

Employability of Teacher Education Graduates in One Government – Owned Teacher Training Institution in Eswatini

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Abstract

Youth unemployment and the poor absorption of tertiary graduates into the labour market contribute to a global educational crisis. The Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF) 2020 highlights a disconnect between education and training and labour market needs. This article examines the employability of teacher education graduates from a government-owned institution in Eswatini, aiming to identify which majors have the highest and lowest employability rates, explore the underlying factors, and provide recommendations to enhance employability. The study is qualitative, involving former graduates (2018-2022), senior school management officers, and representatives from the teacher recruitment body. It seeks to understand participants' experiences regarding the relevance of current course offerings to labour market demands, using seven operational versions of employability as a framework. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, with content analysis applied. Findings revealed varying absorption rates among cohorts; some had all graduates employed, while others faced significant challenges. Factors influencing employability included imbalances in stakeholder collaboration, global crises, and fiscal challenges. Recommendations include reviewing policies for all stakeholders, diversifying and upgrading training programs, and adopting a paradigm shift in mindset to better align educational offerings with market demands.

Introduction

The graduate unemployment rate is one of the current issues being discussed by higher education scholars worldwide. Smooth progression after graduating from the tertiary institution to employment is a critical life course transition with long-lasting consequences. Progressing smoothly from training to employment promotes other dimensions of the transition to adulthood (Morris, 2023). However, literature reveals that the average unemployment rate for recent college graduates stands at about 54% globally (Ulutaş & Saklan, 2022). Most college and university graduates are faced with long stretches of unemployment and inactivity after graduating. This comes with a host of negative effects to the youth, which include mental and physical health outcomes and higher risks of premature death.

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, unemployment is one of the major challenges, as about 58.3% of the population are unemployed (Swazi Observer, 2022). In 2022, the youth unemployment rate was around 49.77 %. Even the Eswatini National Skills Audit report of April 13, 2022, showed that unemployment is a major challenge for the economy of Eswatini.

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Consequently, reports also reveal that, even in the Eswatini education and skills development sector, there are inadequacies (Eswatini Qualifications Framework, 2020). The kind of qualifications produced in the skills' development sector do not tally with the labour market needs. When coming to teacher education programmes, their quality and credibility have a bearing on the marketability of their products. On the other hand, there is a causative relationship between the labour market and the calibre of the products from the skills development sector.

Yet Eswatini is cognisant of the importance of education and skills development in supporting national development aspirations and goals, which include accelerated growth and global competitiveness. It is noted that there is need to provide a stronger basis for the understanding, comparison and recognition of national and foreign qualifications. This necessitated the development of the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF) to develop a set of levels of learning outcomes and competencies to be achieved; assign qualifications to the levels and enhance communication on qualifications between education and the labour market.

The continuing guiding philosophy of the education and training sector is to produce an enlightened and participant citizenry that has skills and knowledge to contribute positively to economic and social development (*Ministry of Education and Training: National Education and Training Sector Policy, 2018*).

The education and training sector goals are to empower people in Eswatini to: think critically and analytically integrate and synthesize knowledge and draw conclusions from complex material; develop the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, emotional, physical and practical capacities; and be equipped with capacities needed to shape to a fast changing, complex and uncertain socio-economic environment.

Problem Statement

Youth unemployment and poor absorption of tertiary institutions' graduates by the labour market can be equated to a national crisis in the Kingdom of Eswatini. There is an outcry of over-production of graduates in some of the tertiary institutions' programmes. The Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF) of 2020 reports that the country is faced with an array of challenges, one of them being non-responsiveness of education and training to industry and labour market needs. There are inadequacies in Eswatini's education and skills development sector. The question then is: are the current courses in the Eswatini tertiary institutions still relevant to the labour market and the contemporary socio-economic environment? This paper then seeks to examine the relevance and effectiveness of teacher education programmes and courses with regards to the current labour market demands and the socio-economic needs of the country.

Research Objectives

- a) To identify the Teacher education programme's graduates with the highest employability rate, and those with the lowest rate.
- b) To establish the factors behind the employability rate of the Teacher education programme's graduates.
- c) To elicit recommendations for minimising / or maximising the factors influencing the employability of the Teacher education programme's graduates.

