EXPLORING SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES' EFFECTIVENESS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN ZAMBIA

by

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DECLARATION

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I, do hereby declare that this thesis is a product of my effort and that all sources used in this work have been acknowledged using complete references and that anything similar to other works that may be found unacknowledged may be due to mere coincidence.

Signature:

Date: 11th October 2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife,

Brenda Nambeye-Mwelwa

for your patience, encouragement, and enduring support during my studies

To my children,

Martha-Mubanga Mwelwa, Marian Mwamba Mwelwa,

Melanie Mwizukanji Mwelwa and Melvin Malumbo Mwelwa

You are my source of inspiration.

I dedicate this work to you for your understanding and allowing me to demonstrate to you that with hard work, self-discipline and determination, it is possible to achieve what may seem impossible.

To my late parents,

Mr Gilbert. M. Mwelwa and Mrs. Martha Mwansa-Mwelwa.

You gave me life, love and hope to realise my potential.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the extent to which social science degree programmes are effective in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The research adopted the convergent parallel mixed-methods design to collect quantitative and qualitative data through the use of structured questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. The triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings. A total of 162 participants participated in the study. The study sample comprised 120 university students, 22 employers or their representatives, 12 lecturers, and 8 key informants. Both the probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the study participants. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 22 to generate descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed using ATLAS.ti Version 8 to generate themes.

The research revealed that for graduates to be employable and carry a graduate identity, they need to possess a mix of employability skills. The study found that the majority of graduates from social sciences were not work-ready at the time of joining their organisations. Employers were less satisfied with their demonstration of employability skills. The study also found that student internships were less effective in promoting skills development due to the manner in which they were being conducted. Furthermore, the findings revealed that university departments offering social science programmes had weak and scant partnerships with the labour industry. The study concluded that, to a varying extent, the four social science degree programmes were less effective in promoting skills acquisition and employability amongst graduating students.

Based on the findings, the study recommends among other things the need to strengthen partnerships between universities and the labour industry through specific laws and policies by embracing the interdisciplinary approach and broadening the assessment of employability skills in social sciences. Finally, the study proposes a model framework to reinforce the relevance of social science degree programmes in promoting graduate employability in Zambia.

Keywords: social sciences; social science degree programmes; skills development; employability skills; graduate employability; programme effectiveness; student internships and work placements; university-industry partnerships; universities

MANWELEDZO

Ṱhoḓisiso heyi yo wanulusa nḓila ine mbekanyamushumo dza digirii dza saintsi dza matshilisano dza shuma ngayo kha u ṱuṱuwedza mveledziso ya zwikili na u ita uri mutelwadigirii a wane mishumo Zambia. Ngudo yo shumisa ngona dzo ṱanganelaho dza khwanthithathivi na khwaḽithethivi kha vhuimo vhu fanaho ha kuitele kwa ṱhoḓisiso kha u kuvhanganya data hu tshi khou shumiswa mbudzisambekanywa, nyendedzi dza inthaviwu na u saukanya maṅwalwa. U shumisa ngona dzo vhalaho dza zwiko zwa data dza vhuvhili hazwo khwanthithathivi na khwanthethivi zwi khwinisa u fulufhelwa na u khwaṱhisedzwa ha mawanwa a ngudo. U shela mulenzhe ha vhadzheneli vha tshivhalo tsho fhelelaho tsha 162 vho shelaho mulenzhe kha ngudo. Tsumbonanguludzwa dza ngudo dzo bveledzwa nga matshudeni a yunivesithi a 120, vhatholi vha 22 kana vhaimeleli vhavho, maḽekitshara a 12, na vhaṉetshedzi vhahulwane vha mafhungo vha 8. Vhuvhili ha tekiniki ya tsumbonanguludzwa dzine dza nangwa u bva kha vhathu vhanzhi na tsumbonanguludzwa dzine dza nangwa ho sedzwa vhukoni dzo shumiswa u nanga vhadzheneli vha ngudo. Data ya khwanthithathivi yo saukanya hu tshi shumiswa SPSS Vesheni ya 22 u bveledza ṱhalutshedzo ya zwitatisiṱika, nge no data ya khwaḽithethivi yo saukanya hu tshi shumiswa ATLAS.ti Vesheni ya 8 u bveledza thero.

Ṱhoḓisiso yo wanulusa uri vhatelwadigirii vha wane mishumo na u tholea, vha fanela u vha na zwikili zwo ṱanganelaho zwa u wana mishumo. Ngudo yo wanulusa uri vhunzhi ha vhatelwadigirii u bva kha saintsi dza matshilisano vho vha vha sa athu u ḓilugisela mishumo nga tshifhinga tsha u dzhoina zwiimiswa zwavho. Vhatholi vho vha vho fushea zwiṱuku kha kusumbedzele kwavho kwa zwikili zwa u wana mishumo. Ngudo dzo dovha dza wanulusa uri vhugudelamushumo ha matshudeni ho shuma mishumo muṱuku kha u ṱuṱuwedza mveledziso ya zwikili zwo itiswa nga nḓila ye zwa vha zwi tshi khou tshimbidziswa zwone. U isa phanḓa nga u ralo, mawanwa o wanulusa uri mihasho ya yunivesithi ine ya ṉetshedza mbekanyamushumo ya saintsi dza matshilisano i na tshumisano ṱhukhu i songo khwaṱhaho na nḓowetshumo ya

mushumo. Ngudo yo pendela ngauri, u ya nga u fhambana, mbekanyamushumo dza digirii nṋa dza saintsi ya matshilisano yo shuma zwiṱuku kha u ṱuṱuwedza u wana zwikili na u wana mushumo vhukati ha matshudeni vho telwaho digirii.

Zwo ḓisendeka nga mawanwa, ṱhoḓisiso yo themendela vhukati ha zwinzhi ṱhoḓea ya u khwaṱhisedza tshumisano vhukati ha dziyunivesithi na nḓowetshumo ya mishumo nga mbekanyamaitele na milayo yo tiwaho nga u ṱanganedza maitele manzhi na u engedza ndingo dza zwikili zwa u wana mishumo kha saintsi dza matshilisano. Tsha u fhedzisela, ṱhoḓisiso yo dzinginya furemiweke ya tshiedza u khwaṱhisedza u tea ha mbekanyamushumo dza digirii dza saintsi dza matshilisano u ṱuṱuwedza u wana mishumo kha vhatelwadigirii ngei Zambia.

Maipfi a ndeme: saintsi dza matshilisano; mbekanyamushumo dza digirii dza saintsi dza matshilisano; mveledziso ya zwikili; zwikili zwa u wana mushumo; u wana mishumo nga mutelwadigirii; u shuma ha phurogireme; vhugudelamushumo ha mutshudeni na u wana mishumo u itela u wana tshenzhemo; tshumisano ya nḓowetshumo ya yunivesithi; dziyunivesithi

TSHOBOKANYO

Thutopatlisiso eno e tlhotlhomisitse gore mananeo a dikirii ya saense ya loago a kgona go le kana kang go tsweletsa tlhabololo ya bokgoni le go kgona go thapega ga dialogane kwa Zambia. Patlisiso e dirisitse melebo e e kopantsweng mme e bapisiwa go kokoanya *data* e e lebelelang dipalopalo le e e lebelelang mabaka ka tiriso ya dipampiripotsolotso tse di rulaganeng, dikaedi tsa dipotsolotso le tokololo ya dikwalo. Tokololo ya *data* e e lebelelang dipalopalo le e e lebelelang mabaka e tokafaditse go ikanyega le bonnete jwa diphitlhelelo. Banni le seabe ba palogotlhe ya 162 ba nnile le seabe mo thutopatlisisong. Sampole ya thutopatlisiso e ne e na le baithuti ba yunibesithi ba le 120, bathapi ba le 22 gongwe baemedi ba bona, batlhatlheledi ba le 12 le basedimosi ba botlhokwa ba le 8. Go dirisitswe dithekeniki tsa go tlhopha sampole kwa ntle ga thulaganyo le e e farologanang le eo mmogo go tlhopha banni le seabe ba thutopatlisiso. Go lokolotswe *data* e e dirisang dipalopalo go dirisiwa *SPSS Version 22* go tlhagisa dipalopalo tse di tlhalosang, fa data e e lebelelang mabaka yona e lokolotswe go dirisiwa *ATLAS.ti Version 8* go tlhagisa merero.

Patlisiso e senotse gore go re dialogane di kgone go thapega le go nna le boitshupo jwa boalogane, di tlhoka go nna le bokgoni jo bo farologaneng jwa go kgona go thapega. Thutopatlisiso e fitlhetse gore dialogane go tswa kwa disaenseng tsa loago di ne di sa siamela tiro ka nako e di neng di tsena mo ditheong tsa tsona. Bathapi ba ne ba sa kgotsofadiwa ke ka moo ba bontshang bokgoni jwa bona jwa go thapega ka gona. Gape thutopatlisiso e fitlhetse gore go ithutela mo tirong ga baithuti ga go na bokgoni jwa go tsweletsa tlhabololo ya bokgoni ka ntlha ya tsela e go dirwang ka gona. Mo godimo ga moo, diphitlhelelo di senotse gore mafapha a diyunibesithi a a tlamelang ka mananeo a saense ya loago a na le dilekane tse di bokoa le tse di sa lekanang le indaseteri ya badiri. Thutopatlisiso e konoseditse gore, le fa go sa lekalekane, mananeo a le mane a dikirii ya saense ya loago a ne a se bokgoni mo go kalo go tsweletsa go bona bokgoni le go kgona go thapega mo baithuting ba ba alogang.

Go ikaegilwe ka diphitlhelelo, thutopatlisiso e atlenegisa gareng ga tse dingwe, tlhokego ya go maatlafatsa selekane magareng ga diyunibesithi le indaseteri ya badiri ka melao e e rileng le dipholisi ka go amogela molebo o o akaretsang maphata a a farologaneng le go atolosa tlhatlhobo ya bokgoni jwa go thapega mo disaenseng tsa loago. Kwa bokhutlong, thutopatlisiso e tshitshinya letlhomeso la sekao go tiisa bomaleba jwa mananeo a dikirii ya saense ya loago go tsweletsa go kgona go thapega ga dialogane kwa Zambia.

Mafoko a botlhokwa: disaense tsa loago; mananeo a dikirii ya saense ya loago; tlhabololo ya bokgoni; bokgoni jwa go thapega; go kgona go thapega ga dialogane; bokgoni jwa lenaneo; go ithutela tirong ga baithuti le go tsenngwa mo tirong; dilekane tsa yunibesithi-indaseteri; diyunibesithi

ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organisations
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CIPD	Chartered Institute for Personnel Development
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
CSO	Central Statistical Office
EU	European Union
FBO	Faith-Based Organisations
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HCA	Human Capability Approach
HCP	Human Capital Theory
HEA	Higher Education Authority
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education,
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOS	National Occupation Standards
NQAF	National Quality Assurance Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSQF	National Skills Qualification Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPI	Paper and Pulp Industry
PRMC	Policy Monitoring and Research Centre

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SS	Social Sciences
STEM	Science, Technological, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWES	Student Work Experience Schemes
TEVET	Technical Education, Vocation and Entrepreneurship Training
TEVETA	Technical Education Vocation and Entrepreneurship Authority
UK	The United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
USEM	Understanding, Skills, Efficiency beliefs and Metacognition
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

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CHAPTER ONE

STUDY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to explore the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in selected public and private universities in Zambia. The focus was on social sciences undergraduate degree programmes of the selected universities. The study is structured in such a manner that background information is presented first. This is followed by the rationale of the study, the aim of the study, problem statement, and research questions. A theoretical framework and conceptual framework of the study as well as the research methods (which include, the research design and approach; study population and sample, methods of data collection and analysis, validity, reliability, and ethical issues) thereof, are outlined, defined and briefly described, as used in the study. Terms are defined, followed by the literature review and finally, the programme outline of the study is presented.

1.2 BACKGROUND

There had been a notable concern in Zambia over the increasing number of reports about the mismatch between the skills graduates were acquiring from higher learning institutions and what was expected of them in the job market. Consequently, some graduates were finding it difficult to secure employment (Moono & Rankin, 2013:25; United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2016:182) which has been attributed to the inability by higher learning institutions in Zambia to expose students to a curriculum that was responsive to the present and future needs of the labour industry in the country. For instance, a scoping study by Moono and Rankin (2013:28) found that the education curricula from most higher learning institutions in Zambia did not equip graduates with specific skills needed in the industry. It has also been found that there were very few people employed in the labour industry who had undergone skills training in Zambia (CSO, 2015:80).

The majority of those with skills demanded by the labour market in the fields of Science, Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Metal Fabrication and Technology to

name but a few, had qualifications at certificate and diploma level (CSO, 2013:37), with a large number of those employed in the labour sector not undergoing any skills training. Consequently, this has hampered the growth and productivity of the labour market in Zambia (GRZ, 2013:33).

To ameliorate this situation, the Zambian government has developed legal and policy frameworks to guide the provision of quality and relevant higher education which is responsive to the needs of the country's economy. Such legal and policy frameworks included the Ministry of Education's Educating Our Future Policy Document of 1996 (the current national policy for education in Zambia), Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Policy Act of 1998, The Zambia Qualifications Authority Act of 2011 and the Higher Education Act No.4 of 2013 to mention but a few (UNESCO, 2016:170-171; GRZ, 2017:23).

Notable among those policy interventions had been the establishment of the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Policy as the National Skills Development Policy to guide skills development through higher education in Zambia (UNESCO, 2016:167). Though this policy has been instrumental in promoting skills development in higher education, it was restricted to TEVET colleges and did not cater to university institutions in Zambia. As such, from the National Skills Qualifications Framework, the highest qualification one could obtain from the colleges was Diploma certification (UNESCO, 2013:170).

To promote access to tertiary education, the government through the liberalisation policy permitted the private sector to take part in the provision of university education in Zambia. To ensure that both public and private universities remained true to the ideals of providing quality education to enhance skills development in the country, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established through an act of parliament and operationalized in 2014 (Higher Education Act, 2013:1). The HEA was established to work in collaboration with the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) to promote quality assurance in higher education.

Albeit with all these measures put in place, various stakeholders in the country continued questioning the quality and calibre of graduates produced at the university level. More so, most universities in Zambia, except for medical fields, were said to be producing more than enough graduates with less needed skills in the field of social

sciences and fewer numbers of those with scarce skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics demanded by the labour market (UNDP, 2016:84). This resonates well with the 2016 Zambia Educational Statistical Bulletin which revealed that enrolment in [public] universities was not in line with the development priorities and realities of the labour market and the nation at large. What is disquieting about these enrolments was that 65 percent of those getting into the universities were in the social science fields which were characterised with less demand on the labour sector in Zambia (MoE, 2017:58), even though the productivity of the national and global labour markets was driven by the demand for graduates in Science, Technological, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related fields of study. This, however, was not the situation in Zambia, where the number of unemployed graduates had been steadily growing.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Quality and relevant university education play a potent role in fostering individual and national development. Evidence suggests that skills and knowledge acquired through higher education often result in increased opportunities for wage and self-employment amongst the youth. Subsequently, this brings about individual empowerment and national development through increased labour productivity (Oketch, McCowan & Schendel, 2014:12; Qiu, 2014:624). However, reports about the inability of Zambia's higher education sector to effectively produce university graduates with employable skills in line with the needs of the labour market are worrisome. Therefore, a study aimed at exploring the extent to which social science degree programmes in selected universities in Zambia were promoting employability skills in graduating students was not only vital but indispensable. This study brought to the fore how universities and other higher learning institutions in the country could work towards producing social science graduates with relevant skills needed by the labour industry in line with the nation's strategic focus and foster their employability (GRZ, 2014:102). The study was timely, especially that quality and relevant higher education is indispensable in improving the productivity of Zambia's labour force to advance industrialisation and economic growth.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The lack of practical skills by graduates demanded by the labour industry has negatively affected the productivity of Zambia's economy (UNDP, 2016:84). Many graduates fail to secure jobs as it was perceived that they had acquired irrelevant skills despite being educated at the university level (Moono & Rankin, 2013:25). This has partly been attributed to the fact that 65 percent of those getting into the universities enrolled in social science fields which were characterised with less demand for employment in the labour sector in Zambia (MoE, 2017:58). In Zambia, the production of more graduates in the field of Social Sciences compared to STEM by universities, was at variance with the development priorities and realities of the labour market and the nation at large (UNDP, 2016:84). Consequently, graduate unemployment in Zambia was reported to be at 7.8 percent in 2015 (CSO, 2015:67). In 2019, the unemployment rate increased to 12.5 percent (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2019:xii). On the other hand, youth unemployment is reported to have increased from 11.4 percent in 2018 to 17.9 percent in 2019 (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2019:xii). These statistics offer clear evidence that the rate of unemployment in Zambia has been on the increase. Several strategies, suggestions, and policies have forthwith been put in place by the government and other stakeholders to ameliorate the situation, were aimed at promoting skills development and reducing the educated and out of school, rural and urban youth unemployment problem in the country (GRZ, 2015:8-12; Policy Monitoring and Research Centre, 2015:24-30). However, the unemployment problem seems to be far from ending (Moono & Rankin, 2013:25; Bhorat, Cassin, Masumba, Naidoo & Steenkamp, 2015:10). Besides, practical strategies to promote education-industry linkages to empower graduates with relevant skills to minimize skills mismatch in the labour market through higher education have for a long time been reported to be weaker in the country (Youthmap Zambia, 2014:1; Bhorat *et al.,* 2015:2; UNDP, 2016:84).

While literature abounds (Oppong & Saches, 2014; Jackson, 2015; Chan & Lin, 2016; World Bank, 2016) about how skills development could be enhanced to promote graduate employability and productivity in the labour sector, there had been very few empirical studies conducted in the Zambian context which have attempted to focus on how and the extent to which both public and privately-run universities in the country

are producing graduates from social science degree programmes in line with the skills demanded by the labour industry (Moono & Rankin, 2013:25-28; Mulenga, 2015:iv). In addition, past studies about higher education and skills development in the Zambian context have tended to focus on TEVET institutions and not universities (Simukungwe-Moono, 2010: iii; Mwila, 2017:83) because skills development has been biased towards job-specific skills acquired by graduates from vocational and technical programmes and not those who pursue social sciences. More so, most local studies on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia have been based on assumptions with no empirical evidence and it seems that there is a predominance of social science graduates at the undergraduate level in most Zambian universities compared to those in STEM fields. This study, therefore, aimed to explore the effectiveness of the social science degree programmes offered in selected Zambian universities in promoting the acquisition of employable and relevant skills demanded by the job market to foster equitable employment opportunities amongst graduates in the country.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question developed for this study is**:**

To what extent do social science degree programmes offered at universities promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia?

The following sub-questions were formulated to support the main research question:

1. What does scholarly literature say regarding university skills development and graduate employability?

2. To what extent are social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities relevant to the skills need in the job market in Zambia?

3. How effective are work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?

4. What are the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia?

5. Which framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skill needs on the job market in Zambia?

1.6 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at exploring the extent to which social science degree programmes offered at universities promoted skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

To achieve the aim, the objectives of the study were to:

- **Establish** scholarly literature regarding university skills development and graduate employability.

- **Evaluate** the relevance of social science degree programmes on offer regarding skills need in the job market in selected universities in Zambia

- **Examine** the availability and effectiveness of work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia

- **Assess** the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia

- **Propose** a framework that could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the job market in Zambia.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term theoretical framework entails the use of a theory to frame our understanding and explanation of a given phenomenon (Strayhorn, 2013:10). It is a frame of a study that implies the stance taken by the researcher on the premise of the given literature of the topic under consideration (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:15). Theories touch on every facet of a study such as identifying the research problem and justifying the need for a study to be undertaken. To a larger extent, the theoretical orientation of a study also influences what the researcher focuses on to construct sense out of the collected information. It also expands his or her horizon in understanding the topic under study.

Anfara and Mertz (2014:15) thus conceptualise a theoretical framework as an empirical theory of some psycho-social processes that can be used to simplify our understanding of the given phenomena in varying contexts. By simplifying how various components of a given phenomenon interact and operate, theories act as models which concretise how we understand the world around us. They provide a framework on how a given research problem and questions are likely to be addressed. A good analytical and interpretive framework is said to be one that is simple, supportive of other theories, novel, predictive, and internally consistent (Anfra & Mertz, 2014:15). In this study, therefore, a theoretical framework was taken to mean a blueprint which acts as a foundation upon which research is premised and constructed. This study was framed within the context of the Human Capability Approach. A detailed discussion of this framework is provided in Chapter 2.

1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study took a conceptual framework to be a synthesis of the different theoretical concepts and constructs which represent an integrated approach of looking at a research problem (Imenda, 2014:189). In contrast to a theoretical framework, which is obtained from a theory, a conceptual framework is premised on different concepts, constructs, and assumptions (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018:439). A conceptual framework, therefore, was key to this study as it helped the researcher to bring out some interrelated concepts from different theories to easily explain the relationships between different variables in the study.

The use of a conceptual framework was premised on the argument that the characteristics of the Human Capability Approach may be limited to thoroughly explain the problem of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. More so, the triangulation of the theoretical and conceptual framework was intended to enrich our understanding of the problem under study (Imenda, 2014:190). As such, the researcher integrated various concepts taken from the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis to develop a conceptual framework that would thoroughly address the research problem at hand. As such, though the study was framed within the context of the Human Capability Approach as a theory, reference was made to key characteristics or assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Approach as well as other constructs and concepts within the literature review of the study, as shown in Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2.

This culminated in an overarching conceptual framework for this study. In the context of this study, the Human Capability Approach was not used without referring to some key assumptions and concepts of the Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961:8-9; Eide & Showalter, 2010:27; Oketch *et al*., 2014:12) and the Screening Hypothesis (Akinyemi, 2013:14; James, Warhurst, Tholen & Commander, 2013:958). Extending some key assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis to the Human Capability Approach made it easier for the researcher to elucidate the different aspects of the phenomenon under study (Anfra & Mertz, 2014:15; Banart, Bosse & Trautwein, 2017:8).

For instance, The Human Capital Theory assumed that exposing individuals to training opportunities on the job and other work experiences could enhance their skills and productivity (Cai, 2013:459). Based on that assumption, the study ascertained the effectiveness of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Jackson, 2015:350) experiences in promoting practical skill acquisition amongst graduating students in selected universities. One of the key assumptions of the Screening Hypothesis is that since employers cannot tell the actual productivity of the prospective employees, the use of educational qualifications such as university degree certificates was the only sure way employers could predict one's productivity and arrive at a decision to employ and pay wages (Cai, 2013:459). While education is instrumental in promoting employee productivity at work, it also acts as a signal regarding their innate abilities and competencies to be employable (Page, 2010:34).

Drawing on these assumptions, the current study looked at how and the extent to which skills and practical knowledge and skills through higher education from selected universities in Zambia aided graduates to secure credentials for employability within the framework of the Human Capability Approach. Such credentials should reflect their worth and productivity (Akinyemi, 2013:14; James *et al.,* 2013:958). This ultimately increases their freedom and opportunity to be employed or employ themselves to enhance the productivity and growth of the labour sector and the nation at large (Holmes & Mayhew, 2016:482). The Human Capability Approach, therefore, aided the researcher in establishing whether social science degree programmes in selected universities promote the acquisition of specific or general skills (capabilities) or both amongst graduates. Such a determination would act as a guide in establishing graduate employability in Zambia. The next section offers a brief review of the literature which is expanded in later chapters.

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a process of reading through published materials related to a topic under investigation (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013:49). It involves studying and interrogating the current literature on the topic being researched. It is a key component of any research. The rationale behind the literature review is to aid the researcher to formulate a clear research problem worth investigating. Reviewing literature helps one to understand the current state of knowledge regarding the topic being studied (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2011:37; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2014:9). It thus affects the aim of the study, research problem, and design, data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation. The reviewed literature also helps the researcher to clearly understand their research topic, thereby helping them to define the variables of the study which makes it easier to measure them. Thoroughly reviewed literature helps the researcher to be conversant with the theoretical orientations of the topic under study from a multi-disciplinary perspective. It is only by reviewing literature that a literature gap can be identified for a given research topic to be investigated (Welman *et al.,* 2011:38). The entire research process, therefore, is encapsulated in the literature review. The literature search and review is an ongoing process that is considered from the inception of the study until it is deemed complete.

A literature search was thus essential to the topic under study. It helped the researcher to thoroughly grasp the various theoretical perspectives of university skills development and graduate employability as they relate to Zambia's situation. The topic of university skills development and graduate employability is a widely researched and highly contested area globally. As such it was only through a thorough review of literature that the researcher was able to identify the knowledge gap in the Zambian context to undertake the study without mere duplication of efforts on aspects that had already been extensively researched and consensus reached. The literature was systematically reviewed from the global, African, and Zambian perspectives. The objectives of this study were used to come up with sub-themes to guide the literature search.

Different sources of literature have been used to develop a comprehensive and scholarly literature search relevant to the study problem. These included primary and secondary data sources. The secondary sources of data were from scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations, research reports, and monographs. They also included national government and intergovernmental reports on higher education, skills development, and graduate employability. Internet and computer-accessible databases such as ERIC, EBSCO, Informit, Proquest, UNESCO, and many others were also used to access relevant data for review on the study topic. A comprehensive literature search for this study is herein presented in Chapter 3.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is often confused with research methods. Research methodology refers to those principles which determine the tools of investigations (methods) that dictate how the actual research is conducted (Tan, 2018:4). This means that while the research methodology entails the procedures used by the researcher to acquire knowledge about a research problem, the research method tells us about the tools used to acquire knowledge from the researcher. Research methodology, therefore, encompass the research design, paradigms, approaches, and methods used as they relate to the study (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:28). The research methods relate to the tools of the investigation such as the population, study sample, sampling, and instruments of data collection and procedure which were considered. They also include methods of analysing and interpreting data used by the researcher.

The research methodology also includes aspects of validity and reliability (Bless *et al*., 2013:221), trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 4 of this thesis gives a thorough description of the research methodology.

1.10.1 Research Design

The research design involves all processes involved in researching to achieve the desired purpose (De Vos *et al*., 2014:142). It is a plan of how the research is to be executed to answer the research questions and meet the overall aim of the study. In research, a research design is a strategy for inquiry (Creswell, 2014:12). It can also be said to be a structure for collecting and analysing data and interpreting the findings of the study (Bryman, 2008:31). Bless *et al*. (2013:130) regard a research design as a clear plan or blueprint which is used to guide how a study is to be conducted from its inception to the end. It is about the study of a population by using some given research methods to achieve the intended outcomes. In this study, a research design was taken to mean the various steps which were undertaken to collect, analyse and interpret the findings of the study on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

Research designs vary from one study to another depending on the research approach used. Such approaches may either be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. For example, a qualitative approach in research entails the use of qualitative and non-numerical data. Such a study may warrant the use of research designs such as Narrative Biography, Ethnography, Case Study, Phenomenology, and Grounded Theory to mention a few (De Vos *et al.,* 2014: 312-313). These designs are commonly used in social-related studies. On the other hand, the use of quantitative approaches in research entails the use of numerical empirical data. Such research is commonly associated with the use of research designs which include the experimental, quasi-experimental, and true experimental designs, to name but a few. Quantitative research designs are mostly used in controlled environments and they are useful in scientific experimental studies (De Vos *et al.,* 2014:144-150).

Lastly, the mixed methods approach is an approach that utilises both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The proponents of the mixed methods approach argue that unlike the use of either qualitative or quantitative approach,

triangulation of the two ensures that strength in one approach makes up for the weaknesses in the other, thereby promoting completeness and corroboration in the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:12). There are various research designs associated with the mixed methods approach which include but are not limited to the Explanatory Mixed Methods Design, Exploratory Mixed Methods Design, Triangulation Mixed Methods Design, and Embedded Mixed Methods Design (Creswell, 2014:12).

This study, therefore, using the mixed methods approach, adopted the triangulation mixed methods design. The triangulation mixed methods design also is known as the Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design, is a design that allows the researcher to converge and make use of both the qualitative and quantitative data in a study (Creswell, 2014:15). This mixed-methods design thus implies the convergence of both qualitative and quantitative data about the effectiveness of the social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. Chapter 4 gives a comprehensive description of and justification for the use of the concurrent triangulation or convergent parallel mixed-methods design in the study. The researcher's worldview informed the use of the mixed methods research design in this study. The subsequent section presents the philosophical orientation of the researcher regarding the topic under investigation.

1.10.2 Research Paradigm

Kivunji and Kuyini (2017:26) define a research paradigm as the world view of the researcher. It is a philosophical perspective that exposes the researcher's way of thinking. It is that pattern of thinking which helped the researcher to construct knowledge from the data collected. A research paradigm thus is a philosophical worldview. Morgan (2007:50) defines a research paradigm as a system of beliefs and practices that have a bearing on how a researcher arrives at questions to study and the means and methods that are employed to investigate them (Morgan, 2007:50). A research paradigm thus has a bearing on the research designs and methods one adopts in their study (Creswell, 2014:5). This study thus took a research paradigm to mean the researcher's philosophical perspective which guided the means for identification, collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data to construct meaning from the research problem at hand.

The study adopted a research paradigm associated with mixed methods research. Shanon-Baker (2016:322-329) identifies four paradigm perspectives for mixed methods research which can be taken into consideration. These include pragmatism, transformative emancipation, dialects, and critical realism. From the four philosophical paradigms identified by Shanon-Baker (2016:322-329), the present study adopted the pragmatic paradigm. The pragmatic paradigm, as discussed under Chapter 4, is premised on the idea that in research various methods that could help the researcher answer different research questions to solve real-world problems such as the issue of skills development and graduate employability, must be used in research execution. The paradigm is thus open to the use of a mix of approaches irrespective of the paradigmatic or philosophical assumptions followed by a researcher (Zandvanian & Daryapoor, 2013:528). The adoption of the pragmatic paradigm in the study was informed by the three important elements of a research paradigm. These were the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions of the pragmatic perspective regarding the effectiveness of the social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and employability amongst graduating students from Zambian universities.

1.10.3 General Population, Target Population, and Accessible Population

A population for a study can be better understood by clearly defining its three constituent parts. These include the (general) population, target population as well as accessible (study) population. The general population refers to the entire population in which all elements share some similar attributes (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng-Abayie, 2017:1611). It is also a unit upon which the findings of a given study may be generalised (Welman *et al.,* 2011:52). For this study, government ministries, higher learning, and business institutions, and individuals with interest in and affected by higher education and its outcomes regarding skills development and graduate employability constituted the general population of the study.

The target population, on the other hand, is more redefined than a general population. It is a composition of study participants with specific characteristics of interest and relevance to the problem under investigation (Asiamah *et al.,* 2017:1612). The target population thus omits all elements of the population with undesirable attributes to the relevance and context of the objectives of the study. The target population constitutes

only those elements that meet the inclusion criteria to participate in the study (Alvi, 2016:10). In this study, the target population constituted all those relevant stakeholders with an interest in and knowledge about university skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. Lastly, the accessible population refers to the subset of a target population. It is the accessible population from which the researcher can draw their representative study sample. The aspect of accessibility, therefore, entails the willingness and availability of the prospective participants to be part of the study sample during data collection. Implicitly, this notion entailed that only accessible representative members of the target population participated in the study.

