect them. Participants will be assured that the information obtained will be treated as confidential and the re results will be used for research purposes only.

3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section highlights the findings with regard to evaluation study for employability of TVET graduates funded under SASSETA work integrated learning (WIL) programmes whom have received their National Diplomas within three (3) years post certification.

The following is an example of one of the responses from Graduates during telephonic interviews:

- I. Have you received a service certificate upon successful completion of the Work Integrated Learning Placement?
[Answer: certificate issued by IPID but did not get time to collect it](#)
- II. Did you obtain your certificate / Diploma after completion of the WIL programme?

If not, why?

Answer: This was an NCV L4, Safety in Society. Certificate was already awarded

III. Did you manage to get employment after completed the SASSETA WIL programme?

If yes, name of employer if applicable.

Answer: Yes, I have applied for job whilst in the WIL programme

IV. Is your placement related to your field of study?

Answer: Yes

V. Were your skills, knowledge and capabilities used in your placement?

Answer: my skills and knowledge were demonstrated to the best of my abilities during WIL program, received regular feedback from my mentor.

If no, what challenges have you experienced? (Interview ends here for unemployed learners)

Answer: No challenges experienced.

VI. Have you been employed by the employer who trained you for the Work Integrated Learning?

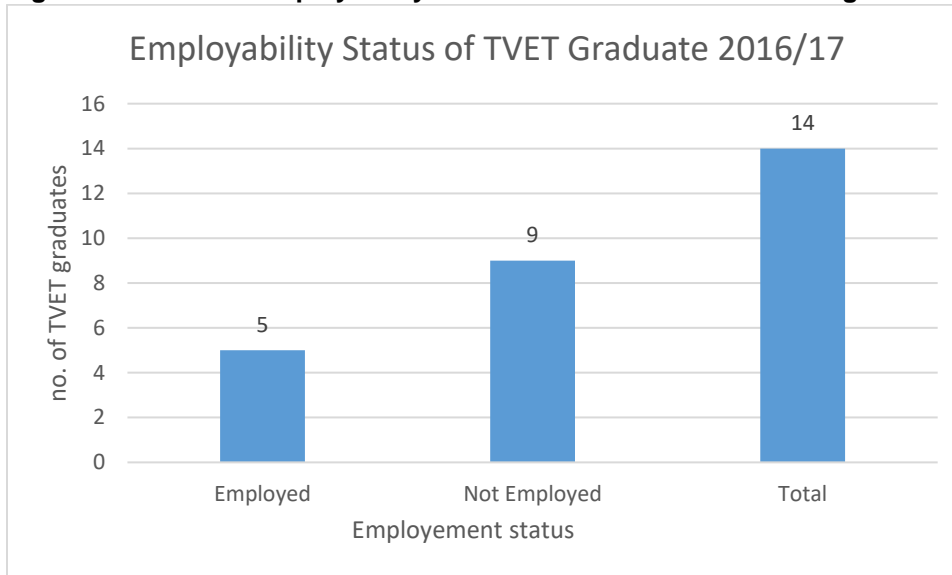
Answer: yes, though I have applied for SAPS basic training , I have been appointed as Constable

3.1 Findings for 2015/16

Though Safety and Security SETA has reported 1125 completed Graduates during this period. It was extremely difficult to obtain list of contact details from the database. Project's department indicated that this information has been filed offside (metro file). This matter has been brought to the attention of IT department who are still trying to assist retrieving this database from the system. This process has negatively impacted the evaluation study as it has a large number of reported Graduates compared to 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years. It has been noted that Graduates on this list achieved variety of diplomas e.g Human resource management, Engineering and related design, Office Administration, Business Management to name just a few. This information was anticipated to enhance this evaluation study.

3.2 Findings for 2016/17

Figure 2. Illustrates employability status of TVET Graduates during 2016/17



According to figure 2 above, the total number of TVET graduated whom were contacted during telephonic interviews were 14 out of 30. The entire list was contacted during telephonic interviews where it has been noted that only five (5) Graduates found employment, three (3) were absorbed by the host Employer whilst nine (9) Graduates were still unemployed and actively looking for employment. One (1) Graduate indicated that she enrolled on other internship programme not within Safety and Security SETA

funded. Graduates were placed at Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) for workplace experience.