Research Questions

- a) Which graduates of the teacher education programme have the highest employability rate, and which have the lowest?

- b) What are the factors behind the employability rate of the teacher education programme's graduates?
- c) How can the factors influencing the employability of the Teacher education programme's graduates be minimised/ or maximised?

Literature Review

Employability as a Concept

This study uses the two definitions of employability given by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) which states that employability is the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realize his or her aspirations and potential in work (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005:4). Employability is further referred to as the development of skills and adaptable workforces in which all those capable of work are encouraged to develop their skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives.

Graduates' Employability Globally

The graduate unemployment rate is one of the current issues being discussed by higher education scholars worldwide. Youth unemployment rates are escalating, more especially those of college and university graduates. These rates also vary substantially within countries (Morris, 2023). Almost 10% of citizens with an academic degree in the United States (US) are basically jobless (Hwang, 2017). In 2019 Eurostat data show that regional unemployment rates among 15–29-year-olds varied from 2.7 – 7.8 percent in Germany; 5.6 – 43.3 percent in Italy; and 4.9 – 10.7 percent in the United States (Morris, 2023). Reports from the United States (US) 2016-2022, show that in February 2023, about 4.1% of recent college graduates were unemployed in the United States (Cagnassola, 2023). In February 2023, about 4.1% of recent college graduates were unemployed in the United States. College majors which were found to have the highest unemployment rate include Fine arts (12.1%); Philosophy (9.1%); Sociology (9%); Family and consumer sciences (8.9%); Mass media (8.4%); Commercial and graphic design (7.9%); Foreign language (7.8%); Performing arts (7.6%); Public Policy and Law (7.4%) and Engineering technologies (7.1%) (Cagnassola, 2023).

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York latest data on how recent graduates are faring in the labour market, pointed out that even college majors in the areas like Elementary, General and Secondary education; Nursing, Construction services, Nutrition sciences, Architecture, Business analytics, and Agriculture have unemployment rates ranging between 1.3% to 2.6% globally. However, Cagnassola (2023) observes that, the unemployment rates for young college graduates vary dramatically depending on their choice of majors.

The reviewed literature also notes that differing regional economic conditions produce distinctive regional patterns of youth labour market integration (Morris, 2023). In the United Kingdom it was found that the risk of elongated unemployment or inactivity was associated with low educational attainment. It takes young people with lower secondary qualifications one month to find employment of any sort, seven months to find secure, full-time employment if they are located in a place of low labour demand (Morris, 2023:3). It is also noted that the overall strength and economic performance of local economies, affect the number of job vacancies available and the degree of competition for these vacancies. In some instances, depending on the economic conditions, employer demand for labour may put emphasis on filling available job vacancies with younger less experienced workers (Morris, 2023).

Graduates' Employability in the African Region

Most African countries are also faced with unemployment rates. The average unemployment rate in Africa was around 25% in 2020. It was only Mauritius who was found to have the lowest unemployment rate, which stood at 7.7% in 2020. In Nigeria, the number of unemployed graduates has been on the rise in recent years. Currently, over 50% of graduates in Nigeria are unemployed (UN DESA, 2017). The Republic of South Africa was also found to be faced with the challenge of over-production of the workforce in some occupations and fields of study. In fact, one third of people are projected to be unemployed in South Africa, rating the highest in the world. (IMF World Economic Outlook, Oct 2022, Nikei; The Balance Money, 2022).