An in-depth description of the target and the accessible population is given under the research methodology in Chapter 4.

1.10.4 Study Sample

A study sample is a subset of the entire study population that a researcher gets to investigate (Bless *et al*., 2013:162). It is thus a group of a relatively smaller number of individuals who were selected from the target population for investigations only (Alvi, 2016:10). A study sample in this study was thus taken to a mean a small representative and accessible group selected from the target population. A total sample size of 162 participants was selected to take part in the study. Discussed hereunder are the techniques and procedures which were used and carried out to arrive at the sample size of 162 participants.

1.10.5 Sampling Techniques and Procedure

Sampling is a technique or process through which a representative sample is selected from a given population (Bless *et al.,* 2013: 395). It refers to those techniques used to select participants who constitute a study sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017:1). The study utilised both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling techniques refer to random sampling techniques in which each element of the population has equal chances of being selected to the sample (Patten & Newhart, 2018:89). While non-probability sampling techniques refer to those sampling techniques in which the probability of an element being selected to be part of the sample is not known or guaranteed. Three different sampling techniques were used in

the study to come up with a sample of 162 participants. These included purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and systematic simple random sampling.

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select institutions and individuals to take part in the study. Eight key informants and 22 employers or their representatives were purposively selected. Simple random sampling, a random sampling technique was used by the researcher to select 12 lecturers to participate in the study from different universities. Lastly, a systematic simple random sampling technique was used to randomly select 120 students to participate in the study using a questionnaire. A detailed description of how these different sampling techniques were employed in arriving at a total study sample of 162 participants and justifications for their inclusion, is given in Chapter 4.

1.10.6 Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The study utilised self-administered, semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides as instruments of data collection. Other primary and secondary data were also collected through document analysis. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while qualitative data were collected using interview guides as well as document analysis.

1.10.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is the process of describing what has been found by the researcher. The processes of data analysis depend on whether one is dealing with quantitative or qualitative data. For instance, Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014:12) take qualitative data analysis to involve data condensation, display and verification. As a process, qualitative data analysis is concerned with the selection, simplifying, focusing, and abstracting of the data that appear to be in written form from interviews into meaningful findings. In contrast, quantitative data analysis entails a systematic process of applying statistical techniques and procedures to ensure adequate description, classification, illustration, condensation, and evaluation of the given numerical data (Schurink, Fouche, & Devos, 2014:403).

Data interpretation, on the other hand, involves the process of establishing the meaning of the research findings or results by closely examining the patterns, classes,

causal flows, explanations, and propositions in the data (Miles, *et al*., 2014:12). Data interpretation entails the process of explaining the research findings to make meaning out of them. Interpretation of the data, therefore, is about drawing inferences from the hidden meanings of the findings or results to conclude what best describes the value of a given phenomenon (Schurink, *et al.,* 2014:402). It is about uncovering the truths that explain trends or relationships in the given data.

The present study utilised both qualitative and quantitative processes of data analysis being a mixed methods study. Quantitative data from self-administered semi-structured questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 22 software to generate descriptive statistics in the form of pie charts, tables, and graphs (Bryman, 2008:361). In addition, the researcher ran several statistical tests to compare and test the significance of the findings on different variables regarding the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (Field, 2013:89).

The qualitative data, collected through semi-structured interview guides, were analysed using ATLAS.TI Version 8, a qualitative data analysis software to generate themes from the interview responses. This software was used to organise, analyse and bring out insights on unstructured text, or qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses of the study to establish how social science degree programmes in selected universities were working towards producing employable graduates in the labour industry in Zambia.

The analysed qualitative and quantitative data were interpreted concurrently. Implying that after analysing them, qualitative and quantitative data were converged at the interpretation stage. The data were interpreted following the objectives of the study. During data interpretation, reference was made to other secondary sources of information such as government and organisational policies and university programme documents obtained through document analysis to complement the primary data of the study. The processes of data analysis and interpretation are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.11 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Having adopted a mixed methods approach, quantitative data were subjected to validity and reliability tests. Trustworthiness, on the other hand, was used to confirm the authenticity and credibility of the qualitative data that were collected.

1.11.1 Reliability

Reliability in research entails the extent to which an observable or empirical measure represents an empirical concept or activity accurately over several repeated observations (Bless *et al.,* 2013:221). Reliability, therefore, is concerned with the consistency of the measures. The study, therefore, ensured that the data collected for the study were reliable. Achieving reliability helped the researcher to make sure that the findings were credible and acceptable to the study beneficiaries (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010:148). The researcher ensured that quantitative data were corrected with maximum precision and accuracy. This was cardinal to ensure consistency, stability, and replicability of the findings of the study over time (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:148). After data collection, the three research questionnaires were subjected to a reliability test using the Alpha Cronbach test in SPSS. This was done by subjecting some selected items such as those on the Likert Scale from the three questionnaires which were used. The reliability results are further discussed in Chapter 4.

1.11.2 Validity

Validity is defined as the extent to which the findings of a study represent what was intended to be measured. Thus, research can only be said to be valid if it measures what it intended or was purported to measure (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:142). The validity, therefore, looks at how accurate the observable measures represent the concepts in question or whether they represent something, not in question (Bless *et al.,* 2013:221). Validity issues were adequately addressed by the researcher to ensure that the quantitative data collected in the study were valid to accurately answer the research questions of the study. Ensuring that the data collected is valid, enhanced the accuracy of both the assessment and evaluation of the findings in the research process (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:53). This was cardinal to ensure that the study findings were not invalidated.

1.11.3 Trustworthiness

While validity and reliability are mostly associated with quantitative data, the concept of trustworthiness was employed to help the researcher bring out the credibility and rigour of the qualitative findings in this mixed methods study.

Trustworthiness in research entails that evidence upon which the reported research findings are premised is solid and that the arguments made on the said findings are believable. Trustworthiness thus entails that the researcher's results are reliable and above questioning. Findings from trustworthy research can be said to be accurately grounded in data and thus can be trusted completely (Shenton, 2004:63). Four important indicators must be met for research to attain the trustworthiness status. These are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the findings. A detailed look at these four key aspects of the trustworthiness of a study is given in Chapter 4.

Meeting the four indicators of trustworthiness rendered the research findings valid and reliable. That made the research highly trustworthy and thereby improved its scientific rigour (Bless *et al.,* 2013:238). The validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research findings were confirmed as discussed in Chapter 4.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The key terms have been operationally defined as used in the study. These terms include Exploring; Effectiveness; University Education; Social Sciences; Education and Training Programmes; Skills Development, Graduate Employability, and Zambia.

1.12.1 Exploring

To explore is to take a systematic or careful examination of a matter before arriving at a conclusion (Merriam-Webster, n.d). It is about taking a detailed and careful look at something to properly understand it. (Merriam-Webster, n.d). Further exploring entails taking a thorough and detailed inquiry into some phenomena. In this study, exploring refers to a detailed inquiry into the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities in equipping graduating students with employability skills in Zambia.

1.12.2 Effectiveness

The term effectiveness is generally taken to mean the ability of programmes to meet the intended outcomes. Effectiveness thus is all about the extent to which the intended purpose of a given process or programme is achieved. It entails doing the right thing. Thus a programme can be said to be effective if it is meant to meet the intended objectives or results (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It also entails the extent to which the identified challenge is achieved. The Australian Government takes the term effectiveness to mean the extent to which the predetermined objectives are met (Production Commission, 2013:6). This study took the term effectiveness to mean the extent to which the social science degree programmes were able to enhance skills acquisition and employability of graduating students from selected universities in Zambia.

1.12.3 University Education

University education can be taken to mean tertiary education, higher education, or post-secondary education taken at the university level (Percy & Svenson, 2016:141). Holmes and Mayhew (2016:476) define higher education, which may also be taken to mean university education, as various courses and qualifications, which are mostly taught in universities and results in one being awarded a degree. University education is a form of higher education at the post-secondary level which takes place at university institutions (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2018). The Cambridge Online Dictionary (2018) defines university education as education at the college or university level. In this study, university education was taken to refer to that part of higher education which took place at the university level where those who underwent training were awarded an undergraduate degree qualification upon completion of studies.

1.12.4 Social Science

Social science is a distinctive field of study that is concerned with the study of society and the human relations within it (American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language**,** n.d). Social science refers to a distinctive field of study which deals with human society, group, and individual relationships within society. It is a field that is concerned with all aspects of human life. Social sciences differ from natural sciences

in that they are concerned with the study of human beings and their relationship in and with society. There are several study fields in the social sciences. These include Sociology, Psychology, Development Studies, Public Administration; Political Science, History, Economics, International Relations, Journalism, amongst others. This study took social science to be a field of study in universities concerned with the study of human relations within and with society such as Public Administration, Political Science, Economics, History, Development Studies, Demography, Education, Adult Education, and other study areas.

1.12.5 Education and Training Programmes

Though there is a thin line between what the terms 'education' and 'training' mean, they are both meant to bring about learning as the product. They are thus mostly used as an integrated approach to learning in different education and training institutions. Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda, and Nel (2013:20) for instance, take education to mean the careful and systematic efforts taken to acquire or transmit knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes either intentionally or unintentionally. On the other, hand Erasmus *et al.,* (2013:20) define training as the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills in a planned way to perform well-defined and specific tasks in a vocation setup.

Education and training programmes thus create a situation in which a university can guide students to acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they can later apply to accomplish tasks when employed. This study considered University Education and Training programmes to mean degree programmes that were designed in line with the curricula of selected universities to nurture graduating students towards acquiring relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes upon graduation in line with the labour market demands. The study focused on undergraduate degree programmes in the Social Science fields of the selected public and private universities in Zambia.

1.12.6 Skills Development

Skills development implies the different processes of education and training through which graduating students acquire competencies and personal attributes needed for self or wage employment (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2018:2) Skills development is important as it enhances individual employability and higher industrial productivity. The ripple effects of industrial productivity are reduced

unemployment and poverty levels and enhanced innovativeness and investment in the national economy (Aggarwal & Gasskor, 2013:1).

Various scholars in the field of skills development have defined what constitutes skills in different ways. There is thus no one universally accepted definition of what skills are. For instance, Tymon (2013:845) takes skills to be any component of the work to be done that requires one to do something and usually includes physical work, and other interpersonal skills. One Business Dictionary (2018) defines skill as the ability and capacity acquired through the deliberate, systematic and sustained effort for one to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities.

Skills can be divided into two broad categories. These are hard or technical skills and generic or soft skills. Cunningham and Villasenõr (2016:104) define technical skills "as specific knowledge required to carry out an occupation." Technical skills are job-specific skills, which are acquired by an individual through quality education and training (Turner, 2014:592). For example, such skills entail the ability to repair a television, the ability to do plumbing work, and many other jobs to name a few. In Zambia, technical skills were often taught in Technical and Vocational Colleges dotted around the country (UNESCO, 2016:167). In this study, therefore, skills were taken to mean possession of key competencies, knowledge, and attributes by a graduating student, acquired through a university degree programme to effectively carry out well-defined work to the satisfaction of both the employer and themselves.

1.12.7 Graduate Employability

Wedekind and Mutereko (2016) define employability as skills and attributes, which should be possessed by individuals to secure an employment position. Helyer and Lee (2014:350), quoting Addeco (2012:40) take being employable as "…having the skills, attributes, and belief necessary to win a job, succeed in a role and move on to even a more fulfilling role in the future." Lastly, Singh, Thambusamy, and Ramly (2014:845) define employability in line with Yorke, (2006:21) as a "set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to succeed in their chosen occupation (s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce and the economy." From these definitions, it is clear that being employable entails an individual's capacity to acquire and possess unique skills, knowledge, and attributes required by employers (Turner, 2014:592; Moswela & Chiparo, 2015:107; Tomlison, 2017:5).

By implication, for university graduates in Zambia to be employable, they needed to possess skills and personal attributes as demanded by the job market. An employable graduate thus is one whose chances of being employed after graduating were greater due to his or her possession of competencies and attributes demanded by the prospective employers (Singh *et al.,* 2014:852). In this study, therefore, graduate employability meant producing graduates from universities who have skills, knowledge and personal attributes relevant to the labour market for them to easily stand a chance of getting employed and with the ability to keep that job or employ themselves. In other words, employability was taken to mean one's ability to use their acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, individual agency, personal circumstances and the prevailing labour conditions to successfully create or secure and maintain employment opportunities at a given time following their graduation.

1.12.8 Zambia

This is the country in which the study was conducted. Zambia, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, is located between latitudes 8˚and 18˚south and longitudes 22˚and 34˚east. It covers a total area of 752, 612 square kilometres. It is also surrounded by eight (8) neighbouring nations. These are Zimbabwe, Tanzania. Malawi, Angola, D.R. Congo, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia. The 2010 population census report revealed that Zambia had a total population of over 13 092 666 people (Central Statistical Office, 2014:2) with a current possible population estimated to be above 16 million. As a former colony of Britain, she gained political independence from Britain in 1964. Zambia had experienced three (3) major governance phases. These were the multiparty system from 1964 to 1972; the One-Party system from 1973 to 1991 which reverted to the multiparty system in 1991 (CSO, 2014:1). Administratively, Zambia is demarcated into ten (10) provinces comprising Western, Southern, North-Western, Northern, Luapula, Lusaka, Muchinga, Eastern, Copperbelt, and Central provinces. Lusaka is the capital city.

1.13 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an orientation of the study. The theoretical framework of the study is outlined in Chapter 2. Literature is reviewed in Chapter 3 to provide a conceptual understanding of the study. The design and

methodology of empirical research are outlined in Chapter 4. The presentation and interpretation of the findings are given in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents the discussion of the results, and the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study are given in Chapter 7.

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the introduction and orientation to the study of social science degree programmes effectiveness in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The background, study rationale, problem statement, and research questions have been highlighted. The researcher has also given a preview of the theoretical framework, literature review, and research design and methodology employed in the study. The next chapter, therefore, presents a detailed and thorough description of the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the introduction and orientation of the study on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. This chapter presents the theoretical framework within which the study is framed and understood. The chapter describes what a theory is all about. It also brings into perspective the meaning, characterisation, and functionalities of the Human Capability Approach, a theoretical framework adopted for the study. Further, the chapter highlights the rationale and relevance of the capabilities framework to the study at hand. It also illuminates how the frailties of the Human Capabilities Approach could be complemented by some features of the Human Capital Theory and Screening (signalling) Hypothesis and thereby culminating into the conceptual framework within which the interrelationships between different variables of the study are interwoven and explained.

2.2 DEFINITION OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term theoretical framework, as defined in Chapter 1, entails the use of a theory to frame our understanding and explanation of a given phenomenon (Strayhorn, 2013:10). It is a frame of a study, implying the stance taken by the researcher on the premise of the given literature of the topic under consideration (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:15). Theories touch on every facet of a study such as identifying the research problem and justifying the need for a study to be undertaken. To a larger extent, the theoretical orientation of a study also influences what the researcher focuses on to construct sense out of the collected information. It also expands his or her horizon in understanding the topic under study.

Anfara and Mertz (2014:15) thus conceptualise a theoretical framework as an empirical theory of some psycho-social processes that can be used to simplify our understanding of the given phenomena in varying contexts. By simplifying how various components of a given phenomenon interact and operate, theories act as models

which concretise how we understand the world around us. They provide a framework on how a given research problem and questions are likely to be addressed. A good analytical and interpretive framework is said to be simple, supportive of other theories, novel, predictive, and internally consistent (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:15). In this study, therefore, a theoretical framework was taken to mean a blueprint that acts as a foundation upon which research is premised and constructed. This study was framed within the context of the Human Capability Approach.

2.3 THE HUMAN CAPABILITY APPROACH (HCA)

This study was couched within the framework of the Human Capability Approach as discussed below.

2.3.1 Background and Meaning of the Human Capability Approach

The Human Capability Approach, also known as the Capability Approach, was conceptualised by Amartya Sen (1988) and later improved upon by Martha Nussbaum (1990) (Saito, 2003:19; Oketch *et al.,* 2014:14; Prowse & Valeria, 2016:2). The Human Capability Approach is described as a normative framework that can be used to evaluate and assess the wellbeing of individuals and social arrangements, policy design, and social change. Chikunda and Chikunda (2015:10) argue that the emphasis of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's Human Capability Approach is on the creation of space in which equality can be promoted and not income. According to Saito (2003:19), Amartya Sen found it less beneficial to simply focus on people's income to establish their wellbeing. Rather, he argued for the need to focus on capabilities that bring out what people can do or be. To Amartya Sen, the focus on the intrinsic and not the economic value of life was the most valuable consideration than anything else. By concentrating on what individuals can do or be, Amartya Sen is said to have come up with the most comprehensible way of understanding individual well-being (Saito, 2003:19).

Unlike other economic welfare approaches, the Human Capability Approach focuses on the intrinsic value of wellbeing and not only material gain. The approach can be used to understand social justice, inequalities, poverty, and human development in general. This it does by focusing on what people can be or do effectively against their actual beings and doings (Sarkodie, Agyei-Mensah, Anarfi & Antwi-Bosiakoti,

2014:798). By looking at the conditions for wellbeing such as having access to quality education, health care, community and political participation, and the extent to which such conditions are being met, the Human Capability Approach looks at the wellbeing of people holistically. As an interdisciplinary framework, it is often applied in welfare economics, political philosophy, and social policy fields. More so, it is used to evaluate the people's wellbeing by considering the inequalities and poverty in a given population.

The Human Capability Approach, therefore, is a theoretical ideology premised on the thinking that societies must focus on expanding individual opportunities concerning the quality of life and freedom of choice to promote social justice (Pandolfini & Poli, 2015:44). It looks at the influence of social and cultural practices, political participation, social institutions, and social norms apart from financial and economic productivity. These are to be met in achieving the real freedom of thought, protection and participation in public life (Robeyns, 2005:96). It is about affording opportunities for individuals to engage in what they value for their fulfilment. The Human Capability Approach, as a multidimensional theory of justice, could also be taken to mean freedom or genuine opportunities available to an individual, such as being educated and wealthy (Calitz, Walker & Wilson-Strydom, 2016:59). Of necessity, therefore, is the undertaking that individuals should have freedom or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to pursue and lead the kind of lives they want to lead by doing whatever they may want and be in absolute terms.

In the context of this study, therefore, the Human Capability Approach was used as a lens through which the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities in Zambia was analysed to explore the extent to which they were able to empower graduates with the real freedom of being skilled and employable. For education to be valuable, it should afford those who pursue it the freedom and opportunity to advance their wellbeing. The subsequent section looks at the characteristics and functions of the Human Capability Approach.

2.3.2 Characteristics and Functions of the Human Capability Approach

Many features characterise the Human Capability Approach. Different scholars who have written about the Human Capability Approach, have identified various characteristics (Robeyns, 2005:98-100; Robertson & Egdell, 2018:120). These include

the functionings, capabilities, conversion factors, means and agency. Others have even argued that the core aspects or characteristics of the Human Capability Approach are functionings and capabilities (Robeyns, 2005:98; Chikunda & Chikunda, 2015:10). Below is a description of the various characteristics of the Human Capability Approach as they relate to the study at hand.

2.3.2.1 Functioning

Functioning in the Human Capability Approach is about what an individual can achieve to do and be. Chikunda and Chikunda (2015:10) define functioning as various things which people aspire to or value in doing or being. These include being healthy, happy, wealthy, or being an active participant in communal engagements. The functioning can, however, only be realised if one can achieve them. Functioning in this study thus refers to the different things a person may prefer to value being, such as being educated, skilled and acquiring a job in the labour market, or employing oneself.

2.3.2.2 Capabilities

Capabilities refer to the freedom the individual has to lead a life they value. Pandolfini and Poli (2015:45) take capabilities to be an alternative combination of functionings that a person is likely to achieve. They entail the actual freedoms that a person may have to decide the kind of life they want to live and have reason to value.

Capabilities, therefore, entail a set of alternatives or options from which individuals have the freedom to choose and lead the life they desire. In terms of capabilities, the question to answer is what freedom do graduate students in social science degree programmes have to render themselves employable in the job industry in Zambia? As such, this study is about how the potential freedom or opportunities of the graduating students can be broadened for them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for taking up the employment opportunities they wish to acquire. In the context of university education and graduate employability in Zambia, the student capabilities were considered by exploring the extent to which social science degree programmes in selected universities promote graduate employability opportunities and freedom (Pandolfini & Poli, 2015:44) through the use of competencies and knowledge acquired during completion of their studies. To promote a clearer understanding of functioning

and capabilities in the context of the Human Capability Approach, the two concepts of functionings and capabilities are compared below.

2.3.2.3 Functioning and capabilities compared

'Functioning' and 'Capabilities' are the two key features of the Human Capability Approach. According to Prowse and Valeria (2016:2) capabilities are "… freedoms to achieve set functionings, whereas functioning relates to the beings and doings that a person values and has reason to value". Menashy (2014:16) also clearly explains that "capabilities… are opportunities, and functioning is what such opportunities allow a human being to concretely do". The difference between functioning and capabilities in the Human Capability Approach is that the former focuses on what is already realised and the latter on what is possible to achieve to enjoy a quality life. This is in line with Robeyns (2005:95) who put it that the difference between functionings and capabilities is that the former denotes what is already realised (achieved) and the latter is about what is effectively possible. In other words, the difference between the two is that of an outcome (functioning) and the opportunities (capabilities) (Chikunda & Chikunda, 2015:11).

Once the capability has been realised, then it becomes a functioning. The functioning thus denotes an active doing such as using one's capability to carry out tasks competently on the job. The capability at times may denote the state of being in which one's capability has been realised, such as being well-skilled. In other words, functioning refers to what has been achieved and the capabilities entail the freedom on valuable options that one can achieve. In a nutshell, it should be noted that since opportunities afforded to an individual to accomplish something are the capabilities, then what such opportunities allow an individual to achieve are what constitutes the functioning (Prowse & Valeria, 2016:2).

2.3.2.4 Means (goods and services)

Within the context of the Human Capability Approach, means are goods and services which one must access to enhance their wellbeing. Means are also referred to as commodities (Robertson & Egdell, 2018:120). Means entail the resources of achieving the functioning which individuals can pursue. The means, according to Robeyns (2005:99), can be referred to as those goods or services which act as inputs in creating

or expanding capabilities. Such inputs could be material or immaterial circumstances that have a bearing on the choices and aspirations of individuals to expand their capability sets. In this study, the means referred to is access to quality university education, a conduit through which an individual could expand their capability sets of freedom and opportunities to achieve what they value to have and be. However, the mere access to means or commodities, for example, education, does not necessarily translate into increased achieved freedom and opportunities. This is due to several conversion factors that may be at play.

2.3.2.5 The conversion factors

The conversion factor is another important feature of the Human Capability Approach and relates to those aspects that may affect the ability and extent to which an individual can convert resources (means) into functionings and capabilities (Robertson & Egdell, 2018:120)**.** The conversion factor entails the extent to which an individual can turn a resource into a functioning. This means that if the acquisition of skills and knowledge are a functioning achieved through the means of university education, then one should determine the extent to which the pursuant of a social science degree programme for instance, in addition to other factors, is affected by their attainment of the status of employability (a capability) as a form of wellbeing. Conversion factors thus can limit or accelerate one's freedom and opportunities to achieve what one values to do and become. The conversion factors can be categorised into individual, social and environmental factors.

2.3.2.5.1 Personal conversion factors

Personal conversion factors are those personal factors that may affect an individual's capacity to acquire or become something (Chikunda & Chikunda, 2015:12). These include individual circumstances, background, one's intellectual abilities and individual agency to mention but a few. These may affect one's freedom and opportunities to achieve their valued state of wellbeing. In the context of employability, personal conversion factors may influence one's freedom to acquire the employability status and employment based on the level and quality of skills and competencies they possess.

2.3.2.5.2 Social conversion factors

The social conversion factors relate to public policies, social norms, power relations, and other discriminating practices. Social conversion factors relate to perceptions regarding certain social aspects of society such as education, training and employment, for example. The study thus looked at the extent to which these social conversion factors were able to influence or affect the quality of university education in the context of skills development in social sciences degree programmes. Besides, the labour market value perception of what a graduate with a social science degree qualification can accomplish for them to be rendered employable was also considered as a social conversion factor (Robeyns, 2005:99). This entails that if a qualification obtained is perceived to be of less value or peripheral compared to others, then such a perception is to a greater extent likely to negatively affect graduate employability.

For instance, the way the labour market (employers) may perceive a degree in social science fields such as Public Administration, Adult Education, Political Science, History, Psychology, Sociology and other subject areas may have a greater effect on the employability of the graduates in those fields. It should also be noted that when it comes to employability, the social norms created by society as conversion factors include the perceptions which society (labour market) has over the given qualification or field of study. Such perceptions can be best explained in the context of the screening hypothesis, as explained below, which postulates that one has to be screened to determine (signal) whether they are suitable and qualified to take up a given job opportunity.

2.3.2.5.3 Environmental conversion factors

The environmental conversion factors, though slightly similar to the social conversion factors, relate to the social and legal norms, and environmental charactersitics such as infrastructural facilities put in place in a given society (Nambiar, 2013:224; Chikunda & Chikunda, 2015:13). For instance, environmental factors may be labour market conditions, practices, laws, and policies which may affect one's employability. The labour situation in a given country can relate to environmental conversion factors. The environmental conversion factors according to the Human Capability Approach are important as they can hinder or promote people's freedom to achieve and expand their opportunities for wellbeing (Robertson & Egdell, 2018:120). This implies that the

context (environment) becomes an indispensable consideration whenever the Human Capability Approach is used as a lens to understand the given social phenomenon such as skills development and graduate employability.

2.3.2.6 Agency

Agency is an important characteristic of the Human Capability Approach. Agency in the Human Capability Approach is about the role of human beings in achieving wellbeing (Robeyns, 2005:102). It entails someone who acts to bring about change regarding what they value to do and become. This implies that human beings have a role to play as change agents in promoting their wellbeing as individuals. The focus, therefore, is more about the individual as well as the collective efforts in coming up with policy changes that can enhance individual wellbeing (Chikunda & Chikunda, 2015:12). Agency is about the extent to which people are empowered to pursue their destiny. To determine a graduate's agency thus entails examining the extent to which the social science degree programmes they are exposed to empowers them with different employability possibilities through the acquired skills. This is at variance with the Human Capital Theory which stresses how much one can earn to contribute financially as opposed to focusing on their wellbeing (ElKhayat, 2018:40).

Having discussed the characteristics of the Human Capability Approach, the next section presents the justification for its use in the study.

2.4 RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF THE HUMAN CAPABILITY APPROACH

There are numerous reasons why the Human Capability Approach was considered appropriate for this study which focuses on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

In the first place, unlike other theories with rigid assumptions, the Human Capability Approach is flexible and allowed for the contextualisation of what may constitute employability and skills development for graduates in social science degree programmes of selected universities in Zambia (Menashy, 2014:19). The Human Capability Approach was therefore key to the study of skills development and graduate employability in social sciences as it focuses on the outcome of each individual's effort to pursue freedom and wellbeing regardless of their different circumstances.

Regarding its applicability, the Human Capability Approach has seen wide application since its conceptualisation. Robeyns (2006:361) itemises the assessment of human development in different countries, identification of the poor in developing countries, assessment of small-scale development initiatives, assessment of poverty and wellbeing in advanced economies, assessment of deprivation of the disabled people, gender inequalities and criticising of social norms, practices, and discoveries as some of the areas in which the theory has been applied.

For instance, Lopez-Fogues (2014:3) used the Human Capability Approach to analyse the unemployment problem in Spain focusing on the less employable youths. The Human Capability Approach was used to understand how employment opportunities could be afforded to the disadvantaged youths in a country where the focus has been on the provision of demand-driven education to advance human development. To achieve this, the government policy on education was directed towards the provision of Vocational and Technical Education (Lopez-Fogues 2014:4). The Human Capability Approach in this study helped the researcher (Lopez-Fogues) to understand and contextualise the extent to which student access to Vocational and Technical Education augmented their opportunities and freedom to secure employment in Spain.

The wide applicability of the Human Capability Approach to different social issues and contexts, justified its applicability to the study of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia as further amplified below. Though justified, a theory must also be relevant to the overall outcome of a given study, which is the focus of the next section.

2.5 RELEVANCE OF THE HUMAN CAPABILITY APPROACH TO THE STUDY

It is worth noting that the massification or expansion of higher education provision in most countries has intensified the challenge of graduate employability and Zambia is not an exception. This is because university education today is perceived to be the tool that one can use to improve individual wellbeing through employment. This has greatly pronounced the discourse on graduate employability (Walker & Fongwa, 2016:16; Tomlinson, 2017:1; Small, Shacklock & Merchant, 2018:148). Although the subject of graduate employability is highly researched and debated the world over, it should be noted that the issue of employability is context-specific and cannot be

resolved by only making references and scientific inferences to contexts of different countries (llieva-Trichkova, 2014:7).

According to Robertson and Egdell, (2018:119), the fluidity of the labour market has shifted a weightier responsibility to individuals to become more adaptive to remain employable. As such, the Human Capability Approach has become increasingly popular as a lens to promote social justice, human rights and equality in areas of education, employment, and health. Within the precincts of the Human Capability Approach, human wellbeing can best be understood if the focus is given to the availability of opportunities to individuals and the freedom that they have to make decisions regarding the choices they consider valuable to themselves (Robertson & Egdell, 2018:120). To realise this, the relevance of the Human Capability Approach to our understanding of the attainment of the means of wellbeing such as skills development and employability status must be analysed.

2.5.1 Human Capability Approach on Skills Development and Employability

The relevance of the Human Capability Approach is further advanced by looking at its use in the discourse of skills development and employability.

In the context of this study, capabilities were looked at in two ways. These were the promotion of skills development and rendering one employable. The first way is that when students are given the freedom or offered the opportunities to acquire skills and competencies (human capital) whilst at university, they can achieve the freedom of being knowledgeable and skilled. Secondly, once this is turned into a functioning of being educated, depending on the nature of the qualification acquired and its demand on the labour market, one may be rendered employable through enhanced freedoms. As such in this study, the aspect of capability was applied to the availability of opportunities for students to access university education which exposed them to pedagogical aspects and experiences such as internships and work placement programmes through which they were to able acquire and develop practical skills and knowledge during their programme of study (Bergstrom, 2012:6).

Using the Human Capability Approach and focusing on university education and graduate employability, Bergstrom (2012:1) found that, the world over, higher education relevance was being evaluated based on graduates' acquiring of labour

market skills essential for their employability, a finding still as valid currently. As defined in Chapters 1 and 3, the concept of employability has no single universally accepted definition. Various scholars have defined it differently. For instance, Bergstrom (2012:9) in agreement with Yorke (2006) took it that the concept of employability can be subjected to three different interpretations of broad meanings. These three are that: (i) employability can be taken as demonstrated by a graduate obtaining a job; (ii) Employability of a student can be developed through the higher education experience, and (iii) Employability is in the context of possessing relevant achievements. These three definitions of employability can be applied to this study.