Graduates already obtained the TVET College certificates, IPID also provided them with service certificates to confirm that work-place learning took place.

Graduates who found employment indicated that their line of duty is in line with what they have studied at the college. They have been placed in the relevant departments. There are also Graduates who applied for South African Police Service (SAPS) basic training whilst on the program but managed to secure the job immediately after completing WIL programme.

Figure 2.1 Illustrates total number of gender contacted

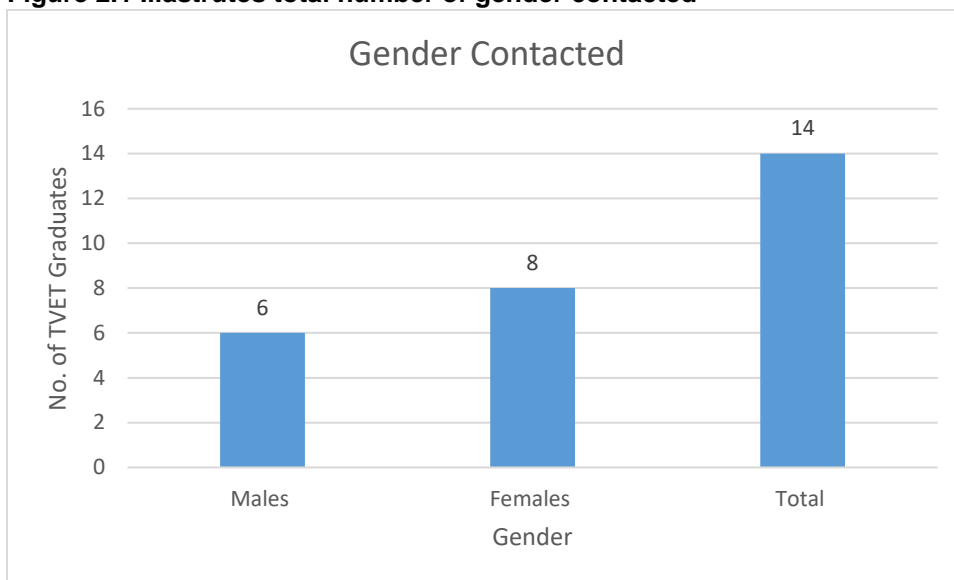
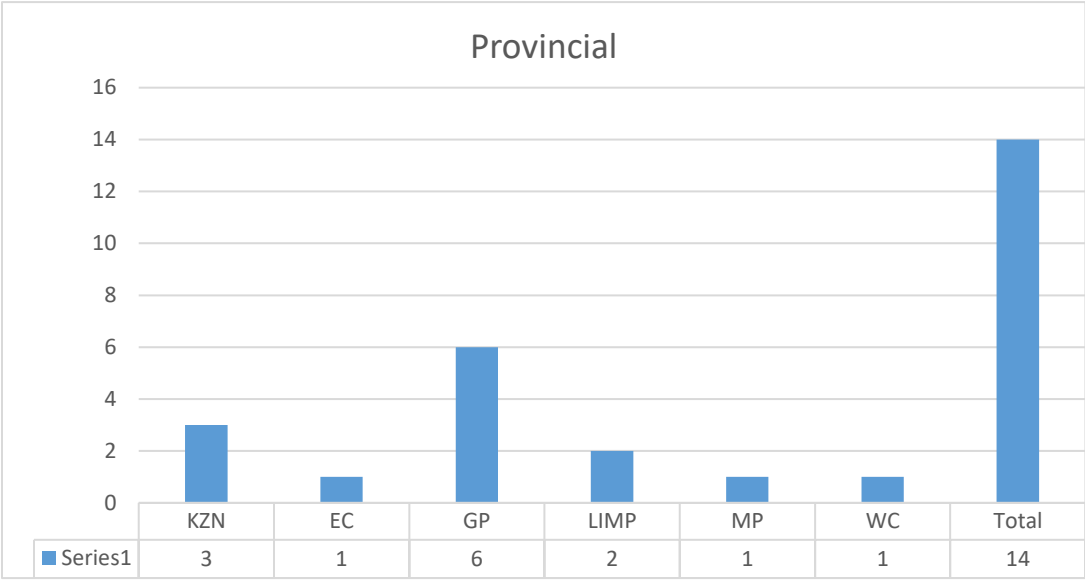