The reviewed literature further revealed that, factors behind the unemployment crisis facing the global community are numerous. Lack of job opportunities in the world of work was found to be the umbrella factor (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), March 2021) while scholars like Myende (MANCOSA) identified weaknesses in the higher education institutions. Evidence from the reviewed literature is an indicator that unemployment and graduate unemployment is a global crisis, a problem which needs to be addressed imminently. All countries need to review, re-think and re-orient their education, vocational training and labour market policies (MacQuaid and Lindsay, 2005:3)

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The study uses two of the seven approaches to employability developed by Gazier (1998, 2001) as the conceptual framework for examining and understanding employability. Gazier emphasizes the impact of both individual characteristics and labour market conditions, which is labour demand and supply factor (MacQuaid and Lindsay, 2005:4). The seven operational versions of the concept of employability proposed by Gazier are: dichotomic employability; Man, power policy; Flow employability; Labour market performance; Initiative employability and Interactive employability (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). The two latter operational versions namely; Initiative employability and Interactive employability are used as lenses of viewing the concept being explored. The micro-level characteristics of labour market entrance, in terms of educational attainment; and the macro-level institutions that govern labour market entry which are generally assumed to be uniform at country level are used to complement Gazier's two concepts (Morris, 2023).

Initiative employability emerged in the North American and European Resource Development (HRD) literature of the late 1980's. It reflected an acceptance amongst individuals and organisations that successful career development requires the development of skills that are transferable and the flexibility to move between job roles. In this approach the focus is on the individual, with the onus on workers to develop their skills and networks in the workplace.

Interactive employability first emerged in North America and then internationally since the end of the 1980's. This approach maintained the emphasis on individual initiative, while also acknowledging that the employability of the individual is relative to the employability of others and the opportunities institutions and rules that govern the labour market. Here Gazier puts to the fore the importance of the role of employers and labour demand in determining a person's employability. This means that policy makers, through governments should target long-term unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups as interventions to long term unemployment and labour market disadvantage.

Methodology

The design of the study is qualitative; it uses the case study approach. Experiences and perceptions of former students, about the labour market after graduating are explored. A case study approach purports to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which

multiple sources of evidence are used (Maree, 2007. Maree, 2016). This study strived towards a holistic understanding of how the participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of employability as the phenomenon being investigated.

The study population were Secondary Teachers' Diploma (STD) graduates of one government owned college, the 2018 – 2022 group; Secondary/high school administrators and officers from the employment entity for teachers in the country, Eswatini Teaching Service Commission (TSC) Human Resource officers. Purposive stratified sampling was used, where the former graduates of the government owned College were stratified according to their area of specialisation and the period of graduating or completing their Diploma studies (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015; Maree, 2007, Maree, 2016). The school administrators were also purposively sampled according to the location of their schools (urban and rural), and in terms of size (student population). The sample size for the study were ten (10) participants. Seven (7) STD graduates of 2018-2022 were selected based on the seven (7) areas of specialisation or major subjects offered in the STD programme, namely (English/SiSwati; English/French; English/Religious Education; Mathematics/Science; Information Communication Technology/Science; Information Communication Technology/Mathematics; and History/Geography).

In the schools, two (2) secondary/high school principals were selected; one from an urban school and one from a rural school, whose size in terms of student population is amongst the big schools in the region. One (1) officer (Human Resource Officer) from the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the government structure which is responsible recruiting teachers for the labour market (Schools) in the Kingdom of Eswatini, was also a participant in the study. The school principals and the Human Resource officer were sampled to gather their experiences and perceptions on the employability of the graduates from the government owned College. Stratified purposive sampling allowed the study to purposefully categorize or stratify the participants; and select college graduates who have in-depth knowledge and experience of being employable or not employable in the years 2018 - 2022 (Maree, 2007). School administrators represent the labour market or recipients of the graduates, and are the ones who place the demand or need for College graduates, together with the recruitment agency; and are key role players in the employment and posting of teacher education graduates. They also have deep knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

Data collection instruments were a semi-structured interview and document analysis. The duration of the interviews was 30 – 40 minutes. Questions were designed and ordered in line with the research questions. The personal contact during the interview allowed the researcher to understand how the graduates, school administrators and Human resource officer feel and perceive employability of teacher education graduates from the selected institution (Mushoriwa, 2009).