For instance, the quality of university education from the employability perspective can be determined by either of the three outlined categories of definitions of employability as espoused by Bergstrom (2012:9). In most cases, the ability of higher education graduates to obtain jobs is regarded as the most important and visible way of determining employability and the quality of education. By empowering graduates with freedom and the opportunity to secure jobs, they are rendered employable. Especially that employability entails higher educational experiences which render one employable as well as having the freedom to obtain the job and keep it. All these aspects relate to employability in the Zambian context.

Additionally, Menashy (2014:16) argues that the Human Capability Approach as a theoretical framework can be used to analyse policies that border on the capabilities of individuals. The import of the Human Capability Approach in this study, therefore, was on the need to broaden freedom and opportunities through which an individual could attain certain functioning through enhanced capabilities. For example, in the case of this study, being skilled is a functioning, but the opportunity to receive skilful training is what is referred to as a capability and what this can further lead to. Also, being employable or having all it takes to secure a job or employ oneself is a functioning that can ultimately result in one being employed if given an opportunity (capability).

Therefore, unlike other theories of development, the Human Capability Approach strives to promote all areas of human wellbeing. It focuses on promoting individual freedom and agency to enhance social justice. Being a people-centred approach, the Human Capability Approach thus can be linked to human development (Alkire,

2005:115). Access to employment opportunities, a source of wellbeing, is one of the key drivers of human development as espoused by the global agenda for sustainable development (Henao, Hui & Shaw, 2017:21). The Human Capability Approach thus helped the researcher to understand the extent to which the value students have given to the social science degree programmes they pursued have helped them become and do that which was valuable and meaningful to them upon graduation from university. The question was whether or not the skills acquired through the social science degree programme they chose were based on what they valued and the real opportunities which come with being employable.

From the foregoing, the question of the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the labour market should be looked at from the perspective of giving real and valuable opportunities to those who pursue education. Thus, by pursuing a social science degree programme, the graduating students should be afforded a wide range of capability sets which may include employment opportunities (Lopez-Fogues, 2014:6). Since the Human Capability Approach is aimed at giving individuals a realm of possibilities to freely choose the life, they have reason to value and live, in this context, it is about affording real freedom and opportunity for employability or capability for work (Bonvin & Galster, 2010:72).

To promote the capability for work by graduating from social science degree programmes from selected universities in Zambia, the focus must be beyond human capital development. It must also involve removing all discriminatory tendencies in the labour market. To achieve that, Bonvin and Galster (2010:72) contend that attention must be given to individual and social conversion factors which may impede such freedom. By implication, the graduating students themselves, universities, government departments, and agencies, the labour movement and labour industry must have a role to play in creating capabilities for work in the country. To promote capability for work, which in this context is employability, there must be real freedom necessitated by the development of what is called opportunity freedom bordering on the supply and demand factors and the actors in the labour market, such as employers, state agencies and universities themselves.

Further, it should be noted that the Human Capability Approach is used to understand how students in their final year of pursuing a social science degree programme at

selected universities in Zambia are motivated to value the acquisition of skills and knowledge and opportunities for enhancing their employability. The main argument of the Human Capability Approach is therefore the thinking that wellbeing can best be understood in the context of the opportunities available to individuals as well as the freedom to make choices while taking into consideration both internal and external factors and individual circumstances or characteristics known as conversion factors. This is key as opposed to solely focusing on what they can do and the ultimate gains of what individuals can achieve. The rationale for this disposition, therefore, is that within the framework of the Human Capability Approach, the government agencies, universities, and the labour market must provide the real freedom for graduating students to acquire the necessary capabilities to render them employable.

2.6 SOME CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HUMAN CAPABILITY APPROACH

The Human Capability Approach thus focuses on the wellbeing and freedom valued by individuals. In the context of higher education, the Human Capability Approach entails providing educational opportunities that expose students to a curriculum that opens their minds to think critically and logically and acquire practical knowledge and problem-solving skills, all crucial to their employability. The capability-informed approach to the study of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia thus entails the need for university students to acquire practical knowledge, skills, and attitudes (human capital) for them to secure employment opportunities they value (capabilities) in the labour market.

The Human Capability Approach brings into perspective an undertaking that apart from monetary gains, individuals also value other worthwhile things, in contrast to money. Implicit in this perspective is the supposition that for graduates to be employable, employers may demand something more than just credentials. The argument of the Human Capability Approach thus is that even if the capability set of an individual is related to the availability of resources or income, they do not form a complete measure of the actual opportunities that may be available to an individual (Calitz *et al.,* 2016:59). As such by extension, the Human Capability Approach does not solely focus on economic gains or access to certain resources but also to evaluate

whether an individual can convert the available resources into capabilities or functioning.

More so, the Human Capability Approach does not necessarily imply that the economic outcomes of education postulated by the Human Capital Theory are not important. It rather focuses on both the social and economic aspects of education to enhance the well-being of individuals. This is in line with Dejaeghere, Wiger and Willenisen (2016:459), who pointed out that the Human Capability Approach does not downgrade the relevance of economic outcomes of education. This is especially that employment and earnings are important aspects of well-being. They rather argue that the outcomes must be critically analysed within specific social and economic inequalities that constrain learning, employment, and well-being for a diverse group of individuals. Therefore, unlike the neoliberal ideologies, the Human Capability Approach does not focus on the market perspective of education. It rather emphasises the achievement of human capabilities.

Within the context of the Human Capability Approach, people must be given the opportunity to choose as well as to aspire for something. As such when people are exposed to a limited range of capabilities, then their choices concerning what they can do and value also becomes limited if not diminished (Baxen, Nsubuga & Botha, 2014:96). Similarly, if students who are pursuing university education in Zambia are not exposed to the education and training experiences that can equip them with various capabilities, then their choices about being employable may be limited. As such, to appreciate the Human Capability Approach, we must also understand higher education processes and pedagogies that are aimed at providing resources and capabilities for well-being (Dejaeghere *et al*., 2016:462).

Apart from looking at the Capabilities and Functionings of the Human Capability Approach, Menashy (2014:18) argue that we must also focus on the aspect of choices that individuals may have to make. Such choices are determined by conversion factors within the context of the Human Capability Approach. The argument is that the choice of an education and training programme can only be valuable if it can help to expand a person's desired functioning. This can only be determined by the conversion factors which entails the possible extent to which one can transform a resource into a functioning. Such may include the choice of education and training programmes in a

university. The conversion factors are thus determined by the social context. For instance, to what extent do the pedagogical approaches within a given university programme help graduates to acquire practical knowledge and social capital for them to stand a better chance of getting a job after graduation? Menashy (2014:18) thus argues that a graduate from a given university may easily navigate through the labour market and get a job if they have a high social conversion factor. This could be so in the sense that even if access to higher education is supposed to increase one's chances of being employed, the relationship between graduating with a degree and graduate employability may not be linear to other factors that may be at play (McCowan, 2014:5).

However, the major emphasis of the Human Capability Approach is on how individuals can achieve functioning that is enabled through capabilities. For example, by being knowledgeable and skilful in a particular field of study, and thus employable is a functioning. As such, the opportunity to be taught or acquire employable skills, knowledge, and attitudes is a capability, which all graduates must enjoy in the higher education sector.

Furthermore, the aspect of context must always be appreciated whenever the Human Capability Approach is used to evaluate certain aspects of education and labour market outcomes. For instance, in the context of the present study, each university social science degree programme must be evaluated to establish if it can equip graduating students with sufficient practical knowledge and skills (freedom) to render them employable. This is key to adequately secure employment opportunities within the labour sector in Zambia. The current study was thus poised to establish how the capabilities which graduates were acquiring from the universities were helping them to achieve their functioning, which are opportunities to secure employment and work to attain the status of wellbeing in society.

Having comprehensively discussed what the Human Capability Approach is all about and its relevance to the current study, the following should be taken into consideration. To begin with, the Human Capability Approach should not be looked at literally as an approach aimed at promoting capabilities as defined in the dictionary (as skills, capacities, abilities, and potentialities). Rather, as Classens (2010:104) put it, Sen regarded the Human Capability Approach as that which is about the freedom to

choose what is called valuable functioning (doing and being) such as being educated, as discussed in this chapter. Capabilities, therefore, should not be looked at in the context of skills, abilities, or capacities, but as real freedom of being able to choose from the available options. In this regard, Sen's conceptualisation of capability entails the freedom of choice from available options such as to be healthy, educated, or well-nourished as an end in itself. Pursuing a social science degree programme as a form of education, therefore, must be understood as an end in itself and not just a capability to achieve other things (Robeyns, 2016:100). As such, Sen's Human Capability Approach becomes useful in this way if one further looks at how the achieved education status as a capability increases one's freedom to choose the functioning that they have reason to value or be (Classens, 2010:104), as in securing a job.

In addition, it must be appreciated that the Human Capability Approach is not a theory that can be used to thoroughly explain the social ills such as inequalities and poverty on its own (Robeyns, 2005:94). Rather, it is a theoretical framework within which social issues can be conceptualised and evaluated. In this study, by being a framework for conceptualising and evaluating social issues, the various characteristics of the Human Capability Approach can only be used to form ideas and opinions about the value and quality of what is being studied such as social science degree programmes' effectiveness in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia to enhance individual wellbeing. However, since the mere conceptualisation and evaluation of the topic at hand based on the characteristics of the Human Capability Approach may not be adequate, some assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis are integrated into the study as additional explanatory theories, as discussed below (Robeyns, 2005:94). This was meant to augment our understanding of the various interrelated variables as they relate to the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

2.7 ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AND THE SCREENING HYPOTHESIS

In augmenting the role of the Human Capability Approach in the study, some key assumptions or features of the Human Capital Theory (HCT) and the Signalling or

Screening hypothesis theory were used to create a conceptual framework relevant to the topic under investigation.

Though it is common research practice to use a single theory to analyse the findings of a study, the researcher drew on the aspects of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis to strengthen the conceptual framework that was adapted using the features of the Human Capability Approach. Banart *et al.* (2017:8) justify the use of multiple theories in a mixed-methods study by arguing that they can make it easier for a researcher to explain the different aspects of a phenomenon. It is also inconceivable that a single theory can provide a perfect explanation of a given phenomenon, albeit the clarity with which they help us understand it (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:15). It is on that premise that some key characteristics of the Human Capital theory and Screening Hypothesis are integrated with those of the Human Capability Approach to form a conceptual framework for the analysis and interpretation of the study findings on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. Described below, are the two theoretical framings whose key assumptions are integrated into the study to form the conceptual framework.

2.7.1 The Human Capital Theory (HCT)

The Human Capital theory is one of the oldest theories for evaluating the economic value of education. The theory found its way into the academic discourse as early as the 18th Century. Initially, the foundation of the theory was laid by Adam Smith in 1776. In his book *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith (1776) argued that the wealth of all nations lay in human beings' tendency towards self-interest which results in prosperity and societal benefit. Later on, John Stuart Mills (1848) built on Smith's assumption by looking at human abilities as a means of wealth creation. Today, contemporary Human Capital Theorists and labour economists such as Theodore. W. Schultz (1960), Michael Mincer (1962), Gary Becker (1964, 1967), and others have also contributed to the growth of the Human Capital Theory (Teixeira, 2014:3-7) through many empirical studies. Studies include those focusing on education and work, educational levels and earning differentials, gender, and income, health and productivity to name a few (Eide & Showalter, 2010:28)

The Human Capital Theory postulates that educational and general investments in human capital can directly lead to increased productivity of labour and individual

earnings. Referring to the intrinsic productive capabilities of human beings, proponents of this theory argue that the production capabilities can be increased through investment in things such as education, on-the-job training, and health (Schultz, 1961:8-9; Eide & Showalter, 2010:27). Human capital thus can be perceived as an asset that generates a flow of services, often measured as earnings and outputs (Oketch *et al.,* 2014:12). Apart from increasing an individual's wages, the human capital also enhances an organisation's productivity and thereby improves the national economy.

There are a few characteristics of the Human Capital Theory which were used in the study. One of them is that an educated individual is likely to get a higher income from work due to increased productivity. This assumption implies that educated and skilful individuals are likely to contribute much more to the collective competencies of an organisation and thus enhance productivity (Akinyemi, 2013:17; Holmes & Mayhew, 2016:482). This characteristic is key to understanding the outcomes of university education and its consequences on graduate employability in Zambia.

The other assumption of the Human Capital Theory is that in developing human capital, education can lead to the acquisition of specific and/or general human capital. This means that education and training, coupled with some work experience, can render one to acquire job-specific skills that cannot easily be transferred between jobs and tasks that are not similar (Eide & Showalter, 2010:32). On the other hand, Human Capital implies the acquisition by an individual of general or generic skills and knowledge asymmetrical to the tasks or jobs within given organisations. Consequently, such general skills, it is argued, are transferable and one can easily apply them to different tasks and in various organisations. The assumption regarding the acquisition of skills through education and training is relevant to the study of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and by extension graduate employability in Zambia. This assumption, therefore, aided the researcher to establish how access to education and training in social science degree programmes in selected universities promoted the acquisition of specific or general skills or both amongst graduates. Such a determination is key in establishing graduate employability in the country.

The Human Capital Theory also assumes that exposing individuals to training opportunities on the job and other work experiences can enhance their skills and productivity (Cai, 2013:459). Based on this assumption, the study ascertained the effectiveness of what is termed the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences such as student internships and work placements in promoting practical skill acquisition amongst graduating students in social science degree programmes in the selected universities (Jackson, 2015:350). It is often argued that ultimate economic development can only be realised in a nation if there is a positive correlation between investments in physical and human capital (Oketch, 2006:554). However, in terms of scope, the current study focused only on how and the extent to which investments in human capital promoted graduate employability in selected universities in Zambia by enhancing the freedom of the wellbeing of graduating students from social science degree programmes through achieved functioning. Described below is the signalling or screening hypothesis as it relates to the Human Capability Approach and the research problem at hand.

2.7.2 The Signalling or Screening Hypothesis

The signalling model of education is a 1973 conception attributed to Michael Spenser. It is also referred to as the Screening Hypothesis or Sorting Hypothesis, premised on the idea that the individual worker's innate productivity levels are identified by their years of schooling rather than enhanced by them (Page, 2010:33). More to this is the understanding that the longer one takes in schooling, the more productive they are likely to be. The screening hypothesis thus is a theory that advances the need for prospective employees to be screened before they can be employed (Akinyemi, 2013:14). It is premised on the idea that to recruit the best in terms of competencies, there must be a thorough screening of job applicants.

One of the key assumptions of the Screening Hypothesis used in the study is that since employers cannot tell the actual productivity of the prospective employees, the use of educational qualifications such as university degree certificates is the only way they can predict one's productivity and arrive at a decision to employ them and pay wages (Cai, 2013:459). Certificates obtained by graduates from higher learning institutions are thus used as proxies to signal their competencies, abilities and skills for employability. To be employable, therefore, job applicant's credentials must be

perceived, by employers, to give a strong and clear signal of what they are likely to accomplish in advancing the productivity and profitability of the organisation if given a job. This implies that the quality and relevance of the qualification obtained by an individual is dependent, to some extent, on employers' perception of it in the labour market. This has a bearing on an individual's freedom and opportunity of being employable in a given labour market.

As a theory of credentialism, the screening hypothesis eulogises certified workers as having the inherent ability to perform exceptionally well on the job (Akinyemi, 2013:14). Therefore, according to this theory, the possibility of a graduate being employable depends on the acquisition of academic and professional qualifications which signifies the skills possessed (Akinyemi, 2013:14; James *et al.,* 2013:958). That qualifications obtained from higher learning institutions, as a proxy to measure the competencies embedded in an individual through education, must at all times give a clear signal to employers to render graduates employable. While this may appear obvious at face value, it must be noted that screening is not the only conversion factor that may affect one's wellbeing in the context of employability.

This theory, however, was to some extent key to our understanding of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The screening hypothesis helped the researcher to examine the perceptions of employers, labour unions, government departments, and other stakeholders regarding the quality of the credentials obtained by graduating students from their social science degree programmes concerning their relevance to the needs of the labour market in Zambia. It was also used as a feedback process through which the relevance or irrelevance of the social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour market in selected universities was determined by focusing on graduate employability.

2.7.3 Integration of Theoretical Assumptions Relevant to the Study

Though the Human Capability Approach was used as the theoretical framework of the study on skills development and university graduate employability in social sciences in the Zambian context, key assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis were adapted to the study. Because of the complementary nature of some of their assumptions, the researcher used the Human Capability Approach with the aid of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis as

a lens through which the skills development and graduate employability problems were examined. For instance, while the Human Capital Theory focuses much on the direct value of education as capital to be invested in the production process, the Human Capability Approach takes into consideration both the direct (pecuniary) and indirect (non-pecuniary) values of human abilities (Pandolfini & Poli, 2015:51). The Human Capital Theory also complements the Screening Hypothesis. While education is instrumental in promoting employee productivity (Human Capital) at work, it also acts as a signal (Screening Hypothesis) regarding their innate abilities and competencies to be employable (Page, 2010:34).

Drawing from the assumptions of the Human Capability Approach and the other two theories, the current study looked at how and the extent to which job-specific and generic skills acquired through social science degree programmes (Human Capital) from selected universities in Zambia aided graduates to secure credentials for employability. Such credentials should reflect their worth (Screening Hypothesis) and productivity (Human Capital), which ultimately increases their freedom and opportunity (Capabilities Approach) to be employed or employ themselves and enhance their overall wellbeing. This thinking culminated in an overarching conceptual framework for the study.

2.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As defined in Chapter 1, this study took a conceptual framework to be a synthesis of the different theoretical concepts and constructs which represent an integrated approach of looking at a research problem (Imenda, 2014:189). Unlike a theoretical framework, which is derived from a theory, a conceptual framework is premised on different concepts, constructs, and assumptions (Adom *et al.,* 2018:439). A conceptual framework, therefore, was key to this study and helped the researcher to bring together concepts, assumptions, and characteristics from different theories to easily explain the interrelationships between different variables in the study.

2.8.1 Rationale for the Use of the Conceptual Framework in the Study

The use of a conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) in this study was premised on the argument that the characteristics of the Human Capability Approach may have limitations to thoroughly explain the problem of skills development and graduate

employability in Zambia. More so, the triangulation of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks would enrich our understanding of the problem under study (Imenda, 2014:190). As such, the researcher integrated some assumptions and concepts from the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis to create a conceptual framework that r thoroughly addresses the research problem at hand. As such, though the study was framed within the context of the Human Capability Approach as a theory, reference was made to some key characteristics or assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Approach as well as other constructs and concepts within the literature relevant to the study. This culminated in the development of the conceptual framework for the study.

In the context of this study, the Human Capability Approach was not used without referring to some key assumptions and concepts of the Human Capital Theory (Schultz, 1961:8-9; Eide & Showalter, 2010:27; Oketch *et al.,* 2014:12) and the Screening Hypothesis (Akinyemi, 2013:14; James *et al.,* 2013:958). Extending some key assumptions of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis to the Human Capability Approach made it easier for the researcher to explain the different aspects of the phenomenon under study (Anfara & Mertz, 2014:15; Banart *et al.,* 2017:8).

In addition, one of the key assumptions of the Screening Hypothesis is that since employers cannot tell the actual productivity of the prospective employees, the use of educational qualifications such as university degree certificates is the only sure way employers can predict productivity and arrive at a decision to employ and pay wages (Cai, 2013:459). While education is instrumental in promoting employee productivity at work it also acts as a signal regarding their innate abilities and competencies (Page, 2010:34) to be employable.

2.8.2 Unpacking the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework as presented in Figure 2.1, is a culmination of various assumptions, concepts and characteristics brought together. It helped the researcher to analyse and synthesise the various concepts and their interrelationships as used in the study. Some of the assumptions were drawn from the Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis and the overall theoretical framework, the Human Capability Approach. The conceptual framework shows the interrelationships between various

concepts and assumptions and helped the researcher to figure out how research into the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability was interwoven within the framework.

The conceptual framework shows that the issue of skills development and graduate employability is complex and multifaceted and that to achieve wellbeing (achieved freedom) is not directly related to accessing the means to achieve, which is access to university education in this context. This is because individuals, who are the key focus of the Human Capability Approach in conceptualising wellbeing, are faced with several visible and invisible conversion factors that may influence their opportunity and freedom in the process of achieving wellbeing such as getting the best out of their educational experiences.

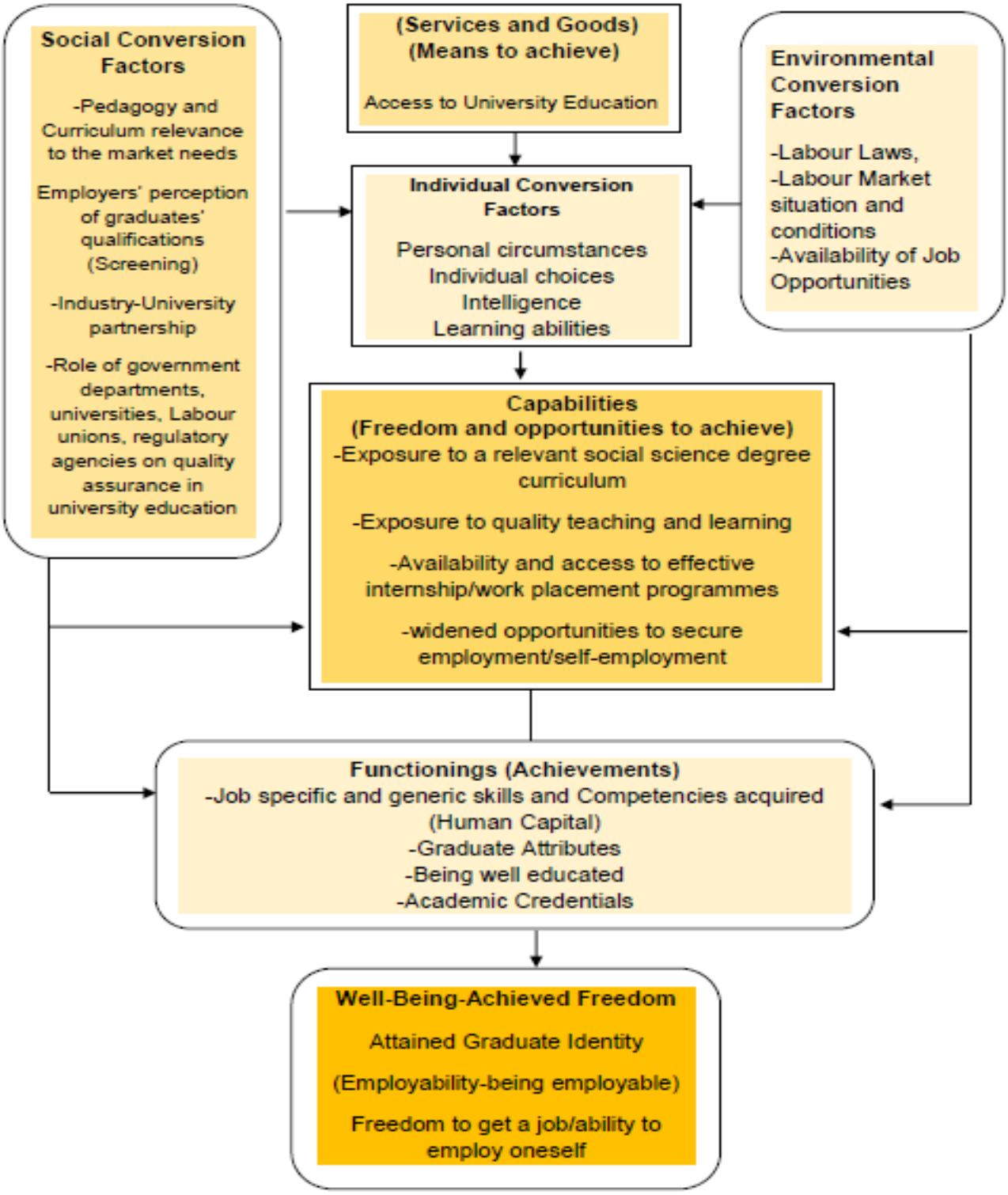


Figure 2.1: The conceptual framework for the study

Source: Adapted from Robeyns (2005:98)

The conversion factors in the conceptual framework could also be personal circumstances that can affect an individual's capabilities to participate in the educational experiences, thereby limiting their learning achievements. For example,

an individual's level of intelligence may limit their critical thinking abilities and this could affect their agency (Robeyns, 2016:11)

While it is the desire of every individual to be exposed to freedom and opportunity of achieving what they value to be and do after completing their degree programmes, the functioning of being well educated, competent and skilled may be affected depending on the relevance of the curriculum to the labour market, the quality of teaching and learning and the availability of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences such as student internships and work placement programmes for them to acquire practical skills (Jackson, 2015:350). The acquisition of such capabilities may further be subjected to the social and environmental conversion factors that may be at play within a given context. For instance, in this study, the employability of a graduate from any social science degree programme may be influenced by labour market conditions and the availability of job opportunities in the market. As if that were not enough, other conversion social factors such as employers' perspectives of the credentials and skills of a graduate may also affect one's freedom of employability.

Furthermore, the relationship between universities and the labour industry may have a bigger stake to play in promoting market-relevant degree programmes in line with the needs of the labour market. More so, the conceptual framework postulates that government departments and agencies responsible for quality assurance in higher education and labour policies may also have a role in graduates' skills acquisition and employability prospects.

Lastly, it can be deduced from the conceptual framework that within the lens of the Human Capability Approach, the concepts of skills development and graduate employability in social science degree programmes should not be perceived to be linear and over-simplistic but rather a more complex process of interrelationships within a wide range of conversion factors and agencies (Kuhumba, 2017:133). As such to achieve the ultimate freedoms of wellbeing such as being educated and employable, consideration must be given to the individual, social and environmental factors that may affect both the freedoms and achieved functionings of an individual in the process and context of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical framework of the study. It has shown that the Human Capability Approach, as a normative framework, can be used to conceptualise the problem of skills development and graduate employability from the individual wellbeing perspective. The chapter clearly outlined the characteristics of the Human Capability Approach as well as its rationale and relevance of applicability to the skills development and graduate employability discourse. The researcher has also highlighted the importance of integrating some aspects of the Human Capital Theory and the Screening or Signalling Hypothesis in crafting a conceptual framework relevant for understanding and appreciating the interrelationships of the various variables in the study. Ultimately, the chapter attempted to show how Amartya Sen's Human Capability Approach was used as a theoretical framework for understanding skills development and graduate employability in social science degree programmes in Zambia. The next chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study of skills development and graduate employability.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the Human Capability Approach as the theoretical framework within which the effectiveness of university social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability could be understood in Zambia. This chapter presents the literature review on skills development and graduate employability. It is segmented into three distinct perspectives: The Global, African and Zambian perspectives. Relevant literature is reviewed on the following aspects: the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the labour market; effectiveness of work placements and internships as Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating university students, the university-industry partnerships in promoting market-driven social science degree programmes and the strategies employed to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour market. This is, however, preceded by a review of scholarly literature regarding university skills development and graduate employability. Reference has been made to many case studies to highlight how different countries across the globe strive to promote skills development and graduate employability.

3.2 UNIVERSITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: A SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE

The advent of knowledge economies has placed a great premium on higher-level skills development for any nation to compete in the 21st Century global market platform. Research has shown that higher-level skills enhance labour productivity and earnings thereby improving the economic growth of any given country (Akinyemi, 2013:12). Skills development has become a central theme for almost every development agenda of industrialised and less industrialised nations. Many developed countries have shifted their focus to developing global citizens equipped with practical knowledge and skills to solve societal problems and advance their welfare. To develop such skills,

many nations have greatly invested in higher education to develop human capital for various sectors of their economies.

However, the dynamism and complexity of economic realities have created a fluid situation for higher learning institutions to produce graduates with skills relevant to the ever-changing needs of the local and international labour markets (Alpaydin, 2015:26). As such, some higher education learning institutions have been reported as producing graduates with inadequate skills to fit and compete in the labour sector. Many employers in the labour sector have become more interested in what graduates can accomplish within their businesses and not the theoretical knowledge they possess (Small *et al.,* 2018:160). This section, therefore, presents a scholarly perspective of what constitutes university skills development and graduate employability. This has been done by highlighting the conceptual understanding of what constitutes skills development and graduate employability in literature.

3.2.1 Conceptual Understanding of Skills and Skills Development

According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO) (2015:8), skill refers to "… the learned ability to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time and energy or both." The term skill is thus taken to mean a display of competence(s) in the labour industry. Also, Borras and Edquist (2015:217) take competencies to mean the skill set, knowledge, and expertise embodied by individuals. They add that competencies are a set of acquired capabilities and aptitudes to perform specific activities using a given set of techniques and methods and some level of experience. Competencies thus are an embodiment of related abilities, knowledge, skills, and dedication levels that enable a person to carry out given activities at work efficiently and effectively. Competencies usually signal the adequacy of knowledge and skills possessed by one to manoeuvre different situations of a given job.

There has been a huge debate about what constitutes skills for employability. For instance, some scholars such as Riebe and Jackson (2014:319) and Kinash, Crane and Judd (2016:10-11) have categorised skills as hard and soft skills. As defined in section 1.12.6, hard skills are also referred to as technical or job-specific skills. Hard skills thus are job-specific skills for a particular field. One must thus possess such skills to excel in that field. Hard skills are very important for graduates with a clearly defined

career path. On the other hand, soft skills permeate all different fields. Soft skills are also referred to as employable skills or generic skills (Kinash *et al.,* 2016:11).

Generic skills, also known as key competencies, on the other hand, are higher-order skills. They promote critical thinking and knowledge generation in an individual. They are thus cognitive skills (Cunningham & Villasenõr, 2016:104) which can help one to understand and analyse complex information to effectively learn from the past, adapt to a given situation, and overcome any given obstacles in the work environment. Though generic skills are said to encapsulate different competencies they also include mathematical knowledge, literacy, interpersonal skills, communication, academic knowledge, and comprehension. It is argued that these are the skills that are supposed to be the major component of the curriculum in any learning institution.

While universities have been called upon to promote technical skills or hard skills as part of graduate outcomes for their careers, other scholars, such as Kinash *et al.,* (2016:12), argue whether universities are the best place to develop such skills. This is in the wake of the understanding that such technical skills are better developed by technical and vocational institutions, while universities are left to equip graduates with the capacity to learn how to learn and adapt in any given environment. As such, demanding that universities be the developers of technical and hard skills in graduates using the skill-based approach, may render irrelevant the non-technical degree programmes in humanities and social sciences which in most cases are best known to equip graduates with generic skills.