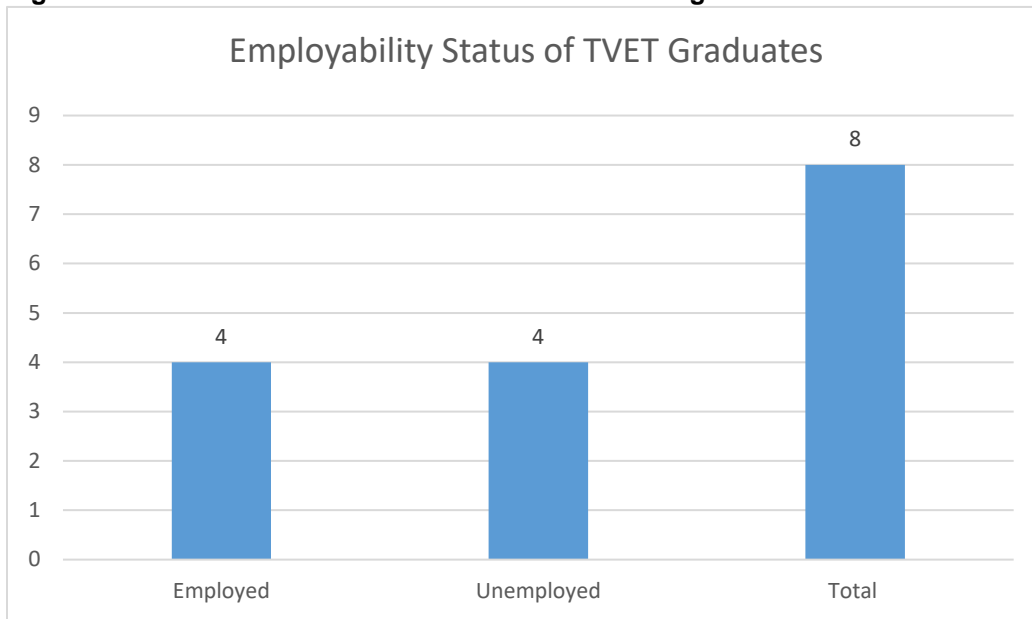
Figure 2.1, indicates gender distribution of TVET Graduates whom were contacted during telephonic interviews.

Figure 2.3 Illustrated provincial distribution of Graduates contacted



3.3 Findings for 2017/18

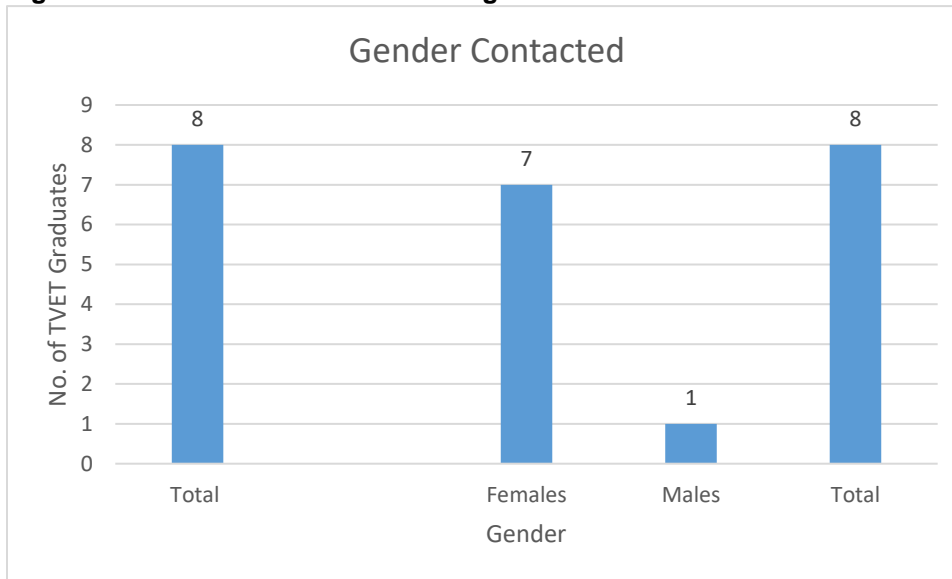
Figure 3 illustrates the status of TVET Graduates during 2016/17