Under document analysis three documents were studied: the Swaziland's Curriculum For the 21st Century: Curriculum Framework Documents (2014; 2018), Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC)'s ten standards for programme evaluation, together with syllabuses for each of the STD programmes' area of specialisation in the selected institution. This aim was to shed more light on the training of the graduates in the selected institution (Maree, 2007) and the skills needed to maximise their employability rate. The programme documents were analysed to understand the nature of course outcomes; the relevance of subjects offered to 21st Century skills, and to validate the interviews. A Document Analysis Data Compilation Instrument was designed. When one uses documents as a data gathering technique, written data sources may

include published and unpublished documents, company reports, administrative documents and reports that are connected to the phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2007:8; Maree, 2016)

Credibility of the findings of the study was attained by employing two data collection techniques, and triangulating the three categories of participants and the three types of documents. This ensured the trustworthiness of the findings. In qualitative research ‘validity and reliability’ refers to research that is credible and trustworthy. Engaging multiple methods of data collection lead to trustworthiness. Involving several peer researchers to assist with the interpretation of data also enhances trustworthiness (Maree, 2007:81). Ethical issues were attained by employing the right rules and practices in research. Permission to access the research sites were sought from the Ministry of Education and Training, after getting a clearance permission to undertake this study from the College administration. Seeking for consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in handling the information gathered and the identity of the participants and the research sites also ensured that no harm or at least very minimal harm is inflicted on subjects (Mushoriwa, 2009; Maree, 2007).

Data was analysed qualitatively, where the process of collecting data, processing, analysis, and reporting were intertwined, and not merely a number of successive steps. Thematic analysis was employed. It included noticing, collecting and reflecting (Maree, 2007: 100). The collected data was transcribed and organised in files. The transcribed texts were then read to form initial codes (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015). Significant statements were developed. The statements were grouped into meaningful units or themes, based on the research objectives. Results and findings were presented through tables and narrations as per the emerging themes from the research questions. Direct quotations from the raw data were used to enhance the findings and discussions.

Findings and Discussion

In order to establish the employment rates of the different areas of specialisation offered in the sampled government owned institution; factors influencing the employment rates and the recommendations to these factors; in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted where graduates from the institution were asked questions formulated in line with the research objectives. Two School administrators and one Human Resource officer from the Government recruitment body were also interviewed. Under document analysis focus was on the programme title and level; availability/non-availability of course competencies; availability/non-availability of 21st Century skills; and the level of compliance with the Eswatini Higher Education Council’s (ESHEC) standards for programme evaluation. The data was reduced through sorting it according to the research objectives, themes and categories that emerged. Direct quotes from the participants are used for authenticity and clarity in the presentation. Relevant literature is used to prove or disprove the findings.

Table 1 presents the products with the highest and lowest employment rate

Table 1: The Secondary Teachers’ Diploma products with highest and lowest employment rate (2018-2022): Graduates Interviews

Programme	Category of employment rate from (2018-2022) Graduates		
	Highest	Medium	Lowest
1. ICT/Maths/Science	5	-	-
2. Maths/Science	2	6	-
3. French/English	5	-	-
4. Siswati/English	1	3	-
5. Religious Ed/English	2	1	-
6. History/Geography	-	-	7

Table 1 presents the responses of the seven (7) graduates who were interviewed regarding the employment rate from (2018-2022). Results show that, there were six (6) areas of specialisation which were offered in (2018-2022). Five (5) graduates ranked Information Communication Technology (ICT)/Mathematics /Sciences; and French /English as the programmes with the highest employment rate. The second in the highest category were Mathematics/Science together with Religious Education/English with two (2), while SiSwati/English scored One (1) in the highest rank category.

Findings were that the areas of specialisation with the highest employment rate between 2018 -2022 were ICT/Math/Science together with French/English. Mathematics/Science and RE/English were second in the highest rate, while SiSwati/English were the third. The graduates with the lowest employability rate were the History/Geography majors, with a total score of seven (7), which shows that all the seven participants identified these majors as the least employed between (2018-2022).

The Teacher education graduates with the medium employability rate were Mathematic/Science with the highest score of six (6), followed by SiSwati/English (3). RE/English (1) was the third in the medium employability rate category.