3.2.1.1 Development of generic or employability skills

Several studies have been carried out to establish the relevance of generic skills in promoting graduate employability (Kinash, *et al.,* 2016:11; Riebe & Jackson, 2014:321-323; Cunningham & Villasenõr, 2016:104). These are skills that university students acquire through the education and training processes that are designed to be part of degree programme content and assessment. Though it is often argued that graduates must possess job-specific skills in line with their future professions for them to be employable, others think this is not always the case (Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi & Eldabi, 2019:1). Osmani *et al.* (2019:1) citing Moore and Morton (2017) put it that the focus by universities must be to teach university students to learn how to learn and

not to produce them with job-ready skills. Teaching students to learn how to learn implies they can easily adapt to any given work environment by learning new skills. *Osmani et al.* (2019:1) therefore looked at how various graduate attributes in the field of Information Communication Technology (ICT), Accounting and Finance, for instance, could be used to promote graduate employability by teaching students to focus on learning how to learn and not field-specific skills for the job.

The study by Osmani *et al*. (2019), which focused on academic practitioners and other stakeholders in the labour industry in the United Kingdom (UK), found that interpersonal attributes such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and creativity were key together with the use of technology amongst the graduates (Osmani *et al.,* 2019:3). The finding that generic skills such as interpersonal attributes improve one's chances of employability even for those in science and business-related fields may also have positive implications on graduate employability in the fields of social sciences (Singh *et al.,* 2014:852).

Another study by Jackson (2016:1315) for instance, evaluated the development of generic skills and graduate identity formulation in undergraduate students using national data in Australia. The aspects investigated by the study included the importance of generic skills from the graduate perspective and the evaluation of how the generic skills and graduate identity were developed focusing on Bachelor's Degree programmes. The study identified significant variations in the skills and identity developed based on the demography, study area, and work characteristics of the graduates. The study found that graduates acknowledged the importance of generic skills to their job readiness and attainment. The study thus revealed that graduate identity and generic skills were key parameters in promoting graduate employability (Jackson, 2016:1328). This implies that, to a certain extent, generic skills can increase the employability probability of graduates from universities.

As if that were not enough, the National Social Sciences Foundation in China found that some of the employable skills required by students were discipline, employment awareness, interpersonal skills, communication skills, employment awareness, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, leadership, self-management, and innovativeness (Gao, Wang & Cui, 2014:44). In addition, Finch, Hamilton, Riley & Zehner (2013:681) also found that listening skills, interpersonal skills, spoken skills,

critical thinking, creative thinking, written communication skills, ability to adapt, self-confidence, work experience, job-specific technical skills, and job-specific competencies to be key skills in ensuring one's employability. They also established that to some extent, programme reputation and institutional reputation were key pointers to graduate employability. From the foregoing, one can deduce that generic skills may be as important as hard or job-specific skills in promoting graduate employability. What is clear, however, is that a graduate of any university degree programme must possess employability skills for them to be employable. The details of the key indicators for the employability skills are given in Table 3.1 below, which shows the common employability skills which were highlighted in the reviewed scholarly literature.

Table 3.1: Summary of common employability skills

SN	Necessary Employability Skills for Graduates
1	Communication skills (oral and written)
2	Interpersonal skills
3	Critical thinking
4	Problem-solving skills
5	Self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-management
6	Creativity, innovativeness, and entrepreneurship
7	Knowledge and use of ICT
8	Accountability and social responsibility
9	Disciplinary knowledge
10	Professional development

Source: Document Analysis

From the foregoing, one can deduce that generic skills may be as important as hard or job-specific skills in promoting graduate employability. What is clear, however, is the lack of specificity or non-universality of the actual generic skills list that may be required for a graduate to be employable based on different study programmes, employers, and even countries. There is, therefore, a need to take into consideration the extent to which the aforementioned skills can be attributed to enhancing graduate

employability in the Zambian context for those pursuing social science degree programmes (Finch *et al.,* 2013:681). What then is graduate employability?

3.2.2 Conceptual Understanding of Graduate Employability

The concept of employability has been understood and defined differently by various scholars (Gonzalez-Roma, Gamboa & Reiro, 2016; Clarke, 2018; Simon, 2018). As a concept, employability has been defined in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes while others have looked at the concept of employability using the model perspective (Erabaddage, Yajid & Khatibi, 2015:76).

However, in discussing the concept of employability, we must first differentiate it from employment in the context of graduate outcomes. As such, the focus of this study is about graduate outcomes and not merely getting a job which means being employed. This study, therefore, did not focus on graduates being employed immediately after leaving university, but rather being employable. Employability, as a concept, deals with how fit graduates are for their future careers and does not guarantee them jobs (Kinash *et al.,* 2016:10). This distinction must be made clear because the issue of employability is not only guaranteed by one graduating from a university, other variables may be at play as well and therefore merits consideration. The debate about embedding employability in university curricula has been an ongoing one with varying views. Others, such as Kinash *et al.* (2016:10), argue that universities have a responsibility to produce employable graduates while others are opposed to it, holding that the employability outcome should merely be a by-product of quality higher education.

The most common definition of employability was given by Mantz Yorke, as defined in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. He defined employability as a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and become successful in their chosen occupations (Yorke, 2006:8). This definition however is narrow in its focus as it concentrates much on the individual graduate at the expense of other contextual factors that may support or hinder one's employment opportunities as later highlighted in this chapter.

Oliver (2015:59) also provides a good definition of what constitutes employability indicating that employability entails that students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understanding and personal attributes that

can make them more likely to find or create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce and the country. This definition implies that employability is a continuous and lifelong process that can take place from the time one enters the university and throughout their career. Graduate employability as a discourse in academia is complex often compounded by the expectations of different stakeholders such as universities, students, professional bodies, policymakers, and employers (Simon, 2016:84-85). Different aspects contribute to the graduate employability matrix and relate to the skills, competencies and attributes of graduates themselves. However, there are also fundamental differences in the skills, competencies and attributes which render graduates employable in various countries and contexts. This understanding implies that the expectations of universities, the industry, government, and the students themselves appear to vary on what employability entails. This shows that the concept of graduate employability may be a shared responsibility between the universities, employers and those they employ (Clarke, 2018:1924).

More so, Simon (2016:87) highlights different aspects of employability such as soft skills, functional or job-specific skills, industry-academic relationships, and government involvement in the discourse of employability at the policy level. Graduate employability is also closely associated with the relevance of higher education. This is one of the reasons why the relevance of university education to society has come under serious scrutiny (Clarke, 2018:1924). Today, policymakers and employers are demanding that the relevance of university education can only be determined through the production of work-ready graduates.

Small *et al.* (2018:149) argue that three aspects must be considered when defining employability. According to them, one's employability depends on the know-how, skills and attitudes possessed by an individual and how such knowledge and skills empower them to survive in the labour sector based on how they are perceived by the employer (Small *et al.,* 2018:149). It is also true that what constitutes employability has greatly evolved. However, there is still no single universally accepted definition or description of what constitutes employability. It is even more complicated to come up with a working definition for a study. Small *et al.* (2018:150) put it that in the past, seven versions of employability were documented which ranged from a dichotomous classification of those in need of employment and those with no capacity to one's

capacity to secure employment in the context of the given labour industry (Small *et al.,* 2018:150). The latter part of this classification is key to this study in that employability is about one's capability or identity to secure employment after completion of their programme of study.

Clarke (2018:1926) citing Holmes (2013) for instance, also identifies three aspects that define employability such as possession, position and processes. Possession refers to skills acquired by an individual. The position is about one's social status while the process is about what is involved in attaining the graduate identity which can render one employable. This way of conceptualising employability entails that skills possessed, social status, and the process of attaining an identity as a graduate are indispensable for employability status to be attained by any university graduate. This way of conceptualising employability directly speaks to the Capability Approach to graduate employability.

3.2.3 Contextual Factors for Understanding Graduate Employability

Apart from the conceptual understanding of what employability is, it must be appreciated there are other factors that may influence how graduate employability is looked at in different contexts. Given the foregoing, it is clear from scholarly literature that there are a number of contextual factors that may have to be taken into consideration when looking at graduate employability. Table 3.2 highlights these factors that are discussed hereunder in detail.

Table 3.2: Contextual aspects of graduate employability

SN	Aspects of Graduate Employability
1	Employer perception of work-readiness and graduate identity
2	Industry perception of field and programme of study and university attended
3	Graduate's social capital
4	Adopted models for graduate employability conceptualisation

Source: Document Analysis

3.2.3.1 Employer perception of graduate work-readiness and graduate identity

The need for work-ready graduates in the labour industry is well supported (Fung, 2017:87; Ruwe & Zegwaard, 2017:88) to enhance employability. This comes in the work of labour industry's increased complaints about universities producing graduates who are not work-ready. Graduate work readiness is about a graduate having what it takes in terms of skills, knowledge, and competencies to take on a job without many challenges from the perspective and expectations of the potential employer. Industry demand for work-ready graduates stems from the desire to reduce the cost of in-house training to facilitate graduate transition and adaptation to the workplace setting with more demands than experienced at universities. Besides being work-ready, the concept of graduate identity is also used to describe how a university graduate should look when ready to take up a position in the workplace.

A graduate with an employability identity is a person who is expected to act in a manner that should lead others to ascribe to them an identity of someone worthy of being employed. Carrying a graduate identity is more than pressing the credentials obtained from a university. To put it succinctly, it is about a graduate from the field of social sciences, for instance, demonstrating what they are capable of doing in terms of their value, intellect, performance, and engagements (Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2013:566) as identify marks for their employability. With the identity of an employable graduate, they prove that they possess what employers look for in a potential employee and by extension, their competencies necessary to engage in self-employment (Jackson, 2016:1314). Though the labour industry, on one hand, has been demanding for work-ready graduates, it also carries an implied role of taking part in helping universities produce work-ready graduates through internships and other pre-graduation work experiences and opportunities to test and learn new skills.

Moreover, graduate identity is associated with work readiness. This identity is not something a university can achieve alone. It requires collaboration with the labour industry to produce graduates with work readiness identity. Ultimately, the perception held by the labour industry's potential employers concerning what constitutes graduate work readiness and graduate identity, has a bearing on graduate employability. This could be so even for graduates from social science degree programmes.

3.2.3.2 Industry value perception of the field, programme of study and university attended

Another aspect that may affect the employability of graduates of a given programme, is how the industry perceives the value of the field and programme of study. If a programme is perceived to be of value to a sector in the labour industry, then graduates from such a programme are likely to be perceived employable. The opposite is equally correct. For instance, Finch *et al.* (2013:681) found programme and institution reputation to be key factors in the equation of graduate employability. If the university attended is perceived to produce quality graduates with skills aligned to industry demands then, graduates from such an institution may carry the tag of employability. This perception is true even for most of the degree programmes offered by such universities. For universities, to stand a chance for graduates of their programmes to be perceived as employable, must take initiative and reach out to actors in the labour industry for them to understand what the universities are aiming for.

3.2.3.3 Graduates' social capital

Graduate social capital is another factor that emanated from the review of the literature. Social capital entails the creation of good social networks through which one can access information and resources for available opportunities on the labour market (Ngoma & Ntale, 2016:129). It is about the impact that a graduate's social class, the reputation of the higher learning institution attended and the type of qualification obtained has in creating networks to enhance their employment outcomes (Ngoma & Ntale, 2016: 128; Clarke, 2018:1931). The social capital of a graduate to some extent influences graduate employability (Clarke, 2018:1931). Social capital is one of the aspects that can catalyse or slow one's employability. This is true especially for those who focus on graduate employability in the context of securing a job from the job industry. A graduate must have social networks and this entails knowing people in organisations within the labour industry. This is one of the aspects that can increase the employability prospects of an individual with such agency compared to those with no social network (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.,* 2016:144).

3.2.3.4 Models for employability conceptualisation

Many models of employability have been conceptualised to help us understand what is involved in graduate employability. In the early 1990s, an Employability Skills Model was conceptualised by Colton (Sumanasiri, Yajid & Khatibi 2015:77). The Employability Skills Model focused on the possession of skills such as basic skills, higher-order skills, affective skills and traits as aspects that determine graduate employability (Erabaddage *et al*., 2015:77). One limitation with this model is that it paid no attention to other contextual factors that may affect one's employability rather than individual graduates.

A further model put in place to explain graduate employability is the USEM Model of employability. The USEM model, to mean Understanding, Skills, Efficiency beliefs, and Metacognition, is the only model that looked at employability in the context of other aspects such as possession of certain skills, understanding of the area, or the subject of specialisation, ability to reflect and other personal qualities. This model has also been criticised as being too theoretical and less practical (Erabaddage *et al*., 2015:77).

Another model of employability to be developed has been the Career EDGE model. The Career EDGE model, conceptualised by Darce Pool and Sewell (2007), took into consideration the aspects and weaknesses of the preceding models. The Career EDGE model took into account the aspects of career development, understanding of the knowledge and skills associated with the subject of study, generic skills, the ability of students to reflect and evaluate their experiences as well as emotional intelligence. Though simplified and more practical to generalise to other contexts, the Career EDGE model is said to be a mere simplistic snapshot of what employability is all about (Erabaddage *et al*., 2015:77).

Wellman (2010) is said to have developed what was termed the Integrated Typology Model which took into consideration a combination of what is referred to as Micro, Macro, and Meta-Competencies. For a graduate to be considered employable, they need to possess technical and vocational knowledge and abilities to support what are called micro-level competencies with micro behaviour and attitudes. In further refining, his model, Wellman (2010) added that for the employability model to work well there was a need for various strategies, policies, systems and resources to be put in place to enhance graduate employability. The perceived weakness of this model borders on

the remoteness of its practicality in any given context. These are but some of the many models available to explain graduate employability and are presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Examples of employability models

SN	Name of the Employability Model	Employability Parameters	Limitation(s)
1	Employability Skills Model	▪ Possession of basic skills; higher-order skills; affective skills and traits	▪ No attention to contextual factors
2	USEM Model	▪ Understanding, skills, efficiency, and metacognition ▪ Understanding of the areas or subject of specialisation ▪ Ability to reflect	▪ Too theoretical and less practical
3	Career EDGE Model	▪ Career development ▪ Possession of skills and knowledge of the subject area ▪ Possession of generic skills ▪ Evaluation of personal experiences	▪ Too simplistic
4	Employability Development Model	▪ Ability to embed employability in the degree programme ▪ Many stakeholders involved in employability	▪ Less practical ▪ Effectiveness dependant on a willingness by stakeholders to promote graduate employability
5	Integrated Typology Model	▪ Focus on various competencies ▪ Possession of technical and vocational knowledge ▪ Involve various strategies, policies, systems and resources.	▪ Less practical

Source: Adapted from Erabaddage, Shukri & Khatibi (2015:77)

Another study by Gonzalez-Roma *et al.* (2016:133) focused on the employability model, as conceptualised by Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth (2004), to determine the employability of university graduates in Europe. This model focused on university graduate's career identity, personal adaptability, social and human capital in their relationship to key career outcomes such as employment status and job quality indicators. The study found that the concept of employability appears to centre on the personal factors which encompass one's career, identity, personal adaptability and social capital (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.,* 2016:134). Although these personal factors were found to be key in one's employability, they appear to be weak in the Zambian context

in which the employer's perspective of what constitutes an employable graduate matters the most.

Gonzalez-Roma *et al.* (2016:144) also found that the study area pursued by a student also had a bearing on their employability status. Meaning that one's employability status depended on whether they were in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related fields or Social Sciences. Lastly, the study revealed that social capital, which entails having several social networks, also increased one's chances of being employable after graduation compared to those with none. This fits well with the Capability Approach, which highlights the importance of conversion factors such as social capital in promoting one's employability after graduation.

One major limitation emanating from the different models of graduate employability is their inapplicability in varying contexts. Not every model of employability therefore can be generalised to explain graduate employability in any given country or locality. Due to the various limitations associated with the different models which try to explain what constitutes graduate employability, many countries do not rely on them. Employability is a complex phenomenon that cannot be determined by one act. This is especially that a clear presentation of what constitutes graduate employability involves the roles of different actors associated with the employability-value chain (Erabaddage *et al.,* 2015:77). One, therefore, must take into account the role of graduates themselves, universities, employers and other stakeholders. This implies that graduate employability is not the sole responsibility of institutions of higher learning. Rather, it is a complex process of multiple and combined efforts by different stakeholders.

Given the numerous limitations associated with various employability models, other scholars have come up with what are termed comprehensive rubrics which can be used to assess graduate employability skills. A rubric may be taken as an authoritative procedure that may be used to arrive at something. Thus, in the context of a rubric for employability skills, Riebe and Jackson (2014:319-323) suggested a procedure which could be used by employers and higher education providers to assess the employability of university graduates. They conceptualised a comprehensive rubric of employability skills which could be used to determine the employability outcomes and could be used by both educators in higher learning institutions and employers in the labour industry. According to Riebe and Jackson (2014:320), a rubric of employability

skills could easily be used to measure graduate employability. As generic, non-technical and professional skills, the employability skills could empower the graduates to be effective in the application of their disciplinary knowledge wherever they may find employment. Adapting their rubric of employability skills from the work of Jackson and Chapman (2012a), Riebe and Jackson (2014:321-323) identified key employability skills, which a graduate, upon completion of their programme of study from a university, needed to possess for them to be employable.

In their rubric, Riebe and Jackson (2014:321) identified effective communication, ability to work with other people, critical thinking, self-awareness, ability to use technology to analyse data, problem-solving, ability to take the initiative and being enterprising, self-management and developing professionalism as key employability skills for every graduate. In their paper, Riebe and Jackson (2014:321-323) also provide indicative behaviour to assess the 10 most important employability skills in graduates. They argue that a graduate in possession of the said employability skills must have the capacity to work and collaborate with other people in groups and teams. Such a graduate should also be able to communicate effectively both orally and written. Further, a graduate must show appreciation for lifelong learning and the ability to conceptualise issues without difficulties.

More so every university graduate is expected to evaluate issues, apply reason, diagnose problems and make decisions to solve them. Besides, a graduate must be capable of acquiring some entrepreneurial skills with the ability to initiate change and manage it. Lastly, the rubric provides that a graduate from a university programme must be equipped with self-management skills, which entails the ability to manage time and stress, effectively strike a balance between the needs of work and life, multitask and work autonomously. Due to various interpretations and understanding of what constitutes graduate employability, the use of an employability skills framework, as shown in Table 3.4, such as the one provided by Riebe and Jackson (2014:319) provides an important tool which may be used in measuring graduate employability outcomes for both universities and the labour industry.

Table 3.4: Employability skills framework

S/N	Behaviour	Behaviour Descriptor	Employability Skill
1	Conceptualisation	Recognise patterns in detailed documents and scenarios to understand the "bigger" picture.	**Thinking critically**
	Evaluation	Recognise, evaluate, and retain key points in a range of documents and scenarios.	
2	Reasoning	Use rational and logical reasoning to deduce appropriate and well-reasoned conclusions.	**Problem-solving**
	Analysing and diagnosing	Analyse facts and circumstances and ask the right questions to diagnose problems	
	Decision making	Make appropriate and timely decisions, in light of available information, in sensitive and complex situations.	
3	Numeracy	Analyse and use numbers and data accurately and manipulate them into relevant information.	**Data analysis using technology**
	Technology	Select and use appropriate technology to address diverse tasks and problems.	
	Information management	Retrieve, interpret, evaluate, and interactively use information in a range of different formats.	
4	Self-efficacy	Be self-confident in dealing with the challenges that employment and life present.	**Self-Management**
	Stress tolerance	Persevere and retain effectiveness under pressure or when things go wrong.	
	Work/life balance	Demonstrate the importance of well-being and strive to maintain a productive balance of work and life.	
	Self-regulation	Reflect on and regulate their emotions and demonstrate self.	
5	Social Responsibility	Behave in a sustainable manner and socially responsible (e.g., consistent with company policy and/or broader community values).	**Social responsibility and accountability**
	Accountability	Accept responsibility for own decisions, actions, and work outcomes.	

S/N	Behaviour	Behaviour Descriptor	Employability Skill
	Personal ethics	Remain consistently committed to and guided by core values and beliefs such as honesty and integrity.	
	Organisational awareness	Recognise organisational structure, operations, culture, and systems and adapt their behaviour and attitudes accordingly.	
6	Entrepreneurship/ Intrapreneurship	Initiate change and add value by embracing new ideas and showing ingenuity and creativity in addressing challenges and problems.	**Developing initiative and enterprise**
	Lateral thinking/ Creativity	Develop a range of solutions using lateral and creative thinking.	
	Initiative	Take action unprompted to achieve agreed goals.	
	Change management	Manage change and demonstrate flexibility in their approach to all aspects of work.	
7	Efficiency	Achieve prescribed goals and outcomes in a timely and resourceful manner.	**Developing professionalism**
	Multitasking	Perform more than one task at the same time.	
	Autonomy	Complete tasks in a self-directed manner in the absence of supervision.	
	Time management	Manage their time to achieve agreed goals.	
	Drive	Go beyond the call of duty by pitching in, including undertaking menial tasks, as required by the business.	
	Goal and task management	Set, maintain, and consistently act on achievable goals, prioritized tasks, plans.	
8	Verbal Communication	Communicate orally in a clear and sensitive appropriately varied manner according to different audiences and seniority levels.	**Communicating effectively**
	Giving and receiving Feedback	Give and receive feedback appropriately and constructively.	
	Public speaking	Speak publicly and adjust their style according to the nature of the audience.	

S/N	Behaviour	Behaviour Descriptor	Employability Skill
	Meeting Participation	Participate constructively in meetings.	
	Written communication	Present knowledge, in a range of written formats, in a professional, structured, and clear manner.	
9	Meta-cognition	Reflect on and evaluate personal practices, strengths, and weaknesses in the workplace.	**Self-awareness**
	Lifelong learning	Actively seek, monitor, and manage knowledge and sustainable opportunities for learning in the context of employment and life.	
	Career management	Develop meaningful and realistic career goals and pathways for achieving them in light of labour market conditions	
10	Task collaboration	Complete group tasks through collaborative communication, problem-solving, discussion, and planning.	**Working effectively with others**
	Team working	Operate within, and contribute to, a respectful, supportive, and cooperative group climate.	
	Social intelligence	Acknowledge the complex emotions and viewpoints of others and respond sensitively and appropriately.	
	Cultural and diversity awareness	Work productively with people from diverse cultures, races, ages, gender, religions, and lifestyles.	
	Influencing others	Defend and assert their rights, interests, and needs and convince others of the validity of one's point of view.	
	Conflict resolution	Address and resolve contentious issues with key stakeholders.	

Source: Adapted from Riebe & Jackson, 2014: 321-323

The variations in the conceptualisation of what constitutes employability also seem to emanate from the different perspectives of the different stakeholders. Some studies focus on graduating students (Tymon, 2013:842), others on graduate students but unemployed, and others on those already employed (Gonzalez *et al.,* 2016:133). Additionally, even the aspects of employability appear to differ from one study to

another. Some studies focus on possession of generic skills, graduate identity and the ability to transfer employability skills among other things.

From the different definitions and conceptions of employability, the study took employability to mean one's ability to use their acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, individual agency, personal circumstances and the prevailing labour conditions to successfully create or secure and maintain employment opportunities at a given time following their graduation. The discourse about graduate employability is not new and it is one of the topics which have been researched extensively. It, therefore, appears that there is no single solution to the question of graduate employability, particularly as the issue of graduate employability appears to be context-bound.

The findings in one country or region cannot be easily generalised to another context. Besides, some studies have looked at the concept of employability in fields such as Natural Sciences, Business Studies, Humanities, and Social Sciences from a general perspective (Giles & Drewes, 2001:27-33; Jackson and Chapman, 2012a:541-567 341-Gao *et al*, 2014:43-49). The current study, therefore, is different from prior studies in that it focuses only on Social Science degree programmes in selected universities. The rationale was to establish the effectiveness of selected social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The study aimed at establishing whether social science degree programmes on offer in some selected universities were relevant to the needs of the labour market by making graduates employable. This was to be achieved by assessing whether or not university graduating students were able to acquire certain skills from their social science degree programmes to guarantee them an employability identity. To achieve this, the current study adopted the comprehensive framework for employability skills (Riebe and Jackson (2014:319-323) to measure the employability of graduating students of social sciences in Zambian universities. The justification to use the employability framework to measure employability skills in social sciences emanated from the fact that the different skills outlined by the rubric were observable and could easily be measured using the observable behaviour descriptors as shown in Table 3.4. The employability skills outlined by the employability framework espoused by Riebe and Jackson (2014: 319-323) informed some of the questions which were included in the questionnaires for employers or their representatives and students to assess the employability skills of the latter.

3.2.4 University Skills Development and Graduate Employability: The Global Perspective

Many countries outside of Africa have put up different measures aimed at promoting skills development and graduate employability through quality higher education. The goal is to make education responsive to the demands of the labour market and society. Therefore, the challenge to the higher education sector in many nations has been one of providing education aimed at producing graduates with practical knowledge and skills (Tomlinson & Holmes, 2017:3). This has remained a serious challenge for higher learning institutions to produce human capital relevant to the present and future skill needs of the labour markets.

Several case studies have thus been conducted to link higher education provision, skills development, and graduate employability in both developed and developing nations (Jackson, 2015; Chan & Lin, 2016; Cunningham & Villasenỏr, 2016; Sachan, 2016; Haddad and Habibi, 2017; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). For instance, a study by Cunningham and Villasenỏr (2016:103) found that globally, there have been different conceptions and perceptions between employers and educators regarding skills preparedness for employment by graduates from the education sector. The variation in determining what makes graduates employable has contributed to the rising cases of graduate unemployment. Conducted in 37 countries, the study found that out of the 37 000 employers interviewed, 11 000 had difficulty in finding workers with the right skills for their jobs (Cunningham & Villasenỏr, 2016:103). Below are some of the case studies conducted in Europe, North America, Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, illuminating the relationship between university skills development and graduate employability.

3.2.4.1 Skills development and graduate employability in Europe

In Europe, there has been a growing debate about the quality of university graduates in meeting the requirements of the labour industry. The debate about employability skills started way back in the 1960s when the British government released the Robbins Report. The report emphasised the need for universities to help students acquire skills that were relevant to the needs of the labour market. In 1990, the British government also released the Dearing report whose central theme was the need to develop human

resources with skills to compete with advanced societies in the world (Gao *et al.,* 2014:44). Following the adoption of the Bologna process in 1999 in Europe, the question of graduate employability has remained a fundamental one. As such, various strategies and approaches have been put in place to promote the relevance of university education to the needs of the labour market, as discussed in the case study of the United Kingdom below.

3.2.4.1.1 Skills development in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK), made up of four nations, has a total population of over 68 million people (Worldometer, 2020). In terms of age structure, 17.5 percent were in the age cohort 0 -14; 11.9 percent were between 15 and 24 years; 40.6 percent were between 25 and 54 years; 12.0 percent were between 55 and 66 years and 18.0 percent were 65 years and over in 2017 (Index Mundi, 2018). The UK has an advanced higher education sector and provides world-class education to both local and international students. The University of Cambridge, Imperial College of London, University College of London, University of Oxford, and the University of Edinburgh to name but a few, are some of the universities which offer various undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in different fields of study.

In terms of skills development, the UK is reported to produce more graduates from STEM programmes, twice as much as the entire Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Europe (CIPD, 2017:2). Thus, the UK has more graduates in Science, Statistics and Mathematics compared to Humanities and Social Sciences.

3.2.4.1.2 Graduate employability in the United Kingdom

According to the UK National Office on Statistics (2018:2), the country's unemployment rate by September 2018 was estimated to be 4.0 percent lower than 4.9 percent in the previous year. Graduate unemployment in the UK was rated at 5.0 percent just in the first six months after graduation. After six months, graduates in the UK usually managed to find jobs. It is also interesting to note that unlike most African countries, which produce more social scientists than those with qualifications in STEM fields, the UK records higher unemployment rates amongst Computer Scientists compared to any other field of study in the first six months after graduation. Most

employers in the UK complain about the lack of soft skills such as problem-solving skills by STEM graduates as they enter the labour industry (CIPD, 2017:2). To promote graduate employability, universities in the UK have employability skills and work experiences embedded in their curriculum through internship programmes and other work placements (Clarke, 2018:1924).

Furthermore, due to the fluidity associated with what constitutes graduate employability, different universities in the UK have come up with defined attributes or what they expect to see in their graduates to render them ready for not only professional work, but also life in the community. For example, at the University of Edinburg, upon graduation, graduates are expected to be reflective and critical thinkers, skilful communicators, and creative problem solvers. It is therefore clear that to produce work-ready graduates, employability skills must be embedded in the programmes pursued by the students in the universities (Fung, 2017:87). It is, therefore, evident from the foregoing that higher learning institutions have been entrusted with the responsibility to prepare graduates with relevant knowledge, skills and attributes to meet the ever-changing expectations of the employment world (Fung, 2017:83). The goal of the universities, therefore, has been one of reducing or narrowing the gap between the learning experiences in school and those of the workplace to render all graduates, either in STEM fields or social sciences, employable.

3.2.4.2 Skills development and graduate employability in North America

This section presents the scholarly review of literature on university and skills development from North America focussing on Canada and the United States of America as case studies.

3.2.4.2.1 Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Canada

With over 37.9 million people (Worldometers,2021), Canada is one of the countries with the most educated population in North America. In the country, post-secondary education is regarded as the most important career investment for Canadians (Canadian Alliance for Student Associations, 2017:6). Like in many other parts of the world, the issue of skills development and graduate employability has been one of the trending topics in Canada.

3.2.4.2.1.1 Skills development in Canada

The debate about the relevance of degree programmes in social sciences to the labour market is not new in Canada. Giles and Drewes (2001:28-29) compared the relevance of the humanities and social sciences degree programmes to other programmes on the labour market in Canada. This was necessitated by the concerns that the universities awarded more degrees in social sciences and humanities (41%), compared to engineering and applied sciences (7%), mathematics and physical sciences (6%). The nation wanted to increase the production of work-ready graduates to meet the needs of the labour industry. This concern emanated from the widely-held view that vocational STEM fields have a close association with skills taught in higher learning institutions and those required in the occupational industry.

3.2.4.2.1.2 Graduate employability in Canada

In Canada graduates from STEM fields, it is believed, are prepared for immediate entry into the world of work (Giles & Drewes, 2001:28). This, however, may not be the case with social sciences as they mostly help students to acquire generic skills. Though not job-specific, generic skills give graduates greater mobility in the labour industry coupled with the impetus to easily acquire other skills while on the job. However, in terms of securing employment after graduation, Giles and Drewes (2001:29) found that graduates from social sciences struggled to secure employment compared to their colleagues in applied fields of study. Today, this argument may still hold in many countries.

Another study was undertaken to establish the employability opportunities and challenges associated with graduates in social sciences and humanities in Ontario, Canada. This study was motivated by the perception that pursuing a degree programme in the field of social sciences was a shared waste of time and resources due to a lack of a clearly defined employment trajectory for such graduates (Rastrick, 2018:11). This emanated from the argument that graduates in social science degree programmes are not prepared for a single career path in which career progression is clearly defined. Though this perception may limit their employability, it is also believed that such graduates are likely to have diverse career paths compared to those who follow the STEM or applied fields which are career-specific. However diverse the career path for graduates in social sciences, they are made to compete in the labour

market where different employers may not understand or even appreciate the value of their degrees (Rastrick, 2018:11), which may create a serious challenge to their employability. In 2017, the general youth unemployment in Canada was reported to be at 13.3 percent despite there being a demand for skilled personnel in the labour market (CASA, 2017:6). This implied that graduates faced challenges to get into the job market in Canada.