Based on the interview conducted it has been indicated that only four (4) Graduates found employment and G4S managed to absorb two (2) Graduates whilst four (4) Graduates are still unemployed and actively looking for employment.

Graduates were placed at G4S Secure Solutions for workplace experience. Telephonic interviews were conducted to the entire group to determine their employability status. Some Graduates indicated that they have not obtained their certificates yet as the college requested amendments to be done on their PoE's submitted, whilst some mentioned that they have not collected their certificates from the college. Two (2) Graduates from this group could not finish the programme as they were offered employment elsewhere.

Figure 3. 1 Illustrates total number of gender contacted



4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study conducted in this document, it has been noted that majority of Graduates whom have been placed on workplace programme completed NCV Level 4 which is equivalent to matric. Meaning that the Graduates still required to further their studies in order to enhance chances of being employed in future. Additionally, employers expect Graduates to have well developed employability skills, so that they can make an immediate contribution to the workplace when recruited. Thus, whilst some employers screen job applications on the basis of degree classification, such achievements are much less important at the short-listing stage.

Though it has been observed that work experience has enhanced the employability of unemployed graduates, in particular that such work experience is related to and supports their field of study and obtained in an environment with processes and structures in place to coach and mentor such persons; Graduates are still finding it difficult to find employment after workplace learning.

Graduates appreciated the opportunity granted to them during the WIL programme even though they have not had positive effects on job placement, with most of the participants not gaining employment since completion of their work-integrated learning.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

TVET Colleges together with the Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority need to collaborate with Department of Labour in effort to promote employability of graduates by encouraging them to register as work seekers. The Department of Labour's Employment Services South Africa (ESSA) is an example of a recruitment service where work seekers register their CVs on the department's database and their CVs get matched to vacancies.

Noting the low rate of employability of TVET Graduates, it is advised that Safety and Security SETA lead by example by working hand in hand with Department of Labour during recruitment process in order to obtain Graduate / work seekers data base from the Department. However; priority must be given to Graduates with higher qualification e.g. N6/Diploma's instead. It is further recommended that the SASSETA TVET College Policy be reviewed in order to strengthen the demand side of the labour market to increase youth employment.

The 2013 "*White Paper on Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System*" emphasises the centrality of WIL to all vocational and occupational education and training in colleges. It states that:

- "Since the main purpose of the TVET colleges is to prepare students for the workplace, it is essential that they develop and maintain close working relationships with employers in their areas. Close partnerships between colleges and employers can assist the colleges in locating workplace opportunities for students who need practical experience."

6 REFERENCES:

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- 3) Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013. White Paper for Post-School Education and Training
- 4) FOSKETT, R. (2005). Collaborative partnership between HE and employers: A study of workforce development. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 29(3).

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- 5) National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008
- 6) Skills Development Amendment Act no 37, 2008

Websites:

- 7) Stats SA, Graduate unemployment rate 2019:
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12121>, accessed on 09 March 2020.
- 8) Services SETA: <http://www.serviceseta.org.za>
- 9) <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-02-14-why-is-south-africas-unemployment-rate-so-high>; accessed on 09 March 2020.

Appendices

- 10) ANNEXTURE A (Survey questionnaire template)