Some of the participants had this to say:

GR 1: *“Presently I am the only one in my group who is permanent. Our education has now shifted to the digital era. ICT is more marketable, and we were the first group to graduate with this area of specialisation from our institution”.*

GR 7: *“French and ICT have just been introduced and there are posts in those areas. For years French had been taught by people who had no education. Same with ICT, for a long time it was taught by Technicians with no education, but now teachers trained solely for this subject are produced”.*

GR 6: *‘Losebentako kute lengimatiko eGruphini yetfu, ngisho loku contract. Neba 2017 solo kukhona labahleti. Ukhona lotsite yena akazange nje aze asebente ngisho naku-contract’. Eyi: kubuhlungu ngoba nawuya latikolweni utawukhandza ema-posts akhona. Batsi basemile kucasha”.*

Table 2 presents the results from the interviews with School administrators and the Human Resource Officer.

Table 2: Secondary Teachers’ Diploma majors with the highest/ medium/ lowest employment rate (2018-2022): School Administrators and Human Resource Officer

Employment Rate	Responses from Interviews		
	PR 1	PR 2	HR 1
Highest	Mathematics/Science	SiSwati /English	ICT/Maths/Science French/English
Medium	-	-	RE/English Maths/Science SiSwati/English
Lowest	Religious Education Geography /History	-	History/Geography

The results in Table 2 show that PR1 and PR2 ranked Mathematics/Science and English/SiSwati as majors with the highest employment rate, whilst Religious Education; Geography and History were

ranked by PR 2 as the majors with the lowest employment rate. HR1 ranked ICT/Mathematics/Science with French/English as the majors with the highest employment rate (2018-2022). RE/English, Maths/Science and SiSwati/English were placed in the medium employability rate, while History and Geography were placed in the lowest rate.

The findings from the former graduates' interviews concur with those from the Human Resource officer in that ICT/Mathematics/Science with French and English were in the highest employment rate during this period. Similarly, the School administrators concurred with the graduates in that Mathematics/Science and SiSwati/English were the second majors in the highest employment rate. All the three categories of participants responded that History/Geography was in the lowest or zero employment rate.

Such findings are in line with Cagnassola (2023) who observed that, the unemployment rates for young college graduates vary dramatically depending on their choice of majors. In February 2023, about 4.1% of recent college graduates were unemployed in the United States. College majors which were found to have the highest unemployment rate included Fine arts (12.1%); Philosophy (9.1%); Sociology (9%); Family and consumer sciences (8.9%); Mass media (8.4%); Commercial and graphic design (7.9%); Foreign language (7.8%); Performing arts (7.6%); Public Policy and Law (7.4%) and Engineering technologies (7.1%).

Table 3: The factors behind the highest employability rate

Teacher education Graduates (2018-2022), School administrators and Human Resource Officer

Factors behind high employability	No. of respondents			
	GR	PR 1	PR 2	HR 1
1. Responsive to labour/job market & National goals -The major/programme (ICT, French) is currently new in this institution. -Even the 2021 group, all are employed.	4	-		
2. Currently the institution is the only one that produces ICT teachers	3			
3. Labour market demand -These are marketable subjects; they need many teachers. Teachers in these subjects are in demand.	4	1	1	
4. Status of the subject in the education system -It is a core subject, with many teaching periods. -Since the introduction of RE as a core subject 2017/18, teachers were in demand - SiSwati/English follow. There will always be a need.	4	1	1	
5. Change of the curriculum. This subject is now compulsory	2	1	1	
6. This subject (French) is now offered in most schools	3	-	-	
7. Availability of posts: -I think there were many posts for these majors in 2018 (Siswati/English)	4			
8. Competency in content and pedagogy		1		

Table 3 presents results from the interviews on the factors behind the high employment rate of some of the majors in the teacher education programme. The leading factors behind the high employability rate were the nature of the labour market demand and institutions which govern labour market entry. Labour market demand; status of the subject in the school system and availability of posts scored seven (7) points. The change of the curriculum and competency on the part of the teacher education products were also other contributing factors.

These findings agree with Morris (2023) in that in places where there is high labour demand, young people obtain employment relatively quickly irrespective of the qualifications they hold. It takes young people with lower secondary qualifications one month longer to find employment

of any sort, seven months longer to find secure, full-time employment if they are located in a place of low labour demand.