3.2.4.2.2 Skills Development and Graduate Employability in the United States of America

The United States of America is one of the major global economies in the world. The North American country has over 330 million people in the 50 states (Worldometer, 2021). Despite being a developed nation, the discourse of skills development and graduate employability has continued receiving increasing attention in the USA.

3.2.4.2.2.1 Skills development in the U.S.A

For a long time now, the US has developed and produced graduates from the fields of STEM, humanities, and social sciences (Stewart-Gambino & Rossmann, 2015:1). The goal of American university education has been to produce a technically competent group of people to advance the nation's socio-economic agenda and those in liberal arts to enhance the country's leadership through the advancement of democracy (Stewart-Gambino & Rossmann, 2015:1). However, many still question the value of humanities and social sciences (Dowling, Rose & O'Shea, 2015:52). For instance, Congress had questioned the value of humanities and social sciences in promoting innovation and technological advancements vis-à-vis graduate employability compared to STEM-related fields. This perspective also transcended the public discontentment and scepticism of the relevance of the humanities and social sciences in the 21st Century. This is premised on the belief that individuals passing through university education, must be scientifically grounded and broadly educated.

The challenge between STEM and social sciences is that the STEM fields are often associated with the mastery of practical skills in science and mathematics meant to solve complex challenges for humanity and nature. Whereas, humanities and arts are regarded as soft skills meant to understand the human dimensions of the world (Kirby, Jaimes, Lorenz-Reaves & Libarkin, 2019:1). These degrees only provide those who pursue them with a historical, theoretical, ethical, and cultural understanding of our

societies. It is such a perspective that makes it difficult to strike a balance between the provision of STEM-related programmes and those of social sciences in the universities in the USA.

3.2.4.2.2.1 Graduate employability in the U.S.A

In terms of graduate employability, Cunningham and Villasenȍr, (2016:103) found that while the employers' focus was on interpersonal skills, trustworthiness, leadership and perseverance, the education system in the USA placed a premium on job-specific knowledge as an important skill compared to other skills. That those who acquired job-specific skills stood a better chance of being employable compared to other skills.

3.2.4.3 Skills development and graduate employability in Australia

This section presents the scholarly perspective of university skills development and graduate employability in the Australian context.

3.2.4.3.1 Australia

Graduate employability in higher learning institutions has continued to be a topical issue across the globe, and Australia is no exception. Australia is a continent and country at the same time. It has an estimated population of more than 23 million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015:6). The country's population grew at a rate of 1.6 percent per annum in the year 2017. In terms of age structure, those aged between 0-14 constituted 17.8 percent of the national population with 12.8 percent were being between the ages of 15-24. Those in the age cohort 25-54 were the majority at 41.5 percent. Lastly, those in the cohort 55- 64 were at 11.8 percent of the national population (Index Mundi, 2018).

3.2.4.3.2 Graduate skills development in Australia

The country has over 172 higher learning institutions of which 43 are universities (Australian Government, 2015:5). There are 37 public universities in the country which include the University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide, Monash University, Australian National University, Griffith University, University of Queensland, and Edith-Cowan University to name but a few. There have been over 1.3 million local and international students enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate

programmes enrolled in fields such as Agriculture, Art, Science and Technology, Business, Law, Medical, and Health Sciences.

While Australian universities seem to have attuned their programmes of study to the needs of the labour market, some stakeholders in the labour industry still lament the inadequate generic skills amongst graduates who take up jobs after university. Graduates were described to be weak in the areas of critical thinking, communication skills and leadership (Jackson, 2016:1314). Skill gaps in graduates in aspects such as innovation and enterprise, self-management, and planning and organisational aspects of the workplace were also reported. It, therefore, appears that while in developing countries the skill gaps have been mainly due to lack of job-specific knowledge in most cases, in developed countries such as Australia the emphasis has been on the need for graduates to possess generic skills.

3.2.4.3.3 Graduate employability in Australia

Though there are reports of a skills mismatch in Australia, more than 65.2 percent of the national population has been reported to participate in the labour force. The country's unemployment rate was recorded at 5.6 percent in 2017 and lower than both the global and European Union's (EU) average unemployment rate of 7.3 percent (ILO, 2019:48). Of the unemployed in Australia, 5.6 percent were male and 5.7 percent were female.

To enhance graduate employability, therefore, the universities have been responding by embedding Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities within the core curriculum aimed at improving workplace skills development to promote professional practice and graduate identity for employability (Jackson, 2016:1316). Work Integrated Learning involves the utilisation of various pedagogical strategies such as internships, fieldwork, simulations, and many other experiential and practice-based learning models in education and training programmes to promote workplace skills in graduating students (Jackson, 2015:351; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017:89).

For instance, a study by Rowe and Zegwaared (2017:88) focused on how Work Integrated Learning (WIL) can be embedded within a university curriculum to improve graduate employability by equipping graduating students with skills and competencies attuned to the demands of the labour market. Rowe and Zegwaared (2017:88) argue

that many universities in developed countries such as Australia had integrated WIL into their curriculum. The WIL activities have shown a greater potential to enhance one's employability chances and productivity on the job. In Australia, the goal of the higher learning institutions has been to collaborate with the labour industry to produce graduates who were work-ready with knowledge, skills, and attributes key to succeeding in the labour market.

3.2.4.4 Skills development and graduate employability in Asia

This section highlights the scholarly perspectives concerning university skills development and graduate employability in Asia. India and Taiwan were considered case studies.

3.2.4.4.1 India

India is the second-largest populated country in the world with a population of over 1.3 billion people (Worldometer, 2018). In the year 2019, the composition of the population in terms of age was as follows: 26.62 percent were in the range 0-14, 67 percent were between 15 and 64 years and 6.38 percent were 65 years and above (Statista, 2020). The fact that those between the ages of 15 and 59 were the majority in the population, creates an impression of increased demand for participation in the labour market by many Indians.

3.2.4.4.2 Skills development in India

With the above population composition and structure, the Federal Republic of India has over 650 universities (Centre for Public Policy Research, 2015:1), categorised into Central Universities, State Universities, Private Universities, and Deemed Universities in addition to other colleges (Sheikh, 2017:40). The growth of the higher education sector had been necessitated by the growth in demand for higher education in the country. Notable among the universities were the Punjab Technical University, Carnegie Mellon University, Ashoka University, India Institute of Science, and India Institute of Technology. Programmes offered in these institutions include Arts, Commerce and Management, Engineering and Technology, Medicine, Agriculture, and Veterinary Science and Education.

Though India is one of the countries that have made strides in promoting the relevance of higher education to the job industry, there have been reports of a skills mismatch and oversupply of graduates on the labour market (Khare, 2014:39-40). Only about 25% of the graduates in the field of Sciences were considered employable in India (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 2014:20; Khare, 2014:41). Factors such as outdated curricula, weak academia, industry linkages and a limited focus on developing workplace skills are often cited for the rising unemployment levels in India (Gupte, 2015:24). Despite the country's positive economic growth, most educated youths fail to secure employment in the formal sector. As such, they end up taking opportunities in the informal sector's lowly paying jobs (United Nations, Global Economic Monitoring Unit, 2018:4).

3.2.4.4.3 Graduate employability in India

India's employment-to-population ratio is above 50 percent. Each year about 12 million people join the country's labour market (United Nations, Global Economic Monitoring Unit, 2018:4). In 2012, the country's unemployment rate was at 2.7 percent and increased to 3.5 percent in 2018. In 2017, it was reported that on average, India's youth unemployment had remained at 10 percent since the year 2010. India thus has been grappling with the challenge of graduate unemployment for a long time (Statista, 2018).

In responding to the problem of youth and graduate unemployment, in 2013, the Indian Federal Government with its agencies, crafted the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and aligned it with the National Occupation Standards (NOS) and the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) (Sachan, 2016:101). These policy frameworks were put in place to respond to the unemployment and underemployment challenges among college and university graduates to promote their employability (FICCI, 2014:28). This was done with the hope that the new regulatory and quality assurance system in India would ensure that all qualifications and training needs in college or universities were adequately aligned with comprehensive labour market needs analysis in the country and consequently enhance graduate employability.

3.2.4.4.4 Taiwan

Taiwan is a country that has been trying to improve the employability of its university graduates. Taiwan, a country within the People's Republic of China, recorded a total population of over 23 million people in 2017 and grew up to 0.17 percent per annum. In terms of age structure, 12.9 percent of the population are below the age of 14 years. Those between 15 and 24 years also make up 12.9 percent of the population. The majority of the Taiwanese or 46.4 percent are between the ages of 25 and 54. Those between 55 and 64 years old are 14.1 percent of the total population. Lastly, the oldest cohort of the population of those 65 years old and above is 13.7 percent of the population. The composition of the Taiwanese population indicates that those who are economically active comprise 60 percent of the national population (Index Mundi, 2018). Like many other developing countries, the population dynamics indicate that the demand for employment opportunities was likely to be high in Taiwan.

3.2.4.4.5 Skills development in Taiwan

The higher education sector in Taiwan consists of 159 universities and colleges. Of this number, 47 are public institutions and 112 are privately owned and run. A wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is offered in these institutions and include Biological Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Technology, and Engineering. These programmes are offered in universities such as the National Taiwan University, National Cheng Kung University, and National Sun Yat-Sen University among others (Kuo, 2016:3-4). The expansion of and consequent massification of access to higher education in Taiwan has been informed by the country's desire to create an innovative, service-oriented and knowledge-based economy (Chan & Lin, 2015:22)

Despite all these universities offering different programmes of study, there have been reports of graduates not possessing the necessary skills, as demanded by the labour industry. For instance, key industries such as Biotechnology, Communications and Information Science, and Semi-Conductors Manufacturing, reported a shortfall in the availability of skilled graduates to fit their needs (Chou, 2014:6). Chan and Lin (2016:294) also found that graduates from some vocationally-oriented universities had challenges in securing jobs. For instance, employers in the bakery industry found graduates from a local baking university lacking in job-specific requirements to

enhance industrial productivity. This situation could be attributed to reasons such as the rapid expansion of the higher education sector in Taiwan. The rapidity in the expansion of the higher education sector in Taiwan was necessitated to promote accessibility to tertiary education by the majority of the population. This expansionist approach has, however, negatively affected the quality of education and thereby compromised the quality of graduates demanded by the labour sector (Lin & Chan, 2015:29).

Moreover, there had been a weak linkage between the universities and the industry. The emphasis has been on strengthening such collaborations (Chen, Lin & Chien, 2013:7-8). From the examples given, it appears that it is difficult for higher education curricula in most learning institutions in Taiwan to capture the job-specific and generic skills for a graduate to be valuable for a given job at entry-level.

3.2.4.4.6 Graduate employability in Taiwan

In 2019, 3.8 percent of the Taiwanese population was not in employment (Statista, 2020). Youth unemployment was reported at 12.0 percent in 2020 (Trading Economics, 2020). Regarding graduate employability, each year, over 300 000 graduates join the labour sector. Most university graduates in Taiwan face difficulties securing a job in the labour industry and some remain unemployed. This has been attributed to the inability of the higher education sector to prepare graduates for the needs of the most important High-Technology industries in the nation. More so, the near universalisation of access to university education in the country has problematised entry into the labour market due to graduate oversupply (Lin & Chan, 2015:29). This has created a mismatch of supply and demand in the labour market. Though many graduates have been produced by universities, their demand in the labour market was perceived to be less.

3.2.4.5 Skills development and graduate employability in the Middle East

This section provides the scholarly literature on skills development and graduate employability in Iran, a country in the Middle East.

3.2.4.5.1 Iran

With a population of over 80 million people, Iran is one of the Islamic countries in the Middle East and a founder member of the United Nations (UN) Organisation. The country's population was estimated to have had a 1.6 percent growth in 2017. In terms of population structure by age, 23.8 percent were below the age of 15 in 2017 and 71 percent were aged between 15-64 years. Those above 65 percent made up 5.2 percent of the population (Statista, 2018). Since 71 percent of the population was economically active, the demand for labour market participation has been high in the country.

3.2.4.5.2 Skills development and relevance in Iran

Higher education in the country is offered in universities and colleges. The country has over 100 universities (Ghane, Khosrojerdi & Azizkhani, 2013:38). The universities are run by both the government and the private sector. Among the notable universities are the Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, and the Shiraz University of Medical Sciences among others. Most of the universities in Iran offer Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics related programmes (Habibi, 2015:4) and very few offer social sciences. Many universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Biological Sciences, Engineering, Computer Science and Humanities and Social Sciences.

In Iran, though university education programmes can be said to be responsive to the skills of the economy, there appears to be a problem of over-education amongst the youth. The excessive supply of graduates in fields such as Engineering, Computer Science, Industrial Management, and other fields has not been in tandem with the expansion of the labour market in the country. This has led some university-level graduates to take up low-skilled and low-income jobs in the country (Haddad & Habibi, 2017:55, 70). It is this mismatch between the supply for labour by the higher education sector and the demand for it by the labour market which has left some graduates unemployed in Iran.

3.2.4.5.3 Graduate employability in Iran

In Iran, the national unemployment rate was 12.1 percent in 2017 and reduced to 11.18 percent in 2020 (Statista, 2020). Youth unemployment in the country increased

from 28.7 percent in 2016 to 30.3 percent in 2017. Furthermore, it is reported that the graduate unemployment rate in Iran increased in the past few years from 16.5 percent to 20.9 percent of the employable population (Haddad & Habibi, 2017:45). Though higher, the unemployment situation in Iran is said not to have been limited to the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences (15%) alone but also those with Engineering (22%) and other Science-related degrees (Habibi, 2015:4). Partly, this is attributed to the overproduction of graduates more than the labour industry could assimilate.

The Iranian graduate unemployment challenge may also be attributed to the fact that the education system prepares them to be employed and not to create their employment opportunities. This could suggest a systematic weakness in higher education curricula. Haddad and Habibi (2017:7) also found that the increased levels of unemployment in Iran was due to over-education. They thus suggest the need to reduce the oversupply of university graduates more than the labour market could accommodate. This entails the need to strike a balance between what is produced and needed by the industry. However, the duo did not explain clearly how this can be achieved considering that the demand for higher education has been on an upward trend in the country.

Henceforth, there had been much attention paid to university education provision in terms of its impact, outcomes and results. Universities have been challenged to find ways of training employable graduates if they are to remain relevant to the labour industry. The higher education sector has therefore been challenged to produce a skilled workforce attuned to the economic development agenda of the country (Tank, 2013:64).

3.2.5 University skills development and graduate employability: The African perspective

In Africa, many countries have been grappling with the problem of unemployment for both the educated and uneducated youth. Over 60 percent of Africa's population is young and below the age of 24. Most of the youth enter higher learning institutions with the hope of getting employed after completion of their studies. Unfortunately, the shrinking public sector coupled with the private sector's inability to absorb them all has led to an increase in the unemployment levels in Africa. Though most African economies have not been growing to promote increased employment opportunities for

young people, many indicate that the higher education sector does not produce graduates with employable skills and attributes (Alpaydin, 2015:964; Oppong & Sachs, 2015:127; Moswela and Chiparo, 2015; Etshim, 2017:4). Besides, the role of higher education in promoting graduate employability in Africa is well documented (Boateng, Eghan & Adu, 2015; Pheko & Molefhe, 2017). The examples from Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, and Zimbabwe below illuminate how African countries are grappling with the issue of skills development and graduate employability.

3.2.5.1 Botswana

Botswana is one of the middle-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated population of 2.13 million people (Msweli, 2015:144). The country's population has been growing at a rate of 2.3 percent per annum. Like many other African countries, Botswana has a relatively young population. In terms of age structure, 31.62 percent of the national population was below the age of 14. The economically active population between the ages 15-64 made up 64.55 percent of the national population. Those who were 65 years and above, made up 3.82 percent of the total population.

3.2.5.1.1 Responsiveness of university programmes to skills development in Botswana

The country's higher education sector consists of universities and colleges. According to Samboma (2017:117) between 2014 and 2015, Botswana had a total of 40 tertiary education institutions. Of these, 24 were public institutions and 16 were privately run. Among the notable national institutions in the country are the University of Botswana, Botswana International University of Science and Technology, and the Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Sciences. These universities offer different programmes of study, which include Agriculture Science, Mining, Engineering and Technology, and Management and Entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2014:2).

Botswana has for some time been a diamond-dependent economy. Though the country's economy has been growing at an average of 10% each year, the government embarked on an economic diversification agenda to broaden the labour industry in areas such as agriculture and tourism. In line with the National Human Resource Development Strategy, the country places a high premium on the higher education

sector to promote skills development for increased economic productivity. This is in the wake of repeated reports of the inability by the universities in the country to produce employable graduates with the capacity to meet the needs of the labour sector (World Bank, 2014:2).

In terms of higher education's responsiveness to the needs of the labour market, it had been found that the number of skilled personnel increased more than the need of the labour market. As such, some skilled individuals are reported to have been taking up less-skilled jobs.

3.2.5.1.2 Graduate employability in Botswana

It is believed that equipping graduates with skills relevant to the needs of the labour industry could help reduce the unemployment rate in the country which is approximated to be at 17.8 percent with the Youth unemployment rate being estimated at 35.67 percent in 2018 (Statista, 2018). Many policies have thus been put in place to enhance graduate employability. Such included the realignment of the entire higher education sector to the needs of the economy by developing human capital in fields such as ICT and STEM programmes to support the mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and construction sector (World Bank, 2014:20). In addition, the Government of Botswana has placed a high premium on the provision of quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), aimed at producing graduates with skills and the ability to set up businesses and compete internationally. This was informed by the three key outcomes of the National Development Plan for Botswana which focuses on Vocational and Technical Skills, Employability and Adequate Supply of Skills (Modise & Mosweunyane, 2015:303).

Furthermore, to promote graduate employability in Botswana, the University of Botswana has developed a Teaching and Learning Policy in which it spelled out the expected graduate attributes to promote graduate employability. As such, all programmes of study are expected to focus on entrepreneurship and employability skills. It is envisaged that such an approach would eventually help reduce graduate unemployment in the country (Modise & Mosweunyane, 2015:303). The universities in Botswana, therefore, focus on the provision of technical and practical subjects as well as business skills to all graduates. The goal has been to create a strong relationship between employment and the higher education sectors. It is therefore

evident that in Botswana, less attention has been paid to the social science degree programmes on which the present study focussed.

3.2.5.2 Ghana

Ghana is a country in West Africa. Its population was estimated to be over 31 million people in 2020 (Worldometers, 2020). It is one of the countries in West Africa which is working on the improvement of graduate employability. The country's population has been growing at an annual rate of 2.5 percent. For instance, in 2010 the population of Ghana was over 24.6 million people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013:50). In terms of composition, Ghana has a youthful population. Of the total national population, 38.4 percent are below the age of 15, 20 percent are between 15-24 years old, and 35 percent are between 25-29 years old, with 11.4 percent of the national total population being 60 years old and above. The composition of Ghana's population structure infers that the number of those who were economically active was huge (71.1%). Such a population structure is likely to have some implications on the demand for higher education and opportunities for employment.

3.2.5.2.1 Responsiveness of university programmes to skills development

In Ghana, post-secondary education is offered in Universities, Colleges, Polytechnics, and other specialised institutions. Some of the institutions in the higher education sector included the Valley View University, Central University College, and Ghana Institute of Technology. The country had over 200 tertiary institutions. The majority of the institutions are run by the private sector while only a few are publicly owned. Among the programmes offered in these universities are professional programmes in Business, Public Administration, Information and Communication Technology, Science, Language and Maritime studies to mention but a few. Enrolments in the universities in Ghana had swelled in the recent past from 185 000 in 2009 to about 300 000 in the 2014 academic year (Ananga, Adzahlie-Mensah & Tamanja, 2016:77).

Though Ghana had several institutions offering degree programmes in different fields of study, there were reports of a skills mismatch in terms of the quality and quantity between the skills possessed by university graduates and those expected by the labour market. For instance, the labour sectors such as Agriculture and Agro-Processing, Construction, and Engineering reported shortages of skilled graduates in

their fields (Bawakyillenuo, Akoto, Ahiadeke, Aryeetey & Agbe, 2013:16). Such reports may be substantiated by studies that reveal that some Ghanaian graduates were ill-prepared for the job market due to low skill acquisition and limited knowledge to promote innovation in the industry (Ananga *et* al., 2013:77).

3.2.5.2.2 Graduate employability in Ghana

Ghana's national unemployment rate was reported to be at 11 percent, while the youth unemployment rate for those between 15 and 35 years old was at 16.9 percent (Ghana Statistical Services, 2016:77). The unemployment problem in Ghana, unfortunately, has directly affected even those with tertiary education qualifications. Each year about 71 000 young men and women graduate from universities anticipating to participate in the labour sector. The majority of those who do find employment, invariably end up in the informal sector due to the diminishing job opportunities in the public sector. Only 2 percent of the Ghanaian graduates are employed in the formal sector with over 200 000 graduates being unemployed in the country (Ananga *et al.,* 2016:77).

In 2010, for example, graduates with tertiary qualifications recorded the highest unemployment rate of 9.1 percent compared to others (GSS, 2013:272). The 2015 National Labour Force Survey, revealed an increase in the number of unemployed graduates to 13 percent of the unemployed population in the country (GSS, 2016:78). One of the reasons advanced for graduate unemployment has been that of skills mismatch. Some studies have even reported higher rates of youth unemployment in the country. For instance, a study by Oppong and Sachs (2015:127) revealed that in African countries such as Ghana, youth unemployment rates have risen to 50.8 percent due to inadequate skills development. Oppong and Sachs (2015:132) also argue that the skills mismatch and graduate oversupply have been at the centre of graduate employability.

To resolve the issues of graduate and general unemployment in the nation, the Ghanaian Government has developed policies aimed at reforming the education sector to be more responsive to the skill demands of the labour industry. Many programmes have been lined up to link students in tertiary institutions to school-to-work transition opportunities or their integration into the labour force (Government of Ghana, 2014:20). This is in line with the argument that the graduate unemployment problem in countries like Ghana can better be addressed by linking education and

labour policies. An integrated and coordinated approach, therefore, is key to resolving the graduate unemployment problem in addition to promoting science and technology-related skills training in Ghana (Ananga *et al.,* 2016:81). From the foregoing, it is clear that there has been less focus on social science degree programmes in Ghana in its quest to promote skills development and graduate employability in the country.

3.2.5.3 Nigeria

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy (Adedeji & Oyebade, 2016:27). It has an estimated population of over 174 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014:1) with a rate of 3 percent per annum (National Bureau for Statistics, 2014:1). About 30 percent of the country's population is estimated to be below the age of 15 years. Those in the age group 15-39 make up about 29 percent of the national population, while those between 49-59 years constituted 10 percent of the national population. Lastly, those who are 60 years and above make up about 5 percent of the national population in Nigeria.

3.2.5.3.1 Responsiveness of university programmes to skills development

The higher education sector in the country is composed of Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and other specialised institutions (Adedeji & Oyebade, 2016:27, 58). The number of universities has increased exponentially due to the high demand for higher education in the country. The number of universities had increased from 51 in 2005 to 142 in 2015 (Adedeji & Oyebade, 2016:58) and in addition, over 350 non-university institutions also provided higher learning. A wide range of degree programmes in fields such as Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering Technology, Hospitality Studies, Science, Agriculture, Law, Archaeology, Library and Information Science, Medicine, and Surgery were offered in universities across the country. Some of the well-known universities in Nigeria include the University of Nigeria, (Nsukka), University of Ibadan, Delta State University, and Adeleke University among others. On average, there are over 150 000 students who graduate annually from universities and are in search of employment in Nigeria (Nnaka & Anaekwe, 2015:65).

The relevance of university education in Nigeria in promoting graduate employability had remained a contentious issue due to higher unemployment cases amongst

graduates in the country (Adedeji & Oyedebe, 2016:60). Though there may be other factors, the reduced productivity of the Nigerian economy has been attributed to the mismatch between the skills, knowledge, and values acquired from the universities in the nation and the expectations of the labour sector (Nnaka & Anaekwe, 2015:69). There have been several reports about university graduates being deficient in both generic and specific skills. For instance, labour market sectors such as banking, manufacturing, and oil industries have reiterated the shortage of graduates with a strong command in generic skills such as communication, decision making, critical thinking, entrepreneurship and technical numeracy skills to name a few (Pitan & Adedeji, 2012: 98; Pitan, 2015:28). Graduate skills mismatch and shortages have also been reported in the construction industry (Aigbavboa & Aliu, 2017: 21) and the energy sector.

3.2.5.3.2 Graduate employability in Nigeria

The unemployment rate in Nigeria was reported to be as high as 60.6 percent due to inadequate skills development (Oppong & Sachs, 2015:127) with 80 percent of the graduates in Nigeria remaining unemployed (Nnaka & Anaekwe, 2015:66) albeit having the qualifications. For instance, it was estimated that 23 million youths out of the 40 million, were unemployed mainly due to the lack of relevant skills to acquire and maintain their jobs. This stems from the fact that most universities appear not to be producing graduates with the necessary skills required by the labour markets. Universities were also perceived to lack relevant curricula to produce graduates with adequate professional and lifelong learning skills to survive in a competitive labour economy (Pitan, 2016:1). Many universities in Nigeria, therefore, have been criticised for producing graduates without due regard to the availability of employment opportunities on the labour market. A university education no longer guarantees that after completing a degree, one would get a job. The labour sector had become so oversubscribed that the possession of employable attributes is the only way in which one can secure a job.

To promote graduate employability, there have been several suggestions for the country to close the skills gap through employer involvement in the provision of university education. Programmes such as Student Work Experience Schemes (SWES) have been introduced to expose students to the world of work during training.

In addition, measures such as accreditation of national university programmes through the National University Commission to promote quality assurance in education delivery in the country had continued to receive increased attention (Ozurumba & Ebuara, 2014:33).

3.2.5.4 South Africa

South Africa is the second-largest economy in Africa after Nigeria. It had an estimated population of over 57 million people in 2018 (Worldometers, 2018). In terms of age structure, South Africa's population is youthful. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 28.98 percent of the national population were below the age of 15 years in 2017. Those aged between 15-64 years old were 65.67 percent and those 65 years old and above were 5.34 percent of the national population of 57 million people (Worldometers, 2018).

3.2.5.4.1 Responsiveness of university degree programmes to skill development

South Africa's higher education sector comprises both universities and polytechnic institutions. There were about 26 public universities in the country and a few highly regulated private ones (CHE, 2016:6). Some of the notable universities include Rhodes University, the University of South Africa, the University of Western Cape, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Pretoria to mention a few. These universities offer a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Walker and Fonguna (2016:16) found that South Africa had a highly differentiated university education sector. Which includes traditional universities for research and teaching and others classified as universities of technology focusing on vocational training only. There are also comprehensive universities that offer both traditional and vocational programmes. Different undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered in universities include Bachelor's degrees in Science and Technology, Engineering, Medicine, Humanities and Social Sciences, Education and many others. By 2017, there were over 980 000 students enrolled in these university programmes across the country (Walker & Fonguna, 2016:16; Moolman & Jacobs, 2018:182).

Efforts have been made by the South African government to ensure that the higher education sector is responsive to the skill needs of the labour market. The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2016:10) revealed that South Africa

managed to develop a united higher education sector which was well articulated and funded to ensure its responsiveness to the needs of the economy. The idea had been to promote quality assurance in teaching and research to guarantee graduate employability.

However, changes in the economy from a labour-intensive industry to capital and knowledge-intensive industries had brought a major shift in the demand for new skills (CHE, 2016:7; Moolman & Jacobs, 2018:179). The demand for new soft skills had led to varied graduate unemployment rates across study disciplines in South Africa. More so the Third National Skills Development Strategy for South Africa shows that the country has had a shortage of skilled labour in artisanal, technical and professional fields (OECD, 2017:2).

A 2015 labour survey revealed a skills mismatch in the labour market in South Africa with 52.3% of South African workers not having the correct qualifications for the jobs for which they were employed (OECD, 2017:24). As if that were not enough, in some fields such as skilled trades, Engineering, and management employers reported difficulties in finding suitably skilled people to fill the positions. Such revelations imply that the South African higher education system still had a challenge in producing graduates with the new skills demanded by some sectors in the labour market in the required quantities and quality. This is despite having an excess supply of skills related to manual work, manufacturing and production knowledge and technical skills.

3.2.5.4.2 Graduate employability in South Africa

In 2017, the national unemployment rate in South Africa was at 27.7 percent, while the national youth unemployment was reported to be at 53.5 percent. Graduate unemployment, on the other hand, is reported to be at 5.7 percent (UN-Global Economic Monitoring Unit, 2018:3). Research evidence shows that graduates from Science-related fields take less time to secure employment compared to those in Humanities and Social Sciences (Wedekind & Mutereko, 2016:384). The country had made great strides to link higher education to the needs of the economy. For example, Wedekind and Mutereko (2016:384) found that the Tshwane University of Technology had been in partnership with the Paper and Pulp Industry (PPI) through which a degree programme in Paper and Pulp Engineering had been offered by the university. Consequently, this had helped graduates find employment in the PPI sector, having

been exposed to the current, best, and actual practices of the industry. Such partnerships have helped the industry influence what goes on within the programme in terms of curriculum design, development, and implementation (Wedekind & Mutereko, 2016:386).

3.2.5.5 Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the countries located in Sub-Sahara Africa. It shares one of its borders with Zambia. Zimbabwe had an estimated total population of over 14 million people in 2019. In the last two decades, the country had been faced with many political and economic challenges.

3.2.5.5.1 Skills development and graduate employability in Zimbabwe

Like many other Sub-Sahara African countries, Zimbabwe had been grappling with the problem of graduate unemployment. In Zimbabwe, there had been a decline in the number of jobs being created by the labour sector due to the declining economy (Garwe, 2013:3). Besides, there had been reports of a skills mismatch between what the skills of graduates produced from the higher learning institutions compared to those demanded by the labour sector. It is also argued that one of the reasons associated with skills mismatch in Zimbabwe was attributed to the rapidity with which the production technologies and structures to which the skills supply mechanisms and institutions had failed to match up in their responses. This had led to an increase in the unemployment levels in the country. Moreover, of Zimbabwe's 15 universities, few if any had been able to track the career progression of their graduates due to weak alumnus engagements, a situation not much different from what was happening in Zambia at the time.

As such the country has been trying to put in place strategies that could be used to overcome this problem. The study by Garwe (2013:2) therefore, looked at the different initiatives put in place in Zimbabwe to promote graduate employability through a community of partnership between the higher education sector, commerce and industry, employers, government, and other stakeholders. The greater concern to promote graduate employability in Zimbabwe stems from the undertaking that employable graduates can contribute to innovation and economic growth in the country (Garwe, 2013:2). For instance, the study by Mafumbe, Gondo, and Mutekwe

(2014:54) investigated the extent to which graduates from Zimbabwe Open University were able to secure employment in their specialised fields. The study revealed that most graduates failed to secure gainful employment due to limited opportunities in a shrinking economy.

To enhance graduate employability, therefore, the universities in Zimbabwe have had to make curriculum changes to their programmes for them to be relevant to the needs of the job market. Such changes have included re-designing of degree programmes to incorporate the needs of potential employers as well as the introduction of the entrepreneurial skills within the degree programmes or integration of entrepreneurship topics in some courses and modules (Garwe, 2013:5). To enhance graduate employability, it is argued that consideration must be given to the number of graduates to be produced at a particular point as well as the availability of employment opportunities in the labour market (Mafumbate, Gondo, and Mutekwe, 2014:59). This, however, appears to have been a challenge in Zimbabwe. Main universities continue to produce graduates who cannot be accommodated in the labour market due to limited job opportunities.

As if that were not enough, the promotion of work-related learning, university-industry initiatives have all been strategised in Zimbabwe to promote graduate employability. This is in line with Mafumbate et al. (2014:60) who recommended the need to link university programmes to the needs of the labour market to avoid a mismatch while embracing the synchronisation of the relationships between universities and the labour industry. It appears many strides have been put in place to ensure that graduates produced by the universities meet the needs of the labour industry. Though the extent to which these measures had impacted graduate employability could not be ascertained due to a crumbled economy, there are lessons Zambia can draw from the efforts being put in place in Zimbabwe.

While the discourse about graduate employability in Zimbabwe is a shared responsibility (Garwe, 2013:3) between the universities and other stakeholders, in Zambia it appears the task of preparing work-ready graduates has remained the sole responsibility of the universities for a longer period. From this discourse, it is clear that various factors compound the question of graduate employability. These may include the availability of jobs in the economy, skills, knowledge, and attitudes possessed by

the graduates, graduate adaptive skills to the needs of the industry, and the ultimate performance of the economy.

3.2.6 Skills Development and Graduate Employability: The Zambian Perspective

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, located between latitudes 8˚ and 18˚ south and longitudes 22˚ and 34˚ east. It covers a total area of 752 612 square kilometres. Zambia's population is estimated at 16.4 million people (CSO, 2018:10). In 2020 the population was estimated to have increased to over 17.8 million people with an annual increase of 2.9 percent per annum (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). The change in the population estimates shows that Zambia's population is growing at an alarming rate. In terms of composition, Zambia had a youthful population in 2018. Those below the age of 15 comprised 48 percent of the population, while those between 15-64 years made up 49 percent, and those 65 years old and above were 3.0 percent of the total national population (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2019:13). Zambia's population composition implies that the demand for higher education and employment opportunities is likely to be high in Zambia amongst the large economically active population.

3.2.6.1 Zambia's economy and its performance

In Zambia, the rural agriculture and modern urban sectors comprise the country's mixed economy. Construction, Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Mining sectors are the key drivers of the economy. In 2014, the Construction sector contributed 14 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the Agriculture sector 9.0 percent, and Manufacturing and Mining combined 8.0 percent (CSO, 2015:1). The country's economy grew from 5.8 percent between 2000 and 2005 to 6.9 percent between 2006 and 2015. However, since 2015, the country's economy has recorded sluggish growth. For instance, in 2017, the economy recorded a paltry 4.1 percent growth and was projected to grow up to 4.6 percent by the end of 2018 (GRZ, 2017:3). Among other internal and external factors, the sluggish growth in Zambia's economy was attributed to the country's inability to comprehensively diversify the economy away from copper mining dependency.

Poverty levels remain high in Zambia, especially among the rural population. In the year 2017, it was estimated that 54.4 percent of the country's population lived under the poverty datum line of less than two US$ per day (GRZ, 2017:87). The majority of these (76.6 percent) were concentrated in rural parts of the country.

3.2.6.2 Employment in Zambia's labour sector

In terms of employment in Zambia, out of the estimated working population of some 8 149 797 only 6 392 076 were economically active. Of these, 5 859 225 were employed and the remaining 469 851 were not in any form of employment (CSO, 2015:18). This represents a 7.4 percent unemployment rate (CSO, 2015; GRZ, 2017), an unemployment rate slightly lower than that of Sub-Saharan Africa at 7.6 percent but higher than the global average of 6.0% (ILO, 2013). The majority of those in employment in Zambia are found in the informal sector, 89.3%, and a minor group in the formal sectors accounted for 10.7% (GRZ, 2017:3).

Zambia's unemployment rate of 7.4% of the economically active population of more than 6 million people may appear not to be low in the light of other countries in Sub-Sahara Africa with higher unemployment rates (Oppong & Sachs, 2015:127; Etshim, 2017:4). However, the majority of those employed in Zambia are in the informal sector, with most of the jobs being agricultural-based and not attracting an adequate income. Most of those employed in the informal sector do not possess qualifications for high-level skills to attract higher pay (UNESCO, 2016:177). Others have non-salaried jobs especially those who work for their relatives and as such, their labour output does not contribute much to the growth of the country's economic productivity. Labour productivity is also said to be low even amongst the workforce in the formal sector.

For instance, of the 8 149 797 persons estimated to be in the working population age group in Zambia, only 1 231 219 (15.1 percent) received skills training before employment (CSO, 2015:80). Sadly, it also appears that few employers were willing to invest in the skills training of their employees in the workplace to promote productivity (Moono & Rankin, 2013:26). The 2014 Zambia Labour Force Survey shows that of the 5 859 225 persons who were employed, 18.6 percent had received training while at work; however, 81.4 percent have never received any form of training (CSO, 2015:80). The low levels of the skilled labour force in the economy are said to

have hampered labour productivity in Zambia. This observation is in line with the UNDP (2016:84) report on Zambia that:

> *…industry-relevant technical and managerial skills are in critically short supply and are not readily available among the available workforce. Skills are particularly low in industrial engineering, electrical and electronics engineering, chemical engineering, and mining engineering activities. In Metallurgical engineering, 74 percent of the workers have only certificates or diploma certificates. The pattern of skills distribution is common in all industrial sectors. The quest for industrialisation, therefore, entails an urgent need to develop a medium to long-term human resources development plan and aligning secondary and tertiary education and skills learning to respond to the strategic needs of the industrial sector.*

Apart from many Zambians not having access to tertiary education to acquire practical knowledge and skills needed in the economy, the higher education sector in Zambia is said to have been producing graduates with skills irrelevant to the skill needs and demands of the labour industry (GRZ, 2013:32). The Government of the Republic of Zambia has thus been concerned with how educational attainments could be made more tangible to the needs of the labour industry like many other developed countries (Froy, 2013:344). The observation by the UNDP (2016:84) also seems to suggest that different countries face different challenges regarding graduate employability and skills development.

Contextually, while the focus in industrialised and knowledge economies by employers is on higher-level skills such as problem-solving skills, teamwork and communication skills, many developing countries like Zambia seem to have a shortage of job-specific skills, hence the focus on technical skills development. This could be a further reason for the Technical Education, Vocation, and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Policy being put in place in Zambia as the national policy on skills development (GRZ, 2013:33; UNESCO, 2016:167; World Bank, 2016:30). This policy is aimed at driving the skills development agenda through Technical colleges, though it does not cover university education in the country, which is the focus area of this study. The TEVET

institutions in Zambia also seem to lack the capacity to produce quality personnel with skills demanded by the labour market (UNESCO, 2016:209).

3.2.6.3 Higher education in Zambia

In Zambia, the higher education sector by composition comprises Universities, Technical and Vocational Colleges and Teacher Education Colleges. These offer undergraduate and postgraduate degree and diploma programmes (Ministry of Education, 1996:105; Higher Education Act, 2013:98). In the past, Zambia had three public universities: The University of Zambia, Copperbelt, and Mulungushi Universities. In the year 2011, the government commenced the process of transforming three public colleges of education into universities, increasing the number of public universities to six. In addition, the liberalisation of the economy and subsequent repealing of the 1999 University Act into the Higher Education Act No.5 of 2013 led to an increase in the number of privately-run universities in the country. Today, there are more than 50 registered private universities in Zambia (World Bank, 2016:23). The opening of the higher education space to private sector participation is meant to promote access for all Zambians to university education which the government alone could not afford to provide for the masses. These universities offer a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through full-time and distance modes of delivery. Study programmes in Medicine, Agriculture, Science, Engineering, Mining, Humanities, and Social Sciences and Education fields are offered at these universities.

3.2.6.4 Higher education relevance and labour market needs in Zambia

The expansion of higher education provision in Zambia had led to an increase in the number of graduates looking for employment. However, as in many other developing countries, not all graduates find relevant employment opportunities to offer a sustainable income. The graduate unemployment rate in Zambia was estimated to be at 7.8 percent in 2015 (CSO, 2015:67) and increased to 12.5 percent in 2019 (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2019:Xii). Consequently, several reasons have been advanced to justify the increasing levels of unemployment even among university-level educated youths in the country. The labour industry's inability to absorb every higher education graduate seems to have emanated from both the weaknesses of the labour industry

and the education system. From the labour industry perspective, the market could not absorb more graduates due to its low manufacturing capacity and a weak industrial base (UNESCO, 2016:180), with Zambia predominantly being a copper mining-dependent economy.

Inadequate economic diversification has led to poor growth of the labour market and constrained employment opportunities in the economy. To grow the economy, the Zambian government had been striving to diversify and expand the economic base through industrialisation to create job opportunities (UNDP, 2016:67-68; GRZ, 2017:6). The focus is on priority sectors such as Manufacturing, Agriculture, Construction, and the Service Industry. The government has also embarked on the plan to industrialise the economy to enhance economic growth and open up more job opportunities for the Zambian people. However, as enshrined in the Seventh National Development Plan and the Vision 2030, these goals are yet to be fully realised (GRZ; 2007:4; GRZ, 2017:100). The vision is for the country to become a middle-income country by the year 2030 (GRZ; 2017:4).

The Seventh National Development plan, for instance, focused on five pillars of development. One of the key pillars to which the current study ascribed was that of enhancing human capital development (MOHE, 2019:1). Human capital development is one of the major responsibilities entrusted to the higher education sector in Zambia. To achieve this particular objective through education and skills development, the Higher Education Policy (MOHE, 2019:2) focused on the provision of quality and relevant higher education to meet the needs of the labour market and society at large. This comes in the wake of the understanding that the achievement of quality higher education has remained elusive for a long time considering that, until recently, Zambia has had no human resource development strategy to guide the higher education sector. On the other hand, issues of quality and relevance of university education are key in the discourse of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. This is because the quality of education is often evaluated on the extent to which graduates are employable or relevant to the needs of the labour industry.

However, the education system for a long time has been said to be producing graduates who were not work-ready to take up occupational opportunities available in the labour market. It has also been the view that the higher education sector has been

producing graduates whose skills and competencies were misaligned or mismatched with the job-specific requirements for the available employment opportunities in the labour market (MOHE, 2019:4). This has mainly been due to a lack of adequate linkages between higher learning institutions and the labour industry, and inappropriate curricula amongst other things (MOHE, 2019:3). This is in line with the perspective of the World Bank (2016:18) that the challenge of inadequate skills and rising unemployment levels amongst the youth has been a historical problem in Zambia. Additionally, it was found that most universities in Zambia were producing more graduates in social sciences compared to STEM-related fields.

In response to the claims, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has developed many policy and legal frameworks to guide the transformation of the higher education sector. The issue of skills development has been at the core of these reforms in the sector (GRZ, 2017:22). The policy and legal frameworks were meant to help the Ministry of Higher Education to provide direction in the governance and provision of higher education tailored towards the needs of individuals, commerce, industry, and society at large (MOE, 1996:92). The rationale for this path was to ensure that public and private higher learning institutions promoted the provision of quality education and training attuned to the current and future skill demands of the labour market within and outside Zambia.

The current study is therefore poised to explore the effectiveness of the social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The goal is to come up with measures on how universities could focus on offering quality social science degree programmes that are in sync with the needs of the job market of the 21st Century Zambia, taking into account the Zambia Qualifications Framework which outlines the required learning outcomes for any degree programme in Zambia, as discussed below.

3.2.6.5 Qualification framework for a bachelor's degree in Zambia

According to the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA, 2016:19), the Zambia National Qualifications Framework (NQF) clearly outlines the descriptors for Level 7 of the NQF at the bachelor's degree level. It highlights the fundamental practical and reflexive competencies that a graduate is supposed to possess upon completion of a degree programme from a given university. The fundamental competencies entail that

a graduate from any university programme must possess the knowledge and critical understanding of the principles that are well established in their field of study. They must also clearly grasp how such principles have developed and evolved. Besides, they must also be able to apply the concepts and principles of their field of study to various contexts and they must be in a position to link their area of study to other related subjects. This means that if one for instance pursued a social science degree programme in development studies, they must be in a position to link development studies to issues relating to economics, demography, and politics to mention but a few. As if that were not enough, a graduate from the field of social science should possess knowledge about the different areas of inquiry and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of the different approaches to problem-solving. Apart from the acquisition of the said principles of their field of study, the Zambia National Qualifications Framework also clearly outlines the practical and reflexive competencies a graduate from a Bachelor's Degree programme must possess. For one to graduate from any given learning institution, thus they possess the foundational, practical, and reflexive competencies (ZAQA, 2016:19). It is thus the acquisition of these competencies that constitute a part of the graduate employability identity. Table 3.3 below shows both the practical and reflexive competencies which a graduate from an undergraduate degree programme offered in Zambia must possess upon completion of their programme of study in addition to foundation knowledge or disciplinary knowledge.

Table 3.5: Practical and reflexive skills required in a university graduate in Zambia

	Practical Competencies	Reflexive Competencies
1	Must critically analyse information and propose solutions	Ability to develop existing skills and acquire new competencies to enable the assumption of significant responsibility
2	Communicate information effectively and arguments to varied audiences	Must be able to exercise personal responsibility, initiative, and decision making in complex and unproductive contexts
3	Ability to present and transfer information, transfer knowledge, skills, and values to others through delegation	Must have autonomy and well-developed independence, judgment and adaptability

4	Ability to establish and address personal learning needs	Demonstrate some originality and creativity in formulating, evaluating, and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments.

Source: ZAQA, 2016:19

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, the possession of the practical and reflexive competencies (Table 3.3) is part of what may help a graduate to acquire the employability skills needed for graduate identity. However, the concept of graduate employability is also affected by the extent to which a pursued field of study is relevant to the skill needs of the labour market. The subsequent section focuses on the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market from a scholarly point of view.

3.3 RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

This section provides insights into what social sciences are, as programmes of study. It also provides a working definition of the conceptual understanding of the social sciences as used in the study. The section also highlights the various perceptions of the importance of social science degree programmes concerning graduate employability.

The social science degree programmes are defined and classified differently in different countries. Rastrick (2018:11) defined the humanities and social science degree programmes in line with the Statistics Canadian definition of Humanities and Social Sciences. According to Rastrick (2018:11), Humanities refer to programmes such as English language and literature, liberal arts and sciences, general studies and human classical and ancient studies, maritime studies, philosophy, and religious studies, theology and religious vocations, history and French languages and literary.

Social Sciences, on the other hand, include anthropology, criminology, archaeology, demography and population studies, economics, international relations, geography and cartography, political science, sociology, and others. Although social sciences are often married with humanities in most universities, this study focused on selected social science degree programmes only. There are various examples of what constitutes social science degree programmes offered in Zambian universities. Social sciences in this study, as defined in Chapter 1, are those programmes concerned with

the study of human relations and refer to programmes of study which may be arts, humanities, and indeed social science degree programmes offered at the universities (Anwaruddin, 2013:364). These programmes include the undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree programmes in Social Work, Development Studies, Public Administration, Political Science, Economics, and Sociology. Social sciences also include education-related programmes such as the Bachelor of Education in Adult Education and many other Education arts-related programmes.

3.3.1 Relevance of Social Science to the Labour Sector Skill Needs

Different studies have been carried out about the relevance of social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour industry in the 21st Century. To begin with, it must be noted that the relevancy of any degree programme can be evaluated from its usefulness in the employment industry and other spheres of life. The skills acquired during university education must match the skill needs of the labour industry. Any difference leads to a skills mismatch and hence the irrelevance of the qualifications (Rastrick, 2018:24). The relevance of any social science degree programme concerning graduate employability is strongly linked to the employer's perception of the skills they possess. It is also argued that the employers' perception of a graduate's skills from social sciences differs from that of one from STEM-related programmes. It is therefore one's understanding of these perceptions which can augment the redesigning of the social science degree programmes to enhance the employability of graduates from these programmes at entry-level into the workforce.

In Japan, the relevance of social science degree programmes in promoting graduate employability in a technologically advanced economy had been questioned. In the year 2015, the Government of Japan issued a notice which required all universities to reorganise their programmes in the humanities and social science field. The indirect rationale for this move was the government's perspective of the relevance of social sciences towards economic transformation and graduate employability (Yonezawa, 2017:31). However, in trying to promote global capabilities in its economy, the Japanese government seems to emphasise STEM-related fields and not social sciences. This situation has also been escalated due to the government's desire to develop scientists from the few available youths in a country where over half of the population are elderly.

Yonezawa (2017:32) argues that the limited investments in social sciences by universities has been due to the desire to develop a few future academics in these fields. The argument is that social sciences were key in helping us understand the nature of human existence. The situation did not however motivate those in the field of social sciences, including academics who were regarded as supplementary in the development of science and technology in the country. Also, the fields of social sciences were not regarded as a priority area of investment in Japanese universities in that their research outputs were regarded to be of lesser value in promoting the competitiveness of graduate employability and innovativeness on the global economic stage. This is because the use of Science and Technology in advancing human knowledge has increased the demand for individuals with skills in STEM-related fields of study such as Engineering, Architecture, Mining, Medicine, and Computer Science to name but a few (Habibi, 2015:4).

It should also be noted that most social science degree programmes, unlike natural sciences, do not have a specific relationship with one's career pathway. They are thus also referred to as generalist programmes (Kinash *et al.,* 2014:24). For instance, while degree programmes such as mining engineering, results in a graduate becoming a miner, an accounting degree in one becoming an accountant, most social science degree programmes such as public administration, development studies, adult education, and political science to mention but a few, do not have specific career pathways for their graduates. It is perceived that this makes graduate employability, in the context of these programmes uncertain, especially in an economy where skills from STEM-related fields are on-demand in comparison to social sciences. It is this uncertainty with what one would become upon completion of training that makes potential employers from the labour industry, doubt the capabilities of such graduates from the social science fields of study. More so, graduates from the generalist social science degree programmes may have the challenge of demonstrating how skilful they are and what they are capable of accomplishing within an organisation compared to those in STEM-related fields.

It must, however, be noted that social science degree programmes are fundamentally important to the understanding of society and social cohesion. This could be the reason why some scholars, such as Goma (1975) argue that the potential and actual usefulness of the so-called "useless disciplines" must never be underestimated in any

given society. In furtherance of the importance of social science degree programmes and consequently the graduates of social sciences, the speech delivered by one university Vice-Chancellor still holds today. Goma (1975:8), speaking about what he termed "*The Usefulness of Useless Disciplines*", urged all African universities to guard against the summary exclusion of social science academic programmes that were deemed to have no immediate manpower relevance. His argument was that to understand and appreciate people in any given society one ought to understand their social systems, by looking at their culture, language, history, and how they live in general and that these aspects of social systems can only be properly understood by studying social sciences. This implies the need for a balanced production of both physical and social scientists by universities.

3.3.2 The Labour Market Skill Needs

The world over, there has been a growing campaign to focus much on Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related programmes at the expense of Social Sciences (Axelrod, 2017; Yonezawa, 2017:31). This is so in Europe, the USA, and other parts of the world. For instance, Elkhayat (2018:38) found that non-STEM majors were not publicly funded. As such, many students avoided non-STEM programmes as they were costly to pursue. In the USA, it is reported that between 1967 and 2013 student enrolments in Humanities and Liberal Arts had gone down from 17.2% to 6.5% because from a monetary point of view, social sciences contribute less to the universities compared to Science and Technology programmes.

Several examples point to the decline in the influence of social science degree programmes in educational institutions. For instance, Anwaruddin (2013:366) reports that in 2002, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the Department of Sociology was closed at the University of Birmingham. In addition, a Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sussex was reported to have planned to sack over one hundred staff members and closing down the least profitable academic areas which included social sciences. Today, university education is driven by the focus on market-oriented programmes of study in areas such as Business, ICT and Engineering. While most public universities concentrated on offering all manner of degree programmes, most private universities have concentrated on offering STEM-related subjects.

Today, investment in STEM university programmes is highly regarded as the only way through which the national economies can be transformed the world over. As such, many universities have rolled out various STEM-based degree programmes to respond to government policies of enhancing economic and technological development. More so, many prospective students are yearning to enrol in STEM-related degree programmes compared to humanities and social science degree programmes. For example, China is reported to have converted 42 universities from social sciences into world-class STEM institutions.

This change has mainly been driven by a growing concern that STEM programmes are better than social sciences. In the wake of increasing criticism of the relevance of social science degree programmes in the labour market where the focus is on STEM-related fields to move the economic agenda, much is needed for a clear understanding of the kind of skills graduates get from social science degree programmes as well as to ascertain the extent to which such skills influence their employability.

This study is therefore poised to explore the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia to develop a framework on how market-driven social science degree programmes can be provided in the universities in Zambia. This comes in the wake of the supposition that though social science degree programmes are perceived to be less beneficial for economic and technological development compared to STEM fields, they can guide students to cultivate critical thinking skills, reflections and other values necessary for development (Anwaruddin, 2013:366; Osmani, et al., 2019:1). This study was thus aimed at exploring the extent to which social science degree programmes promote the acquisition of key competencies and knowledge to render graduates employable. This was key especially in the declining influence of social science degree programmes on the labour market.

3.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK PLACEMENTS AND INTERNSHIP PRACTICES IN PROMOTING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONGST GRADUATING STUDENTS

Different names are used to describe pre-graduation work experiences for students in higher learning institutions. The experiences such as work-placements and internships

are referred to as Work Integrated Learning (WIL) practices in different countries. By definition, an internship refers to the supervised training for a specified period as a requirement for a given profession (Hartman, 2014:1). Internships generally involve three parties: the student, learning institutions, and the organisation in which the internship is given. The goal of such a partnership is to benefit both employers and student interns.

3.4.1 Role of Internships in Employability in Skills Development

The importance of industry-based experiences for university students is well documented (Oliver, 2015). Such engagements are said to help students acquire practical skills and experiences. They thus help graduates to be work-ready before graduation**.** WIL activities, therefore, have a major role to play in promoting graduate employability. To help achieve this objective, it is argued that WIL learning experiences such as internships must be embedded in the mainstream curriculum of any social science degree programmes (Schech, Kelton, Carati & Kingsmill, 2017:1477). Learners must be exposed to these experiences to appreciate the authentic working contexts in which they can collaborate with others, regulate themselves, and receive support to gain the relevant work experience which can enhance their employability.

Today, many employers demand not only a graduate's knowledge about a job but also their ability to apply the knowledge at work (Hartman, 2014:1). This underscores the importance of experiential learning for universities to promote graduate employability. Academic internships in this regard are a key component of student learning. Literature shows that compared to natural sciences, in the past, social science programmes never required one to do academic internships to graduate; however, this has changed. Hartman (2014:1) emphasises the importance of internship programmes by pointing out that they are a means of exposing students to their future profession which helps them to understand what is expected of them in their career paths. The goal of the internship programmes must be to help university students to link theory and practical knowledge. Internships, therefore, are meant to prepare students to live beyond the university.

Many higher learning institutions have realised the role of internships in preparing students for employment (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.,* 2016:144). This has further been compounded by the demands of the labour industry to produce work-ready graduates.

The loudness of the call has enabled many higher learning institutions to embed WIL activities in their core curricula as a means to promote graduate identity. This means that internships or work placements, as intra-curricular or extra-curricular experiences, have become increasingly popular. For instance, Baert, Neyt, Siedler, Tobback and Verhaest (2019:2) found that in the USA, internships for higher learning students increased from 3% in the 1980s to 75% after the year 2000. It was also noted that even in Europe, over 45% of those in higher learning institutions aged between 18 and 35, had undertaken some internship programmes, owing to evidence which appears to support that internship experiences are associated with positive labour outcomes for graduates.

Several benefits associated with internship programmes to the student, universities, and the labour industry, have been documented (Rastrick, 2018:21). One of the benefits is that students get exposure to on-the-job experiences. Such experiences give them opportunities to translate theoretical knowledge into the practical application of what may be expected from them in their future professions. Since being exposed to real work experiences helps one to appreciate much more of what they can do post-graduation, such experiences open many opportunities for their career progression.

From the employer's perspective, student internships help business industries to benefit from cheap labour. Such labour promotes efficiency in the organisations, thereby helping them to achieve more. In cases of vacancies in graduate entry positions in such organisations, student interns can easily be considered for employment immediately after graduation which facilitates the recruitment and selection process. On the part of universities, when students are afforded WIL activities such as internships, they are helped to market their universities. Student exposure to industrial work experiences subsequently increases their employability chances in which they undertake internships. Besides, such internship programmes act as a way through which universities can foster university-industry partnerships.

Several studies have been done to look at the relationship between WIL experiences such as internships and the labour market outcomes (Nunley, Pugh, Romero & Seals, 2016; Silva, Lopes, Costa, Melo, Brito, Dias & Seabra, 2016; Saniter, Schumann & Siedler, 2018; Baert *et al.,* 2019:2). For instance, using a randomised field experiment, Baert *et al.* (2019:1) investigated the causal impact of voluntary curricular internships

of university students on their probability of being invited for a job interview. The study thus investigated the effects of internship programmes on the labour outcome success of university graduates. With data collected using more than 1 000 fictitious but realistic job resumes to the job openings, they found that applicants with exposure to internship experiences stood a higher probability of being invited to a job interview compared to other candidates. Though valid, the findings of this study may have limitations due to a narrow focus on one's likelihood of being invited for a job interview or not. The study did not focus on the actual abilities and skills of graduates to be employable. This study also focused on different study areas and did not take into consideration the many variants of internships. As such, a focus on related fields and a clear understanding of how the internship programmes are structured and evaluated can bring out a clear picture of how much work-integrated learning experiences can promote graduate employability.

Nunley *et al.* (2016:37) conducted an experimental study in the USA which looked at the effect of voluntary extra-curricular internships on graduate labour outcomes. They found that internships had a positive effect on the likelihood of an individual being called for interviews. In Portugal, a similar study conducted by Silva *et al*. (2016:703) found a positive association between voluntary and mandatory intra-curricular internships and the ease of one landing their first job. Saniter *et al.* (2018) also conducted a study in German which focused on study areas that are less oriented towards the labour industry. They investigated the effects of mandatory and voluntary intra-curricular internships by looking at the monthly wage to be attained by a graduate after entry into employment. The study established that the internship had a positive effect on study areas with a weak labour market orientation including social sciences.

From these case studies, it is clear that university-facilitated internship placements are key in helping students link their theoretical knowledge acquired in class with its practical application in a workplace setting before their graduation (Ratrick, 2018:20). It is also clear that for the internship programmes to be effective, they have to be in line with one's programme of study.

3.4.2 Design and Assessment of WIL Activities

The pre-graduate internship programmes are designed differently depending on the objectives of the programme. For instance, apart from credit hours, student interns are

also exposed to the practical knowledge associated with their future jobs. This is key to their career paths. While these internships or work placements vary from one place to the other, this study focused on those work placements which are a requirement for one to graduate from the university in a social science field of study (Hartman, 2018:2). Other means of assessing the internships involve students keeping a journal or a daily report of their activities and students are also given opportunities in their learning institutions to share their experiences through internship seminars.

In terms of assessment of internship programmes, Hartman (2018:2) further points out that internship experiences should contribute nothing more than 40 percent of the total course work. In arriving at this grade, there should be clear interaction between the academic member evaluating the students and the supervisor of the student at the workplace. Aspects of assessment in an internship, however, may vary from one institution to another depending on the quality assurance measures put in place. Internships therefore must be well structured and supervised to enrich the learning experiences of students as well as their employability skills (Sattler & Peters, 2013:114).

It is worth noting that WIL activities have been less popular in social sciences compared to STEM-related programmes. There has, however, been a remarkable increase in the exposure of students in social science degree programmes to working placements before their graduation. For instance, in Zambia, most universities have internship programmes embedded within the degree programmes, and students are required to take up these attachments. However, their effectiveness in contributing to graduate employability is not clear. The contributions and effectiveness of the internship programmes can therefore only be established if their structure, means of supervision and assessment are evaluated.

3.4.3 Organisation of Work Placements and Internships in Zambia

Zambia seems to lack a systematic policy to enforce the use of internship programmes for students in higher learning institutions. It is, therefore, possible that such internship activities may either be part of the degree programmes or not depending on a given university. The current Apprenticeship Act No. 13 of 1997, chapter 275 of the laws of Zambia for instance, does not cater to students pursuing studies in the universities. For example, article 3 (i) (a) put it that the apprenticeship Act shall not apply to “any

student at a university, university college, technical college or school, specified by the Minister, who works in a designated trade during vacations to obtain practical experience. Moreover, the current Act on Higher Education also seems to be silent about the roles of internship programmes in providing university students with work and practical skills experiences (Higher Education Act, 2013). There is therefore no law that compels labour industrial organisations to offer internship programmes to university students in the country. The current national internship guidelines document does not cater for students still at university; it is targeted at recent graduates only (GRZ, 2019:10).

While there are various pedagogical strategies through which the theoretical knowledge covered by students in a class can be linked to the real world of work such as project developments as solutions to concrete problems and simulations, internships appear to be most popular, while simulations and other pedagogical strategies, mostly theoretical, internships expose learners to the real and physical environment where actual work takes place. Internships are different from other WIL strategies in that a student is likely to acquire new skills and attributes which can help them to acquire, maintain, and succeed on the job. Through WIL activities such as internships, students are helped to see how they can apply theoretical knowledge in different contexts. Internships promote experiential learning (Silva *et al.,* 2018:5) and can, therefore, also be considered as the first work experience for students before their graduation. The internships are important in that they help students to clarify their skills, qualities, and attributes. They can also help them decide as to whether they are on the right career path or not. Internships thus promote graduate readiness. As students go through the internship programmes, they get a sense of what will be expected of them in the real world of work. This makes their transition from the university to the workplace much easier (Silva *et al.,* 2018:6).

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that compared to natural sciences, social science degree programmes appear to pose a greater challenge to graduate employability (Schech *et al.,* 2017:1477). Therefore, to promote employability among graduates in the field of social sciences, students are required to undergo some practical training through internships for them to gain an employability identity. The goal of promoting internships as a WIL experience is meant to develop graduates who can link theoretical, practical, and general knowledge. Such experiences are also

meant to help graduates adapt and apply their knowledge to divergent contexts to render themselves employable upon completion of university studies.

An internship also acts as one way through which the labour industry can partner with universities to enhance graduate employability. Through this partnership, the industry can have its input in the curriculum and thereby making universities aware of what the labour market expects from the interns in terms of graduate skills and attributes. All these studies point to the fact that work-integrated learning experiences can have a positive effect on graduate employability. However, the effects of the intra-curricular internship programmes on graduate employability are not clear in the Zambian context and this study is poised to explore the extent to which such programmes can enhance graduate employability skills in Zambia.