Table 4: Factors behind the low employability rate: Graduates, School administrators and Human Resource Interviews

Factors behind low employability	Graduates	No. of respondents		
		P1	P2	HR 1
1. Too many graduates/ over-production/ over-supplies in some combinations	4	1	1	1
2. There has been an influx of graduates from other institutions in this major (RE/ Hist /Geo)		1	1	1
3. Policy: Employment Freeze Circular Government is reluctant to hire Zero growth makes it difficult to replace teachers, either retired or deceased There is a 'Waiver'. If the 'Waiver' to hire has not been given, there is no hiring. That is what I gathered. TSC is given a directive from Government, even the numbers to hire.	4	1	1	1
4. Teachers are overloaded due to the Zero growth in employment. When looking at the numbers. There are about 100 students in Form 1 who are taking Geo/History as an elective.	3	1	1	
5. Change of labour market needs. It has other needs The focus now is on technology After 2018 the situation changed. The 2020 graduates are now not employed in our majors.	3	-	1	
6. The job market is shrinking	-	-	1	
7. These are not core subjects. They are electives/optional. The posts are therefore not too many. Few students choose them.	7	1		
8. Redeployment Seeking for greener pastures	2			
9. Government not prioritizing Teacher-pupil ratio One teacher attending to sixty students	3	1	1	
10. The COVID-19 Pandemic		1	1	1
11. The job market is saturated as a result of a host of mushroomed private institution of higher learning in the country. Secondly, History is, more often than not, blocked with Science and Commercials in the schools; the learners choose the other subjects over History exacerbating its slim job market.	2	-	-	-

Table 4 shows that the leading factor in the low employment rate is over-production of graduates in some combinations and yet the subjects in the school system are electives or not core subjects with seven (7) points.

The government's employment freeze Circular of not filling vacant posts or of non-employment was another major factor in the low rate of employability with seven (7) points. The Graduates, Principals and the Human Resource Officer were in agreement in that, the Government Circular which 'froze' the

filling of vacant posts, or hiring of new teachers escalated the low employability rate of teachers even if the posts were available.

The non- prioritisation of the teacher-pupil ratio by the government scored five (5) points; followed by change in labour needs with four (4) points. The COVID-19 pandemic is another contributing factor with three (3) points.

HR 1: We hire through government directives or circulars. TSC gets directives from government in that you can hire so may teachers; the numbers and sometimes even the Grades are determined by government."

GR1: "Government akafuni kucasha, uyabaleka. Tizatfu takhe tahlala titinyenti".

GR 2: There are vacant posts in the schools. Bayadzingeka bothishela. Kuke kwamiswa kutsi kucashwe kwatsiwa yi-Zero Growth"

GR 3: Biggest challenge ngule-waiver. Kusuke nje kungacashwa noma kucashwe inombolo lencane. Angicabangi kutsi lenkinga ikulabantfwana baseKolishi'. Kuba ngulomtsetfo loshayiwe leso sikhatsi".

GR 6: Eyi!!! Kubuhlungu ngoba nawuya letikolweni uyawakhandza ema -Posts abo History nabo Geography. Bakutjele kutsi basemile kaTSC. Bayashoda bothishela".

PR2: The problem is not with Colleges. It is with government. Government does not understand the Teacher-pupil ratio policy in the schools. You find one teacher attending to more than 60 students. How will the teacher cope? Marking and doing remedial classes".

These findings are in line with Morris (2023) who found that local opportunity structures may influence the speed of youth labour market transition. The level of employer demand for labour may be affected by the strength and economic performance of local economies. The performance of local economies affects the number of job vacancies available and the degree of competition for these vacancies.

Table 5: Recommendations for minimizing the negative factors in the employability of teacher education products

Recommendations	No. of respondents			
	Graduates	P1	P2	HR 1
1. Government should prioritize the Teacher-pupil ratio	1	-	1	-
2. Alternate admission of students in order to avoid the over-production	2	1		1
- Avoid producing the same majors for five (consecutive years)				
3. Collaboration between Economic Planning, Ministry of Labour, Civil Service Commission (CSC) and TSC in the human resource training and placement.	3	-	-	1
4. Admit students who have the pre-requisite skills. Some of the teachers in the technical subjects look like they only gained exposure to the subject at college, not at school level. This is bad.	-	1	-	-
5. There is need for a review of the programme(s). ESHEC could help to enrich the programme	2	1		1
6. Pairing subjects like Maths/English, Science/RE, SiSwati/Geography, Science/Geography to enrich the majors offered	4	1	-	1
- Diversify major subject combination				
There is need for the review of the school curriculum with regards to subject combinations & core subjects.	3	1	1	1
7. Conduct research on local and external labour market demand visa vis the current programmes in the local training sector. Provide something unique. Provide something on demand.	1	1	-	1
8. Be proactive. Align/review programmes constantly in line local, regional and global transformations/changes.	-	-	-	1
Align/develop programmes in line with Government pronouncements/National Goals. National goals do inform subjects in schools, and programmes/courses in training institutions.				
9. ICT should be a cut across subject for all trainees	-	-	1	1
10. Diversify: do not focus on producing only for the school system	3	-	-	1

11. Use the Scholarship Board pronouncements as an indicator: to inform the direction of programme review or new courses	-	-	-	1
12. Collaborate/Engage other key stakeholders, push for the mainstreaming of electives to create job opportunities for our products	3			1
13. Change of mindset towards subject combinations in the school system	3	-	-	-
Paradigm shift: Students and parents shift from the White-collar job mindset, prioritize practical-skill-based subjects.	4	-	-	-
-The white-collar job market is saturated. Curriculum should shift and promote practicals, skills and creativity				
14. Introduce a part-time programme (Diploma & Degree)	2	-	1	
- Upgrade the Diploma to a degree for it to be more marketable				
The labour market in overseas countries prefers degree holders				

Table 6 shows that the leading recommendations from the three categories of participants were: Diversifying the areas of specialisation in Teacher education institution to be in line with the current labour market demand; and further review and diversify the curriculum in the school system. The second leading recommendations included the review of the curriculum in the training sector, and align it with ESHEC's standards.

HR 1: *Be at par with changes in the labour market. What is new in Government Ministry and private sector. Study the current trends*".

GR 2: *"Follow the -Teacher-pupil ratio of 1: 40 (Graduate History/Geography).*

GR 4: *"Let there be collaboration between the Ministries. Babuke kutsi kutawudzingeka bothishela labangaki. Ema-stakeholders akabuke lama-Courses la-relevant, nalawa lasagwele. Kutsiwe siyema asisakuceceshi loku, kuze kucashwe bonkhe lebasolo bahleti*".

"Economic Planning nguye lofanele kutsi a-plane kutsi kutawudzingeka bangaki from now on. Baceceshwe. Nabacedza bavele bangene emsecentini"

GR 4: *"You rather not be admitted in a college at all, than being admitted, graduate, then stay at home with the qualification. The mind is immensely affected. Lengcondvo iyalimala kakhulu.*

Tsine siyasilimata kakhulu lesitifiketi. Bancono kakhulu kunatsi laba labete lesitifiketi. Aku-trainwe ngekwesidzingo. Hhayi lokutsi ku-graduato 300 webantfu, kepha kucashwe 10 kuphela. Lo 3 years lom-spender solo ufundzela, uphume sewuyohlala ekhaya"

GR 2: *"Parents and children should take practical subjects seriously. Like Agriculture, Design and Technology. Ka-Design bakucecesha ngelikhono. Utokhona kutiphilisa ngelikhono noma sewehlulekile kulolokunye*".