3.5 UNIVERSITY AND LABOUR INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

The essence of the relationship between universities and the industry can also stem from a critique on the definition of employability by Yorke (2006:8) which highlights the need for a graduate to possess certain skills, knowledge, and attributes to be employable. The question is where can the said skills best be developed and a determination made that graduates are employable? Is it from the university or the labour industry?

The collaboration of universities and the labour industry has been regarded as one of the ways through which graduate employability can be promoted. In this study, the industry involves the employers, the labour unions, and those concerned with effective labour policies and practices. Concerning the role of employers in promoting employability, literature is flooded with debate on the role of university-industry collaborations in promoting graduate employability. It is argued that pre-graduation-work experiences such as work placements can help graduating students acquire communication, problem-solving, and other skills which can render them work-ready (Simon, 2016:87).

It is also argued that to promote graduate employability, entrepreneurship must be embedded in university degree programmes. However, it is worth noting that in the context of promoting employability, oftentimes, the entrepreneurship courses simply help individuals to be innovative and open to taking up any available opportunities but

it does not fully bring about employability. For instance, a study by El Hadidi and Kirby (2017:195) investigated the barriers associated with university-industry collaborations from the perspective of the industry in Egypt. Using a questionnaire survey of 237 industry firms, the study established why the firms seemed disinterested in partnering with universities to drive industrial innovation in the country. From the firms that were included in the study, 14 business firms claimed they had links with the universities. Such links involved knowledge and technology transfer. They bordered on teaching and learning, providing placements for university students' internships and partnerships on research.

From the different forms of partnerships, partnership on university technology and transfer through consultancy and training were found to be the highest at 73 percent of the 14 business industries that were actively involved in partnership (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2017:195). Partnership with regards to recruiting graduates was found to be at 27 percent. The low numbers of industries that were willing to be in partnership with the universities suggest that various factors do impede such collaborations. Among these factors cited were the lack of flexibility on the part of the universities (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2017:195), the variance of the objectives of the industries which were more practical compared to universities that appeared to be more theoretically-oriented amongst other things. The study concluded that the university-industry collaboration in Egypt was weak and thus suggested the need to strengthen and support the same (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2017:200).

Another study about the importance of university-industry partnership by Strachan (2016:1) investigated the impact of real-world learning activities on the employability skills of students who took an advertising course module. Findings from the students, employers, and universities revealed that exposing students to real-world projects increased their chances of employability and gave them opportunities to learn about what will be expected of them when they finally are employed (Strachan, 2016:13). This can only be achieved if universities and employers work together.

In further advancing the importance of partnerships in graduate employability, Pitan (2016:4) argues that poor collaboration between the universities and the employers can contribute to graduate unemployment. As such, the varied interpretations of what constitutes graduate employability between universities and potential employers can

be reconciled through partnerships. The difference in the understanding of employability between universities and graduates has made the operationalisation of the concept of employability difficult in the labour sector. There is, therefore, a need to promote some sync between universities and potential employers on what constitutes employability.

The lack of adequate collaboration between universities and the labour industry has been identified as one of the reasons for the skills mismatch. Literature thus abounds on how the challenge of skills mismatch and graduate employability could be overcome (Sachan, 2016:101; Haddad & Habibi, 2017:7; Rowe & Zegwaared, 2017:88-89). Many researchers thus recommend among other things, the need for meaningful collaboration between the universities and the industrial sector to produce graduates with employable attributes in African countries (Teferra, 2013:45; Alpaydin, 2015:964; Maswela & Chiparo, 2015:1). Such suggestions have been made in the light of increasing levels of unemployment among the graduates in both developed and developing countries. It can, however, be argued that the success of such collaboration in different countries is context-specific. Especially that countries adopt different strategies to promote higher education and labour industry linkages. This study, therefore, assessed the challenges and benefits associated with the universities partnering with the labour industry. The next section looks at practices that can enhance the quality of degree programmes in the university

3.6 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES TO THE SKILL NEEDS

Literature ties the issues of graduate employability to the quality of higher education. Quality higher education which is responsive to both the needs of a graduate and the labour market at large can only be promoted if quality assurance measures are put in place. These quality assurance measures can be put in place either internally within universities or by other agencies but they need to be in place measures to promote the quality of education provided which also ultimately influences graduate employability. This includes the use of graduate tracer studies (Ebert, Lwankomezi, Pistor & Sella, 2017:87) and labour market information for feedback to universities on the relevance of their programme on the job market (GRZ, 2018:1).

The relevance of university education will only be evaluated on the ability to produce employable graduates and it is well documented that in higher education, graduate employability is regarded as one of the benchmarks of measuring quality. Aspects of quality include the provision of courses and programmes which are relevant to the needs of the labour market. In Zambia for instance, higher education regulatory bodies, such as the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) have been established through Acts of Parliament to promote quality assurance in education in the country. These regulatory bodies work together with both the public and private universities.

According to the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ, 2019:21), the Higher Education Authority is mandated to regulate and monitor standards in higher learning institutions in the country to ensure the provision of quality higher education for human capital development to foster the national development agenda. The HEA does so through the promotion of quality assurance in higher education as well as implementing quality assurance mechanisms of higher education. The HEA works closely with the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) which standardises all qualifications from within and outside the country in line with the NQF.

For instance, over 50 public and private universities had been accredited by the HEA. The authority had also accredited over 3 000 programmes of different institutions since its inception. Although the HEA had been put in place to promote quality assurance in all programmes offered by universities and other higher learning institutions in the country, its work was not been without challenges. A report by the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science and Technology (GRZ, 2019:33) described the quality assurance mechanisms in the higher education sector to be weak and ineffective. The Parliamentary Committee also reported that the higher learning institutions in the country lacked a strong relationship with the labour industry. This, it appears, has partly contributed to the poor quality of the education sector in Zambia (GRZ, 2019:33). In addition, higher learning institutions are expected to put in place quality assurance measures to aid their provision of quality and relevant degree programmes to meet the needs of the labour market in the country. This study is therefore poised to explore such strategies and suggest a framework to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs in the job market in Zambia.

3.7 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN ZAMBIA: SITUATING THE STUDY

Skills development through higher education is likely to improve the competencies and productive capacities of the youth and thereby enhance their opportunities for wage-earning and self-employment in the country (Kimenyi, 2011:22; Borras & Edquist, 2015:16). Indeed "…higher education is necessary to increase a country's capacity to conduct research and generate new knowledge to develop new products and production technologies" (Kimenyi, 2011:23). The study about skills development in higher education for equitable graduate employability is thus very important for a nation aspiring to become a middle-income country by the year 2030 (GRZ, 2006:2). The urgency to attain *Vision* 2030 has also largely been fortified by the need for the country to attain inclusivity and quality education for all through the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (UNESCO, 2016:4). This was to be achieved through, among other things, strong and cohesive industrial linkages in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors and a diversified educational curriculum that is responsive to the knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills needs of individuals and society at large (GRZ, 2006:32).

However, many youths have had no opportunities for wage-earning and self-employment due to the lack of financial capacity to access quality tertiary education. Access to higher education was restricted to those with the financial capacity to pay as the government could no longer afford to provide bursary sponsorship to every young Zambian (Mwelwa, 2014:4; Masaiti, Mwelwa & Mwale, 2015:73). For instance, only about 5.0% of the persons in the labour force have completed tertiary education at certificate, A-level, and degree levels (CSO, 2015:36). This is true in that of the unemployed youths in the country only 1 820 721 were full-time students in learning institutions. Many young people remained unemployed despite having acquired some level of education. As demonstrated by various studies such as Moono and Rankin (2013:260, Youthmap (2014:9-10) and Bhorat *et al*. (2015:1-2), the reasons for the unemployment problem in Zambia touches on both the inadequacies of the education system as well as the economy to support employment creation.

Although the unemployment problem due to lack of productive skills by the youth seems to stem from both the inadequacies in the economy and the education sector,

many still pointed to the higher education sector as having had an upper hand in fostering the national skills development agenda to empower the youth (GRZ, 2006:4; GRZ, 2014:102). To address this challenge, the higher education sector in Zambia has been challenged to provide quality education by producing graduates with competencies and the capacity to respond to societal needs.

Many studies have been conducted in Zambia regarding the relevance of higher education to the needs of the labour market and the economy at large (Simukungwe-Moono, 2010; Moono & Rankin, 2013; Mulenga, 2015) with emphasis on skills development. These studies were, however, different from this study in many ways. For instance, the study by Simukungwe-Moono (2010:5) focused on how programmes in TEVET institutions could be developed to enhance graduate employability in Zambia. The study emphasised the involvement of stakeholders such as training providers, employers, the Ministry of Education, and the students themselves in curriculum development. While Simukungwe-Moono (2010:iii) focused on TEVET colleges, the current study focused on universities in Zambia by exploring the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability. The study is therefore different from the former in that unlike colleges, universities have the autonomy to design, develop and manage their education and training programmes (World Bank, 2016:23).

The scoping study by Moono and Rankin (2013) on *Education and Employment in Zambia* investigated the relationship between the quality of education and employment in Zambia and concluded that there was a skills mismatch between the skills provided by the education sector and what was expected by the labour industry focusing on the mining and manufacturing sectors only. Moono and Rankin (2013:28) did not look at the extent to which the universities were engaging with the labour industry to promote skills development for graduate employability in Zambia. Although their study highlighted the irrelevance of graduate skills to the needs of the labour industry from the employers' perspective, their findings did not include the voice of the higher education providers on how education programmes were designed and developed to promote graduate employability. As a scoping study, their findings simply brought to light the fact that skills mismatch existed in terms of the knowledge and skills graduates were exposed to in learning institutions compared to what the labour industry

anticipated from them. The current study goes further in raising the possibility of examining the extent and ways through which the universities engage the labour industry and other stakeholders with the sole purpose of equipping graduates with employable skills and abilities in the Zambian context focusing on social science degree programmes.

Lastly, the study by Mulenga (2015:iv) was an investigation to establish whether or not the English Language Teacher Education Curriculum at the University of Zambia promoted relevant knowledge and skills for teaching English in Zambian Secondary Schools to produce a quality teacher of the English language. One of the major findings of this study was that the English Language Teacher Curriculum did not adequately prepare the graduates with relevant knowledge and skills for teaching in secondary schools in that a job analysis was not done at the inception of curriculum development. The study underscored the importance of job analysis in initiating curriculum development for a given programme of study in teacher education. The study by Mulenga (2015:7), though focusing on university education, was different from the current study in two ways. The first aspect is that while it focused on whether or not the curriculum for English Language Teacher Education was relevant to the knowledge and skills needed for a teacher of English in secondary schools, the current study explored the extent and to which the universities were ensuring that graduating students in social science degree programmes were equipped with skills and attributes as demanded by the labour market to promote their employability. So, while Mulenga's study focused on the University of Zambia's English Language curriculum's relevance to secondary school teaching, the current study focussed on the employability of graduating students from social science degree programmes in Zambia. Secondly, the study by Mulenga (2015:80) focused on one programme of study in teacher education at the University of Zambia, the current study focused on more than one social science degree programme and from several universities in the country.

One supposed methodological weakness in the study by Mulenga (2015:80) is that by focusing on only one programme of study in teacher education at the University of Zambia, the findings may not be generalised to similar programmes in other universities. The findings of the study may also not reflect an accurate picture of how such a teacher education programme may be designed and delivered in other

universities in the country. Therefore, it may be a misconception for one to conclude from such a study that teacher education programmes in Zambian Universities were not very relevant to classroom practice at the secondary school level. The current study addressed this methodological weakness by focusing on programmes from more than one university.

3.8 MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN PROMOTING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN ZAMBIA

To measure the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability, the researcher took into consideration what international scholarly literature says regarding university skills development and graduate employability. In addition, the researcher also looked at what the Zambia Qualifications Framework dictates as skills and competencies that must be acquired by an individual upon completion of an undergraduate degree programme from a given university. As such, a comparative approach was used to determine whether the competencies acquired by students from universities, were in line with the fundamental competencies for a university graduate. Also, the voices of the employers helped to determine the work readiness of graduates from social science degree programmes, by attesting to some skills and attributes which constitute graduate employability.

Therefore, to determine the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability, one ought first to define and operationalise what skills development and graduate employability are. As defined elsewhere in this thesis, skills development refers to the acquisition of certain skills and attributes. It is the effectiveness of the skills acquisition processes within a social science degree programme that may render one to acquire employable skills or not. The concept of graduate employability on the other hand, as defined in Chapter, is meant to produce a social science graduate from a university in possession of skills, knowledge and personal attributes relevant to the labour market for them to easily stand a chance of getting a job and with the ability to keep that job or employ themselves. As such, careful operationalisation of skills development and graduate employability helped the researcher to determine the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting graduate employability in Zambia. Table 3.6 below shows the conceptualisation and operationalisation of variables in the study.

Table 3.6: Conceptualisation and operationalisation of variables in the study

SN	Concepts	Dimensions/Variables	Indicators/Questions
1	**Skills Development**	**Student Internships or work placements**	▪ Are integrated learning activities (internships or work placements) available in the programme? ▪ What kind of practical programmes are these? ▪ What is the length of social science internship programmes? ▪ How are these internship programmes designed and assessed?
		University-Industry Partnerships	▪ Are these partnerships available? ▪ How frequent are partnerships between schools in universities and the labour industry? ▪ What form(s) of partnerships exist between universities offering social science degree programmes and employers in the labour industries? ▪ What kind of support are universities receiving from partnering with the labour industry in promoting the relevance of social science degree programmes
		Quality Assurance on Programme Skills Outcomes	▪ What are the expected curriculum outcomes from this programme? ▪ What kind of skills are graduates expected to come out with upon completion of programmes? ▪ What measures are put in place to ensure the programmes produce graduates in line with the needs of the labour industry? ▪ What measures are put in place to ensure quality teaching and learning in the social science degree programme?
2	**Graduate Employability**	**Employability Skills (As espoused in scholarly literature)** ▪ Generic Skills ▪ Job Specific Skills ▪ Personal Attributes	▪ What is the student's level of satisfaction with the acquired skills from the social science degree programme? ▪ How important are the competencies acquired from social science degree programmes to employers in the labour industry? ▪ How satisfied are students with the possession of the employability skills?
		Curriculum Relevance to Industry	▪ Are industries still demanded by the labour industry? ▪ Is there a demand for the programme on the labour industry? ▪ What is the motivation of the university to offer a social science degree programme?

SN	Concepts	Dimensions/Variables	Indicators/Questions
		Graduate Work-Readiness Perceptions	▪ Are graduates ready for work upon completion of their social science degree programmes? ▪ How confident are graduating students with their knowledge and skills at the point of getting employment? ▪ Are graduates from social science degree programmes in possession of skills demanded by employers in the labour industry?

Table 3.6 above, shows how skills development and graduate employability were conceptualised and operationalised in the study. In operationalising the two concepts of skills development and graduate employability, variables/dimensions were identified together with the indicators in form of questions that were used to answer the research questions to meet the objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a thorough review of the literature on skills development and graduate employability. Literature relevant to higher education, skills development, and graduate employability has been reviewed with an analytical approach from the global, African, and Zambian perspectives. For instance, the case studies from the global perspective revealed that though the skills mismatch and graduate employability challenge is a global issue, different countries and regions use varying strategies in attempting to resolve it and that education and unemployment levels also vary across countries and regions. In some countries, citizens are over-educated and in others under-educated. As such, the skill demands between developed and developing countries may differ as they are contextual. From the African perspective, literature has shown that several studies have been conducted in many countries to get insight into different policy measures and strategies put in place by governments and other organisations focusing on education and labour. The subsequent chapter presents the research design and methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at the review of the literature relevant to the study. This chapter presents the research design employed and how it relates to the study of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The chapter first considers the research design and paradigm. It also presents the population and study sample, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis and interpretation. The section further looks at how issues of validity, reliability, and trustworthiness were addressed in the study. Lastly, consideration is given to how ethical issues relating to the study were addressed.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As discussed in Chapter 1, research methodology broadly refers to both the research design and methods used in a study. Tan (2018:4) conceptualises research methodology to mean the number of well-thought-out steps that a researcher takes from conceiving a research problem, investigating it, and reaching a logical conclusion. It is that which provides a point of connection between research theory and evidence as well as the led down procedures that must be followed to maintain the scientific rigour of the research. It is a combination of different approaches to the entire research process (Collis & Hussey, 2014:59) A methodology thus is a procedure that a researcher uses to acquire knowledge about a particular research problem (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:28) and describes the tools that a researcher can utilise to acquire, analyse and interpret knowledge.

In this study, therefore, the research methodology encompasses the research design, paradigm, sampling methods, data collection methods and procedures, and a tool of data analysis and interpretation. It is these different aspects of the research methodology which guided the researcher to answer the research question: *To what extent do social science degree programmes offered at universities promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia?*

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Fouché, Delport & Devos (2014:192) define research design as basically a process of carrying out either a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study. A research design is a framework that is indispensable in the collection and analysis of data in a study (Bryman, 2008:31). In this study, a research design was taken to mean the different steps which guided the study from data collection, analysis and interpretation of the findings in a scientifically acceptable way. The three basic types of research designs that guide research are the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods designs, each of which is discussed below.

4.3.1 Qualitative Designs

Qualitative designs refer to various approaches that may be used to conduct a qualitative inquiry or research designs associated with qualitative research (Fouché & Schurink, 2014:307,327). They are designs in which only a qualitative approach is used to study a given phenomenon with the main focus of such a study being the collection of qualitative data. Qualitative approaches are premised on the understanding that the actions of individuals regarding a particular aspect or phenomenon cannot be divorced from the setting or context in which they take place (Fouché & Delport, 2014:64). As such, a qualitative study has to take place in a non-manipulative environment or natural setting (Fouché & Delport, 2014:65). It is in this setting where a group of participants with knowledge and experiences on the subject under investigation is directly engaged by the researcher to elicit in-depth information, experiences and narratives regarding the subjective reality being investigated (Coy, 2019:72).

There are several designs associated with qualitative research and include the Narrative design or Narrative Biography (Schurink, *et al*., 2014:313), Case Study, Phenomenology, Ethnography, and Grounded Theory designs.

4.3.1.1 Narrative design

The narrative design, according to Creswell (2014:13), is concerned with the comprehensive study of individual lifestyles to give a narrative or story. This design thus is just about giving the narratives of the lived experiences of the researched

combined with those of the research in a corroborative way. The focus of this approach is to get individuals to give accounts of the subjective definitions of their life experiences.

4.3.1.2 Case study

A case study is a research design in qualitative studies in which the collection of detailed information from one (single case) or more (collective case) individuals leads to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Fouché & Schurink, 2014:321). Information is usually collected from very small groups of people with sound knowledge and life experiences about the phenomenon under investigation. Such a phenomenon can be an event, process, action, programme, or activity. Interviews are commonly used to collect data from such cases (Creswell, 2014:13).

4.3.1.3 Phenomenology

This is a qualitative design that describes the meaning attached to the lived experiences of a given phenomenon or object by various individuals (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:316). Implicit in this design is a desire to get a clear understanding of the phenomenon under study to thoroughly describe the lived experiences as they are experienced by those being investigated. The lived experiences of the given phenomenon are mainly collected through unstructured interviews.

4.3.1.4 Ethnography

This is another qualitative research design that is concerned with the study of social and cultural groups and individuals within the group in their undisturbed setups. Such a design is characterised by longitudinal observations and descriptions of the actions of the groups or individuals in the study. The observations are meant to attach meaning to the daily adventures and experiences of those being observed. Schurink *et al.* (2014:307) explain that the ultimate goal of an ethnographic study is the thorough description and interpretation of a cultural portrait of a given social grouping.

4.3.1.5 Grounded theory

This is a qualitative design in which a researcher builds a substantive theory that is grounded in the thoroughly collected data (Bless, *et al.,* 2013:392). This design does

not require the use of a theory or conceptual framework at the inception of the research. The researcher only gets to study social situations from which the collected data are analysed, verified and validated to develop a theory (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:318). The researcher, therefore, is engaged in various stages of data collection. The goal is to generate a lot of new questions, insights, and hypotheses which are subjected to further analysis and an additional collection of data to come up with some sort of theory capable of explaining the given processes, actions, or interactions about a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2014:14).

4.3.2 Quantitative Designs

Unlike qualitative designs, the quantitative research design is concerned with the use of quantitative research methods and approaches to collect quantitative data. According to Coy (2019:72), quantitative research designs are more concerned with investigating a large sample, often in controlled settings to define, measure, understand and predict reality. In quantitative research, therefore, the emphasis is on the collection of quantitative data to determine the causal-effect relationships between the given independent and dependent variables. Ultimately, such findings are generated for the larger population. According to Fouché *et al.* (2014:156), quantitative research designs can be categorised into two groups: Experimental and Non-Experimental research designs.

4.3.2.1 Experimental research designs

Quantitative experimental research designs are further reclassified into pre-experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, and experimental designs (Bless, *et al*., 2013:137). Experimental designs, therefore, are designs in which two groups called “The Experimental Group” and “The Control Group” are compared in an experimental way to determine the differences in the outcomes as a result of the intervention or manipulation administered to the so-called experimental group (Creswell, 2009:145; Fouché *et al.,* 2014:145). These designs are commonly used in the field of natural sciences. However, they can as well be used in social science fields such as education to assess the effectiveness of different interventions to improve learning outcomes between two groups of students. The main objective of experimental designs is to establish with certainty whether the differences observed

between the two given groups are as a result of the intervention in the experimental groups (Fouché *et al.,* 2014:145).

4.3.2.2 Non-experimental designs

These are designs that are mostly used in descriptive studies in which no experiment is undertaken to manipulate the experimental group to establish its influence on the control group. An example of a non-experimental quantitative research design is a randomised cross-sectional survey design. According to Fouché *et al.* (2014:156), a randomised cross-sectional design is concerned with the explorative and descriptive studies in which diverse groups of people are examined at a given point in time. Such a cross-sectional study design, can, for instance, be used to study a specific issue or problem in a given grouping as well as to determine the extent or level to which that group is affected by it.

4.3.3 Mixed Methods Designs

From the three main categories of research designs available, this study adopted a mixed methods design. A mixed methods design is a research design in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to find answers to one research problem in a single study (Santos, Erdmann, Meireless, Lanzoni & Ross, 2017:4; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:2). A mixed methods research design thus allows for the systematic integration or use of qualitative and quantitative research methods and data (McBride, MacMillan, George & Steiner, 2018:2). This is justified because qualitative research methods are only concerned with the use of non-numerical data which can be explored and interpreted to appreciate occurrences and changes in a given social phenomenon. On the other hand, quantitative research methods are only interested in the use of numerical values in measuring variables to elucidate results and the description, prediction, explanation, and determination of social patterns of a given phenomenon (Zadvanian & Daryapoor, 2013:527). As a result of the differences associated with the qualitative and quantitative data, the use of a mixed methods design has increasingly become prominent to facilitate the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative methods in one study. This is premised on the rationale of compensating for the weaknesses inherent with the independent use of either the qualitative or quantitative study only. A mixed methods study is said to be more

complete by ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative data are synergistically used in a study either concurrently or sequentially (McBride *et al.,* 2018:2). The mixed methods research design provides researchers with an opportunity to use both the qualitative and quantitative research methods, approaches and techniques in answering various research questions of a given study (Johnstone & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17; Mckim, 2017: 203). Such designs are said to be very effective in enhancing the scientific rigour of a given research.

Various types of mixed method research designs can be employed in a study. These designs are classified and named based on different criteria. The first one is the weight attached to either qualitative or quantitative method or data in a study, and secondly, the sequence with which qualitative and or quantitative data is to be collected, analysed, and interpreted (Delport & Fouché, 2014:444; McBride *et al.,* 2018:16).

There are many typologies used in the classification of mixed methods designs (Creswell, 2003:177-185). However, Delport and Fouché (2014:440) put it that major and commonly used mixed methods research designs include: The Sequential Explanatory Design; Sequential Exploratory Design; Concurrent Nested (Embedded) Design, and the Concurrent Triangulation (or Convergent Parallel) Mixed Methods Design.

4.3.3.1 The sequential explanatory design

This is a mixed methods design that uses both qualitative and quantitative research data. It is a two-phase design in which data is collected and analysed in a sequence. In using this design, quantitative data are collected and analysed first (Delport & Fouché, 2014:441). It is the collected quantitative data that guide the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the phase to follow. In the design, priority is given to quantitative data while qualitative data play a secondary role in the study. The researcher thus attaches great importance to the quantitative data which build upon the collection and analysis of qualitative data before actual interpretation.

4.3.3.2 The exploratory sequential design

This design is the reverse sequence of the Sequential Explanatory design. The exploratory mixed methods design has more than one phase in data collection (Delport

& Fouché, 2014:441). The first phase involves the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Once the explored views of participants are analysed, the findings are further used to build and guide the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014:225). Findings can only be interpreted after the two-phase approach of data collection. Thus, in terms of weight and sequence of data collection and analysis, qualitative data precede quantitative data.

4.3.3.3 The concurrent embedded (nested) design

The concurrent embedded mixed methods design is also referred to as the Nested mixed methods design (Creswell, *et al.,* 2003:217). It is called an embedded or nested design in that one of the two data sets, qualitative or quantitative, plays a supportive role in the priority data type. This involves one phase of data collection in which either qualitative or quantitative data plays a supplementary role to the other data type (Delport & Fouché, 2014:443). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at one point in time or in a cross-sectional way. The rationale for embedding or nesting one data type into the other is mainly to address the different research questions that may require thorough answers in a study. Using this design, the collected data may be mixed at the data analysis (Creswell *et al.,* 2003:185) or the interpretation phase (Delport & Fouché, 2014:443).

4.3.3.4 Convergent parallel mixed methods design

The convergent parallel mixed methods design is also referred to as a triangulation mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:21; Almalki, 2016:292). The design allows for the cross-sectional, but separate collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (Delport & Fouché, 2014:442). The ultimate goal is to allow for the interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data to appreciate the differences in the findings in a manner that promotes a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In this design, the qualitative and quantitative data are weighted equally but the researcher can decide which data set to prioritise. The method thus guides the researcher to collect research data that may be at variance but complimentary to the problem being investigated.

As one of the variants of the mixed methods designs, the convergent parallel mixed methods design was adopted in this study. The design was perceived to be

appropriate to help the researcher to converge or put together qualitative and quantitative data in the study after they have been collected and analysed (Creswell, 2014:15) at the interpretation stage as shown in the procedural diagram in Figure 4.1 below. The convergent parallel mixed methods design thus allowed the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches in answering research questions.

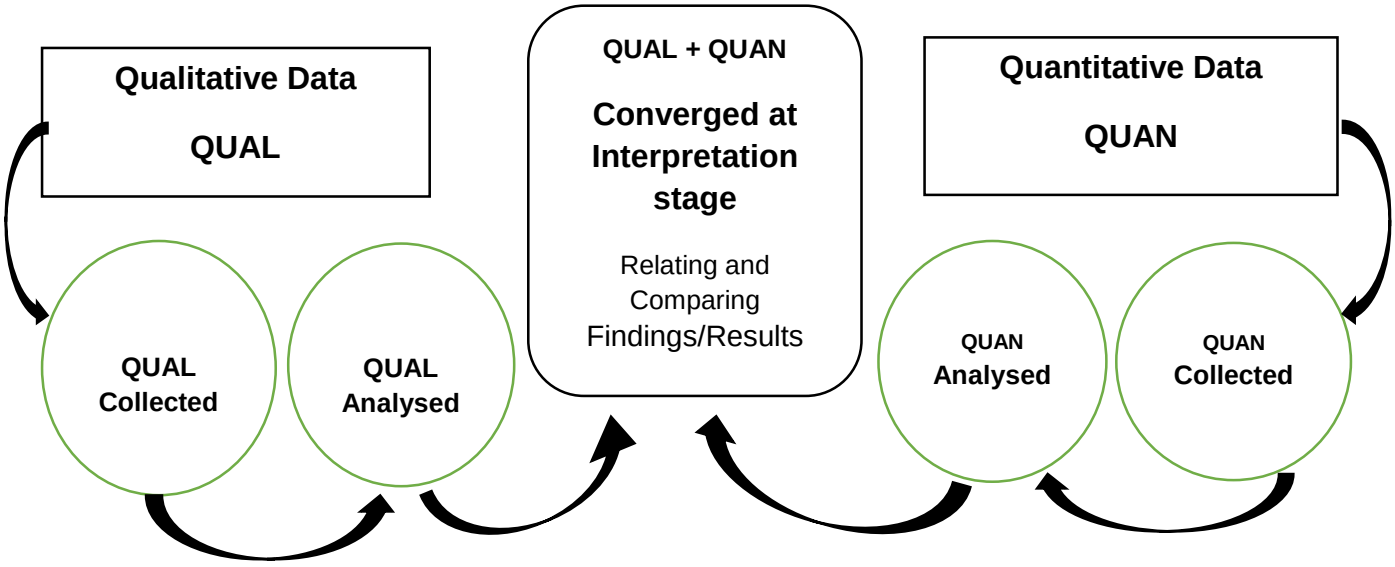


Figure 4.1: The convergent parallel mixed methods design

Source: Adapted from Sweeny (2016:230)

4.4 THE RATIONALE FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE CONVERGENT PARALLEL MIXED METHODS DESIGN

In this study, several factors justified the use of the Convergent Parallel Mixed methods design and not any other. These include the use of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to answer different research questions and the equal weight attached to the qualitative and quantitative data sets and cross-sectional sequence within which the data were collected. Their reasons were in line with Delport and Fouché's (2014:444) position that the choice and adoption of a mixed methods design in a given study is often determined by the sequence or timing, weight, and the approaches adopted for mixing the qualitative and quantitative data sets. Discussed below are the reasons for the rationale to adopt the Convergent parallel mixed methods design.

4.4.1 The Mixing of Qualitative and Quantitative Data Sets

The convergent parallel mixed methods design was, therefore, convenient for the study and deemed appropriate. One of the reasons is that the study aimed at answering different research questions, which required the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Welman *et al.,* 2011:95; Ponce & Pagàn-Maldonado, 2015:115), as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Research questions and nature of data collected

Research Questions (RQ)	Type of Raw Data Collected
RQ_1: What does scholarly literature say regarding university skills development and graduate employability?	**QUAL**
RQ_2: To what extent are social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities relevant to the skill needs in the job market in Zambia?	**QUAL + QUAN**
RQ_3: How effective are work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?	**QUAN + QUAL**
RQ_4: What are the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia?	**QUAL + QUAN**
RQ_5: What framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skill needs in the job market in Zambia?	**QUAL**

Source: Author, 2020

To examine skills development and graduate employability from Zambian Universities, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for different research questions. Qualitative data were collected to elicit views of employers, university administrators and lecturers, and students in their final years of study regarding the relevance of the skills being acquired from the universities to the available jobs in the labour industry. Quantitative data were also collected to appreciate the extent to which universities, working together with the industry and the higher education regulatory agencies, were providing social science degree programmes to promote the skills demanded by the labour market to promote graduate employability in Zambia. This was done by

quantifying responses of participants from the universities, industry, government ministries, and agencies, Zambia Federation of Employers, and Zambia Congress of Trade Unions.