These findings are in line with Morris (2023) who recommended that there must be stronger linkages between the education system and the labour market. Researchers and policy makers should use a broader concept of employability which takes into account individual factors (including employability skills and attributes and job search. Personal circumstances and external factors should also be considered. These factors have a two- way interaction with each other. The employability skills and attributes that an employer may demand depend upon the changing environment in which they operate, such as changing customer preferences, the actions of competitors, and the state of the labour market. A broader approach to employability can help to move analysis and policy towards the identification of factors affecting a person's likelihood of getting a new job and so provide a framework for richer labour market models. Ulutas and Saklan (2022) in Turkey, recommended that teacher training institutions should be

removed from their theoretical, multiple-choice examination-oriented structure, and establish a training system that gives more space to practice and practicals.

Document Analysis

Eswatini Curriculum Framework Documents

The Eswatini Curriculum for the 21st Century: Curriculum Framework (2014, 2018) documents were studied to establish the 21st Century /soft skills which the teacher trainees should be equipped with, for them to possess the necessary employability skills and attributes.

The two documents put forward eight (8) core skills, which are broken down into basic competencies, which everybody needs in the 21st century and in the digital era namely: learning skills; personal skills, social skills, thinking skills, creativity and innovation skills, numeracy skills, communication skills and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Each of these skills has component sets of competencies under it. These documents were used as a standard for assessing the availability of each set of skills in the course outlines.

Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC)'s Ten Standards for Programme Accreditation

The Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) has ten standards which are used to evaluate and accredit all programmes and courses offered in higher education institutions. These standards or guidelines are: the programme mission statement; programme design and development; teaching and learning strategy; assessment and learner attainment; internal quality assurance mechanism; physical resources and infrastructure; staffing; student support services; student admission to a programme; and financial resources.

The analysis of ESHEC's ten standards showed that the sampled institution is fully compliant in about six (6) standards, and partially compliant in four (4) standards when it comes to the programme and courses offered. The partially compliant standards include staffing, financial resources, physical resources and infrastructure, and internal quality assurance mechanism.

The factors behind the partial compliance are largely external and have a bearing to the quality of the graduates that the institution produces and the rate of their employability.

Course Outlines

Course outlines for the Teacher education institution being studied, were analysed against four domains: availability/non-availability of competences; clarity or lack of clarity of course competences, level of relevance of course offerings with labour market needs; and availability/non-availability of 21st Century skills in the course outlines.

In the Languages courses results showed that course competences in English and SiSwati were available to an adequate measure in the programme. The course competences were stated satisfactorily. The level of availability of 21st century skills in the programme was found to be average, with some key soft skills not appearing in the competences. Soft skills like, emotional intelligence, adaptability and resilience did not feature in the competences, yet these are essential for navigating the complexities of modern life and work. This suggests a need for curriculum review to incorporate the skills that are lacking.

In the Social studies department, Religious Education (RE) competences were adequately stated because they included knowledge skills and values. They also incorporated most of the eight (8) core skills. The course was found to be very relevant to the job market because the course outlines articulated clear knowledge skills and values the students should attain. For example, the teacher trainees are trained to be problem solvers. This is commended because the work place demands for a person who can deal with problems encountered and come up with or design solutions- rather than routine tasks; hence the students are equipped with most of the

eight (8) core skills. In History, the course competences were adequately available and clear. The course was found to be very relevant to the job market out there. The Education courses articulated the competences adequately, they included interpersonal skills, soft skills and numeracy. Most course competences were clearly stated in most of the courses offered. In the Sciences, the course competences were available and clearly written. The knowledge and skills that the students need to acquire and be able to apply were clearly stated. The 21st century soft skills were available, but to an average extent. Drastic improvement is needed in all the courses offered especially, emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, creativity and innovative skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings indicated variations per cohort in the absorption of college products into the labour market. In one cohort, all graduates were employed, while in the same cohort, other areas of specialisation were the least absorbed if not none. The absorption of products was largely influenced by a number of factors, for instance, over-admission of students into programmes for which the industry only absorbs a few frustrated the rate of absorption of college products into the labour market. It was recommended that teacher education policies be reviewed. Upgrading some courses from elective to major subject status, and designing new courses that teach employability skills alongside normal skill and content delivery, could calibrate college programmes so that desired results are observed. This paper makes an umbrella recommendation that, teacher education institutions and government need to review, re-think and re-orient their education, vocational training and labour market policies, to align them with the needs of the changing society.

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