The design also aided the researcher in using a qualitative approach to collect and analyse the subjective aspects of the problem being researched. These included experiences and perspectives from participants on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia, with data being collected through interviews. On the other hand, the quantitative approaches were used to measure the objective aspects of the study using a questionnaire. The convergence mixed methods design is thus unique from other designs. In it, lies the need to converge, merge, or triangulate the collected and analysed quantitative and qualitative data to thoroughly interpret and explain the findings to the research problem. Such a design thus aids the researcher in integrating the findings either at data collection or analysis or interpretation stages to draw inferences from them**.** This cannot be possible when one focuses only on either quantitative or qualitative data.

Therefore, the combination of both objective and subjective findings from the study afforded the researcher a holistic picture to interpret findings and draw conclusions. Using the mixed methods design also helped the researcher to establish the strength to which a given factor may be important to understanding the question of university education and skills development for graduate employability in Zambia. More so, the researcher was of the view that the qualitative and quantitative approaches could be utilised together to build on their complementary weaknesses and strengths (Shanon-Baker, 2016:325). In that respect, the strength of one approach made up for the weaknesses of the other and thereby promoting corroboration in the findings (Santos *et al.*, 2017:4; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018:12).

4.4.2 The Sequence of Data Collection

The second reason for the adoption of the convergent parallel mixed methods design is that the design allows for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data sets at the same time. As both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same point in time, this reduces the time and financial costs associated with the data collection process (Bryman, 2008:629, 633; De Vos *et al.,* 2014:181, 342). This design

allowed the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data concurrently but separately, analyse, compare and combine them at the interpretation stage (Creswell, 2014:219).

The goal of the convergence design in using the parallel phases in data collection and analysis is to ensure a holistic approach to the research problem from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Ponce & Pagàn-Maldonado, 2015:119). Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilised to ensure completeness (Bryman, 2008:637) in the collection and analysis of data. This was key to adequately answer different research questions on higher education skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (Bryman, 2008:633; Creswell, Plano Clark, & Garrett, 2008:68). In addition, the use of the mixed methods approach helped the researcher to develop a thorough picture of the problem and adequately answer the research questions regarding the repositioning of university education in Zambia to produce graduates with employability attributes.

4.4.3 The Weight of Qualitative and Quantitative Data in the study

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in equal weighting (Creswell, 2014:18). The data were collected using self-administered questionnaires (quantitative) and interview guides (qualitative) and the data collected were used to answer the various research questions in the study. The quantitative data helped the researcher to establish the extent to which universities were working towards producing graduates with skills demanded by the labour market. The qualitative data, on the other hand, brought out detailed views on how various stakeholders viewed the relevance of university education to the labour industry and how universities were working with higher education agencies and the labour and service industries in Zambia to promote skills development and graduate employability. However, priority was given to qualitative data, as the study was exploratory in nature.

Over and above, the justification for the use of the convergence parallel design in a mixed methods study was its allowance to compare and contrast the results or findings of the study to get a thorough understanding of a given problem before arriving at any conclusions (Creswell, 2014:15).

4.4.4 Use of Collective Case Study and Cross-Sectional Survey within the Concurrent Parallel Mixed Methods Design

Within the concurrent mixed methods design, the researcher used a collective case study and cross-sectional survey designs in the study. The rationale for the use of the collective case study and cross-sectional survey design within the concurrent parallel mixed methods design was informed by the fact that the study involved the exploration of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The concurrent parallel mixed methods design thus provides for the use of various strategies and approaches in understanding a given research problem. Therefore, the study employed both the case study and cross-sectional survey designs as a means of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data.

The case study strategy helped the researcher to collect qualitative data through interviews, detailed information from the views and experiences of various individuals such as lecturers and administrators in universities, employers or their representatives, and officials from the labour unions, government departments, and quasi-government institutions regarding skills development in social science degree programmes and graduate employability in Zambia. The cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect quantitative data using the questionnaires as discussed in the subsequent sections. In this pragmatic study, the quantitative data were collected through surveys from students, academicians, and other participants in the labour industry to answer the research question regarding the extent to which social science degree programmes are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The umbrella research design adopted also spoke to the world view of the researcher as discussed below.

4.5 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Kivunji and Kiyuni (2017:26) define a research paradigm as the world view of the researcher. They contend that it is a philosophical perspective that shows the researcher's way of thinking and how the research should be conducted (Collis & Hussey, 2014:59) and that through this pattern of thinking, the researcher constructs how he or she looks at the research data to be collected.

In sum, it can be said a research paradigm influences the researcher's thinking about data collection, interpretation, and meaning-making. The researcher's worldview, therefore, influences the methods of a study and how data is interpreted and analysed (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:26). It is this worldview that affects the beliefs, thinking, and perspectives of the researcher for a given research topic. Therefore, whether one is a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods researcher, their philosophical grounding is premised on the world view held.

4.5.1 Elements of the Philosophical Paradigms in Research

Every research paradigm is associated with the following philosophical elements of epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology. These are regarded as the underlying basic tenets of any research paradigm because they encompass the beliefs, norms, assumptions, and values inherent in a given paradigm associated with an empirical research undertaking (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:26). Discussed below are the ontological, epistemological, and axiological orientations of research paradigms.

4.5.1.1 Ontological perspective

The ontology of the given worldview is concerned with the nature of the existence or being of something. Definitively, ontology refers to the philosophical supposition taken by a researcher in proving the nature or essentiality of a phenomenon under investigation (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:27). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality philosophically (Jackson, 2013:52) and addresses itself to the question of whether the social phenomenon under study makes sense or not or is real or fake. An ontological perspective thus acts as a guide to the researcher on how the reality should be viewed as to whether it is singular or multiple. It also helps the researcher to take a position as to whether reality inevitably exists independently of the reality of the researcher or not. The ontological position taken by a researcher also affects the methods to be used in a study. This depends on whether reality is perceived to be external and independent of or that which is experienced by the researched in a given context (Jackson, 2013:52). The ideology that reality can either be independent or dependent on the researcher and the research subjects has brought about objectivist and constructivist ontological positions between the positivists and interpretivists respectively.

4.5.1.1.1 Objectivism

Bryman (2008:32) posits that objectivism is an ontological position that postulates that reality is always objective, external and independent of the researcher and the researched. It is associated with the positivists who believe that there is only one reality and that everyone possesses the same sense of reality. As such, social reality can be studied objectively as it exists without interference. In their objective pursuit of reality, positivists believe that personal judgement, opinions and emotions have no place in meaning-making. Their goal thus is to arrive at the objective meaning that people lend to their daily experiences in the most objective of ways (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:309). Objectivists thus are mostly associated with the use of quantitative methods study. Those opposed to this ontological perspective believe in constructivism, as discussed below.

4.5.1.1.2 Constructivism

This is the ontological position of the interpretivists, premised on the philosophical belief that social reality and its meaning can be constructed through the subjective interaction of the researcher and the research participants to understand a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2014:8). This concerns the view that individuals within a given social setting will continually seek to establish a clear understanding of the society in which they exist. To this, they argue that there is no single reality that exists, but that it is constructed by individuals and groups who are active participants in the construction of reality (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:310). Constructivists also believe that a given phenomenon can be investigated, analysed and interpreted in varying ways depending on one's beliefs of what constitutes social reality. In this vein, constructivists believe in the subjectivity of social reality and that it is socially constructed. Most importantly, it is their position that there is no single reality or sense of reality as held by positivists, but rather multiple realities (Collis & Hussey, 2014:47). This implies that each individual has their sense of what constitutes reality, given that constructivists are associated with the qualitative methods of research. They interact with those with experiences regarding a given phenomenon to construct and interpret the subjective knowledge within the social and historical context of a given setting. The intention is to make sense of the world others have built over time (Creswell, 2014:8).

4.5.1.2 Epistemological perspective

Epistemology embodies an aspect of the research paradigm which helps us to understand and describe how we come to acquire knowledge and establish that which we know is the truth (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:27). Epistemology is concerned with what is acceptable as valid knowledge (Collis & Hussey, 2014: 47) or acceptable knowledge in a given discipline (Bryman, 2008:30). In the context of this study, it is about what counts as true knowledge and it can be acquired (Jackson, 2013:53). As theory is concerned with how we come to acquire true knowledge, the main epistemological question is that of whether similar procedures, principles, and ethos should be applied in studying the social world just as the natural sciences. In trying to figure out what constitutes true knowledge and how it can be acquired, researchers are helped to ask themselves questions regarding the nature of true knowledge of reality. In the pursuit of the truth, epistemology helps the researcher to establish whether the knowledge being investigated can actually be acquired or personally experienced.

According to Kivunji and Kiyuni (2017:27), the researcher's epistemological orientation can guide them to determine whether the knowledge being pursued are mere beliefs or factual. This is accomplished by researchers asking themselves what counts as knowledge. In so doing, the researcher must be able to identify the nature of the knowledge they are to pursue by looking at its sources. Kivunji and Kiyuni (2017:27) contend that the sources of true knowledge may stem from intuitive knowledge, logical knowledge, authoritative knowledge, and empirical knowledge. It is thus the responsibility of the researcher(s) to establish the source of the knowledge they are to pursue. For instance, the knowledge which is based on one's faith, intuition and beliefs is classified as intuitive knowledge. Logical knowledge is that which is derived from reasoning. Authoritative knowledge is the knowledge that is based on data collected from authorities in a field of study, written books, and leaders in organisations (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:27). Lastly, the knowledge that is derived from experiences and demonstrable facts and objectives is regarded as empirical knowledge. As such one's epistemological stance is likely to be influenced by the nature of the knowledge that they may want to pursue by looking at its sources. Such an understanding is generally reached when the researcher decides to take either a positivist or interpretivist paradigmatic perspective, as discussed below.

4.5.1.2.1 Positivism

Positivism is a philosophical underpinning that is premised on the thinking that reality is independent of the researcher (Collis & Hussey, 2014:44). This philosophical perspective claims that the knowledge derived through empirical research can easily be scientifically verified. To the positivists, it is only the phenomenon that is observable to the human senses which can be validated as knowledge (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2014:6). The positivists, therefore, believe that social phenomena can be observed objectively and as such, they are associated with the quantitative methods of research analysis where they use statistical means of analysing data. The positivists thus believe in objective knowledge from which they can draw generalisations as well as abstractions.

From the epistemological point of view, therefore, nothing counts as valid knowledge to the positivists than that which can be observed and measured. In this respect, the researcher can objectively measure the knowledge without any direct interaction with the phenomena under investigation (Collis & Hussey, 2014:47).

4.5.1.2.2 Interpretivism

This is a philosophical perspective that arose as an alternative to the traditionally held positivistic approach. Unlike the positivism orientation in which knowledge has to be measured objectively, interpretivism is concerned with the understanding of social reality in a subjective way. The interpretivists thus are concerned with the study of social phenomena, which is regarded as any observed or apparent occurrence or facts (Collis & Hussey, 2014:44). Interpretivism, therefore, is about the understanding that social reality is subjective and inseparable from individuals and can exist in many ways. This position implies that researchers are supposed to be actively involved in the phenomenon under investigation to gain insight into social reality. It is also held that interpretivism is associated with inductive reasoning to provide an interpretive understanding of the social phenomenon in the precincts of the given context. Derived from the word, ‘Hermeneutics’, interpretivism stresses the emphatic comprehension and explanation of human behaviour within a natural context as opposed to those forces which are perceived to act on it (Bryman, 2008:30; Collis & Hussey, 2014:44).

In terms of the epistemological perspective, the interpretivists take it that knowledge can be measured and investigated through the direct interaction between the researcher and the researched. They contend that there must be no distance in terms of the interaction between the researcher and the subjects of inquiry. They are thus pioneers and advocates of participative inquiry in knowledge construction from multiple perspectives (Collis & Hussey, 2014:47). It is also the view of the interpretivists that it is that which one believes in which counts as knowledge and fact and not otherwise.

Given the above, the epistemological position of this study is that knowledge is that which is authoritative and empirical at the same time. As such, the data to construct true knowledge and reality on the extent to which social science degree programmes are effective in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia was derived from the authoritative and empirical sources of knowledge only.

From the foregoing, it can be said that the ontological perspective relates to our beliefs about how we should view social reality. The epistemological perspective, on the other hand, relates to the rules and procedures by which we believe reality should be known. A clear understanding of these philosophical positions shaped the methods and approaches adopted by the researcher in the study of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The subsequent section considers the conceptual understanding of axiology in research.

4.5.1.3 Axiological perspective

Although not as pronounced as ontology and epistemology, axiology is a philosophical element of research paradigms that are concerned with the role of values in research (Collis & Hussey, 2014:48). Kivunji and Kiyuni (2017:28) explain that axiology takes into consideration all ethical aspects which must be observed in the research process. This entails that axiology, as a philosophical approach, is concerned with bringing out the values and ethics embodied by the researcher in carrying out the research process. It is about determining what acceptable behaviour is or is not in the research process.

Regarding ethics, axiology is concerned with ensuring that research is carried out following all ethical considerations such as respect for the privacy of research participants and confidentiality with which the collected information is treated (Kivunji & Kiyuni, 2017:28). It is also about the accuracy and precision with which the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study are done without any bias. In short, ethical issues must be addressed at all stages of the research process from inception to the point of dissemination of research findings.

Axiology is also concerned with the value position of the researcher at the point of conducting the research. The value position, however, depends on whether the researcher takes the positivistic or interpretivistic view of research. According to Collis and Hussey (2014:48), unlike interpretivists who are value-laden, positivists believe that the process of research should be value-free. The latter, therefore believe that the subject of the investigation must be regarded as an object which must be independent and detached from the researcher. To positivists, the values held by the researcher should not in any way affect the objects they study. This, however, is in sharp contrast to the interpretivists who believe that the values held by the researcher should influence them to determine what they recognise as facts as well as the interpretations of what may be deduced from phenomena under investigation (Collis & Hussey, 2014:48). Unlike the positivists, an interpretivist is thus directly involved in the research process with that which is being investigated.

All in all, axiology is about the position held by the researcher regarding the influence of the values on what is investigated. In this study, the researcher took a neutral stance regarding the value-position since a mixed methods research design was adopted.

4.5.2 Research Paradigms Associated with Mixed Methods Research

According to Shanon-Baker (2016:322-329), four research paradigms are often associated with mixed methods designs. These include the Dialectic, Transformative-Emancipatory, Critical Realism and Pragmatic perspectives, as discussed below.

4.5.2.1 The dialectic perspective

This is a research perspective in mixed methods design that lends itself to the use of at least two paradigms in a single study. A dialectic approach is a research approach

that accommodates the divergences in the research data. The proponents of this perspective argue for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data that promotes dialogue between the qualitative and quantitative research methods (Shanon-Baker (2016:328). This approach, therefore, is handy for a researcher whose goal is to address the tension, paradoxes, and discordances that may arise from the inferences of a cross dialogue study. As such, when attempting to employ paradigms with conflicting views in a study, the dialectical paradigm could be the alternative approach to use in research.

4.5.2.2 The transformative-emancipatory perspective

The transformative-emancipatory approach is another paradigm perspective that can be used in mixed methods research focusing on the disadvantaged and minority groups in society. As its name suggests, the goals of undertaking a transformative and emancipatory study are to transform the situations of the identified groups for the better. Shanon-Baker (2016:327) contend that the research paradigm can help the researcher to bring out a voice to those in power and privilege to draw attention to the marginalised groupings in society such as the disabled and other minority communities. The transformative emancipatory paradigm thus is a more practical approach to better the lives of those who are perceived to be disadvantaged in society. However, this approach can only be used effectively if the researcher is well acquainted with the socio-cultural and historical perspectives of a given community or grouping.

4.5.2.3 The critical realism perspective

This is another research paradigm approach that can be employed in a mixed methods study. This paradigm is premised on the thinking that qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used compatibly to overcome the weaknesses inherent in the independent use of each one of them (Shanon-Baker, 2016:330). Critical realists believe that reality can exist independently of one's perspective. This is albeit the belief that reality is constructed through the perspectives and viewpoints of individuals (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:310). Unlike those who take the positivism or interpretivism stance only, critical realists believe in the existence of multiple realities that are beyond human reach. Consequently, even if their ultimate goal is to clearly understand and

verify what constitutes reality, critical realists take it that at all times reality can only be partially represented.

Unlike the dialectic paradigm which thrives on the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, critical realism survives on the compatibility of the extremes of qualitative and quantitative research methods in establishing causal relationships to appreciate the phenomenon under investigation. As such, critical realism can be used as a paradigm in a mixed methods study to appreciate the relationships of whatever is being studied, be it people, events, or ideas. It is thus a paradigm that can easily be employed in an evaluation study to establish the causal inferences in the components of the phenomenon under investigation. The subsequent section discusses the pragmatic research paradigm, which was the paradigm adopted for the study.

4.5.2.4 The pragmatic philosophical paradigm

Of the four paradigms associated with mixed methods research (Shanon-Baker (2016:330), the study adopted the pragmatic philosophical paradigm. The pragmatic paradigm is based on the assumption that research should be oriented towards finding practical solutions to real-world problems and not simply by looking at the nature of knowledge (Shanon-Baker, 2016:323). This philosophical orientation is argued to be outcome-oriented and interested in determining the meaning of things. Its emphasis is on the outcome or product of the research. It is premised on the thinking that to create practical solutions to societal problems, there should be communication and shared meaning-making. The focus of this paradigm, therefore, is on what works for research questions of the topic being investigated to be answered and not necessarily looking at what is true or real in research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009:7). Shanon-Baker (2016:322) further add that “Pragmatism is based on the belief that theories can be both contextual and generalizable by analysing them for transferability in another situation”.

4.5.2.5 The rationale for the use of the pragmatic philosophical paradigm

There are many reasons to justify the use of a pragmatic philosophical paradigm in this study. The first one being is that the current study is a mixed methods research. Therefore, pragmatism as a philosophical orientation in mixed methods research could

be used to maintain both the subjectivity of the researcher's reflections and the objectivity in data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014:10-11).

This perspective helped the researcher to utilise the pragmatic paradigm to thoroughly investigate the extent to which universities in Zambia are striving to provide education and training programmes in line with the demands of the labour industry to promote graduate employability. Morgan (2007:74) further argued that the pragmatic paradigm in mixed methods research promotes some form of complementarity in the way qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used to overcome the weaknesses and strengths inherent in each. Pragmatism thus allows the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches within the same study and does not subscribe to the notion of incompatibility in the use of such approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:21).

From the foregoing, it is worth noting that the use of the pragmatic philosophical paradigm provided leeway for the researcher to employ the convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The design allowed for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data at the same time in the research process. This study, therefore, was a rendition of a cross-sectional mixed methods design (Zheng, 2015:69). Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and a cross-sectional survey employing questionnaires were the methods employed in the study to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, as discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter. The next section looks at the population and study sample.

4.6 GENERAL POPULATION, TARGET POPULATION AND ACCESSIBLE POPULATION

As defined in Chapter 1, a general population is a set of elements upon which a study focuses (Bless *et al.,* 2013:165). Bryman (2008:697) defines the general population as the universe of units from which a sample is selected. Further, Welman *et al.* (2011:52) take the general population to mean a unit of analysis upon which a researcher desires to make specific conclusions. For this study, the general population included all stakeholders concerned with higher education outcomes in the country.

The target population, on the other hand, refers to a population that meets a particular criterion that is specified for a particular investigation (Alvi, 2016:10). For this study, the target population meant a group of people or stakeholders from different

institutions and organisations with interest, knowledge, and potential to contribute useful information to build new knowledge on university skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. These included officials from the Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education Authority, Ministry of Labour, Public and Private Universities in Zambia, Public and Private Industries and Business Owners or their representatives, Zambia Congress of Trade Union, Administrators and Academics in Universities and Graduating Students from universities in Zambia.

From this target population, a representative accessible population was selected to take part in the study.

4.6.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria designated the means that the researcher used to determine which members of the target population were going to be included or not included in the study sample and the reasons thereof. From these elements of the target population, those who were accessible constituted the accessible population from which the study sample was drawn. The inclusion criteria for the different study participants varied depending on their role in graduate skills development and employability discourse in Zambia. For example, the Ministry of Higher Education was included in the study because it provides policy direction for the higher education sector in Zambia. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security was entrusted with the responsibility of promoting labour productivity and the best labour practices in Zambia.

Public and private universities were included in the study in that they offered undergraduate social science degree programmes on a full-time basis and that administrators, lecturers, and students participating in the said study programmes were accessible and willingly took part in the study. The employers or representatives of employers were selected to participate in the study on the premise that they were potential employers of university graduates with a degree qualification in social sciences.

The Zambia Federation of Employers and the Zambia Congress of Trade Union were selected to be part of the study on the basis that they represent the interests of the employers and employees respectively in the country. It was also taken that the two

institutions understood better what it took for a graduate to be employed, hence their participation in the study.

Apart from being accessible at the time of data collection, the modes of participation by the various stakeholders in the study varied. The sampling procedures used for inclusion in the final study sample also differed as discussed below.

4.6.2 Study Sample

A study sample is a subset of the entire study population that a researcher gets to investigate (Bless *et al.,* 2013:162). It is thus a group of a relatively smaller number of people who will be selected from the targeted population for investigation purposes only (Alvi, 2016:10). The total sample size used in this study was 162 participants. Of these, eight were key informants to the study. These key informants were officials from government ministries and agencies, and other institutions representing the labour industry. The key informants were selected from different institutions as follows: Ministry of Higher Education (01), Higher Education Authority (01), Ministry of Labour and Social Security (01), Zambia Federation of Employers (01), Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (01) and four (05) administrators or their representatives from selected public and private universities. These participants took part in the study through semi-structured interviews.

Additionally, 22 participants were employers or their representatives either in the quasi-government or private labour market industry or service sector. The employers selected in this study referred to government departments, quasi-government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and other local and international business organisations and companies which offered internship programmes to university students and were likely to employ graduates with the qualification in social sciences. These participants completed a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire to bring out ways through which their interaction with the universities contributes towards the provision of education and training programmes attuned to the skill needs of the labour sector in the country. A further 12 academics teaching in the programmes under consideration from selected public and private universities participated in the study. A self-administered semi-structured questionnaire (Bless *et al.,* 2013:194) was used as a principal tool for the collection of data from the academics

on their perceptions regarding the relevance of the undergraduate degree programmes offered in the various departments.

Lastly, a total of 120 students in their final year of study from selected universities participated in the study by completing a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire to offer their views and experiences regarding the relevance of their programmes of study to the industry. The students were taken to mean undergraduate full-time students taking one of the selected degree programmes in their final year of study at one of the selected universities.

The justification for arriving at a representative sample of 120 graduating students was based on the argument that the number of selected participants was close to 30% of the over 600 students estimated to be enrolled in the selected programmes of study (Welman *et al.,* 2011:71). The student sample of 120 thus provided a 95 percent chance of being distributed in a similar way as the study population (Bless *et al.,* 2013:174). The total sample size for the study, therefore, was 162, as shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Study sample size and composition

SN	Participants	Number
1	Key Informants	8
2	Employers or their Representatives	22
3	Academics	12
4	Graduating Students	120
	Total Sample Size (N)	**162**

4.7 RESEARCH METHODS

As defined in Chapter 1, research methods refer to the techniques employed in the collection and analysis of data to deduce evidence from the theorised knowledge to be constructed by the research undertaken (Jackson, 2013:55). They are approaches and techniques used in the collection and analysis of data and interpretation of the research findings. The research methods for the study thus included the description of the sampling techniques and procedures and the methods and processes employed

in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and validation of the findings. This also included the ethical considerations as well as the delimitations of the study as discussed below.

4.7.1 Sampling

Sampling is a technique or process through which a representative sample is selected from a given population (Bless *et al.,* 2013: 395). There are two classes of sampling techniques namely, the probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling techniques refer to random sampling techniques in which each element of the population has equal chances of being selected to the sample (Patten & Newhart, 2018:89), while the non-probability sampling techniques refer to those sampling techniques in which the probability of an element being selected to be part of the sample is not known or guaranteed.

4.7.1.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which a researcher relying on their ingenuity and judgement, deliberately selects some elements or people to be part of the sample (Strydom, 2014:232). Such elements or people are selected on the premise that they were representative of the relevant population to which the findings may be generalised. Purposive sampling was used to select the key informants to the study, as discussed below.

4.7.1.1.2 Sampling Procedure

The key informants were selected purposively because they were perceived to be knowledgeable about the topic at hand by the researcher (Welman *et al.,* 2011:69). More so, they could not be selected randomly owing to the unavailability of a complete sampling frame to warrant any form of probability selection from the study population (Welman *et al.,* 2011:67).

Five (5) universities were selected purposively to be part of the study. In the year 2019 Zambia had a total of 61 registered universities. Six were public universities and the rest were privately run for profit. Both public and private universities were selected to participate in the study. Most private universities offered programmes under the distance mode of study. Therefore, only five universities were purposively selected to

be part of the study on the premise that they offered undergraduate social science degree programmes on a full-time delivery mode. This was to ensure easy accessibility to academics and students participating in the selected programme of study at each of the five universities. Of the five universities, there were two public and three private universities that had participated in the study. The selection ratio was justified to obtain a balanced perspective of how social science degree programmes promote graduate employability in both public and private universities.

The study was also limited to five universities due to several reasons. The first reason was that access to university institutions was restricted at the time of data collection due to the outbreak of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) between March 2020 and September 2020 in Zambia. Universities were closed and access to both students and lecturers was restricted due to the closure of all learning institutions in the country. Secondly, the financial and time constraints made it difficult for the researcher to collect data from more than five universities (Bryman, 2008:198). From each of the five universities, one school of study offering programmes in Humanities and Social Sciences was purposively selected to be part of the study because the research focused on programmes in humanities and social sciences and teacher education and not Medicine, Mining, Engineering, and other STEM-related programmes

Apart from selecting universities and their schools using the non-probability purposive sampling technique, 22 employers were also purposively selected to be part of the study sample. Employers or their representatives from both government institutions and private organisations or enterprises on the labour market were selected purposively due to the unavailability of a complete sampling frame from which they could be selected randomly. The 22 employers were purposively selected by the researcher to take part in the study owing to their capacity to employ graduates from universities and by implication, having adequate knowledge regarding skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

4.7.1.2 Simple random sampling technique

Simple random sampling is a probability sampling technique, which provides equal opportunities for members of the population to be selected in the sample (Bless *et al.,*

2013:167). The lottery techniques are the most common form of selection for simple random sampling, as discussed below.

4.7.1.2.1 Sampling Procedure

After five schools had been selected, one programme was randomly selected from each of the schools at a given university. This was done by using the simple random sampling technique (Welman *et al.,* 2011:59; Bless *et al.,* 2013:167). A compilation list of names of all programmes of study in each of the selected schools was used as a sampling frame for programme selection in the study. The name of each undergraduate programme of study for the given school on the list of programmes was written on separate pieces of paper and folded. The folded small pieces of papers bearing names of programmes were thoroughly shaken in a container and one piece of paper and picked from it without looking on (Patten & Newhart, 2018:89). The selected piece of paper with a programme name helped the researcher to randomly select the given programme of study of the selected school at each university. This process was repeated at the other four schools to come up with the five programmes to consider in the study. The fact that four programmes were randomly selected in five universities, means that at two of the participating universities, a similar programme was selected.

The study focused on social science degree programmes in Humanities and Social Sciences. This is because graduates from such programmes were perceived to be the majority and struggled the most in securing employment after graduation (United Nations Development Programme, 2016:84; Ministry of General Education, 2017:58) compared to those from other STEM-related programmes such as medicine. The selected Social Science degree programmes helped the researcher to establish the sampling frames (Bless *et al.,* 2013:165) upon which graduating students undertaking the selected programmes were sampled to participate in the study from the selected schools.

Since each of the four selected programmes of the study was housed in a respective department, the departments were used to select the lecturers and students to participate in the study. At each university, a certain number of lecturers was purposively selected to participate in the study because they were teaching a course or two in the given programme of study. These lecturers were either employed at the

university on a full-time or part-time basis. The study targeted not less than 12 lecturers in total from the four programmes under consideration.

4.7.1.3 Systematic simple random sampling

Systematic sampling is a probability sampling technique in which each element of the population is provided with an equal opportunity of being included in the sample at equal intervals beginning with a randomly selected element from the given sampling frame (Bless *et al.,* 2013:167). Systematic simple random sampling, therefore, was used to select students from universities who participated in the study. Before their selection, the researcher randomly chose one non-teacher Education Humanities and Social Science undergraduate degree programme of study from each of the four schools of the selected universities in Zambia.

4.7.1.3.1 Sampling Procedure

Lastly, 120 graduating students from the four selected programmes were randomly selected to participate in the study from an estimated total population of 600 final year students expected to graduate from their respective programmes of study. At each university, the list of final year students registered in a given programme was compiled to act as a sampling frame upon which the random selection of student participants was based. A systematic simple random sampling technique was used to select students to participate in the study at each university. The sampling technique was used to select students beginning with the first name of the student on the list, regardless of whether one was a male or female student. The sampling interval of 5 ($\frac{Population\ Size}{Size\ of\ Sample} = \frac{600}{120}$) meant that every fifth name on the programme list in each of the four selected departmental programmes at the five universities was to be selected to be part of the study (Bless *et al.,* 2013:167). With an estimated student population of 600 from the selected programmes of study, 120 students from the five universities were randomly selected to participate in the study by completing a self-administered structured questionnaire. After the selection of 120 students, the total number of the study sample was 162 participants. The next section describes the methods, instruments, and techniques employed in the data collection process.

4.7.2 Data Collection Instruments and Methods

In a mixed-methods study, data collection involves the collection of data using qualitative and quantitative approaches. In such a study, qualitative and quantitative data may be collected from the same participants of the given sample. This, it is argued, makes data collection easier. However, Creswell (2014:219) contended that qualitative and quantitative data can be collected from the different participants in the sample. This is because the sample for the qualitative part of the study is usually smaller than the quantitative one and this was the case in this study. The rationale for doing so was to compare the different viewpoints to enrich our understanding of skills development in social science degree programmes and graduate employability in Zambia from various perspectives (McBride *et al.,* 2018:12). The quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the different study participants as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Data collection methods and instruments

SN	Participants	Data Collection Method
1	Key Informants	Semi-structured interviews
2	Employers or their Representatives	Self-administered semi-structured questionnaire
3	Lecturers	Self-administered semi-structured questionnaire
4	Graduating Students	Self-administered semi-structured questionnaire
5		Document analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data thus played a complementary role in the study. The qualitative data helped the researcher to elicit the views and experiences from academics, employers, government, and labour union representatives on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes offered in universities in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. On the other hand, quantitative data were collected from students, academics, and representatives of employers to help the researcher establish the relationships and trends of the various factors affecting skills development and graduate employability in social science degree programmes in Zambia.

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using the semi-structured interviews and self-administered semi-structured questionnaires as instruments of data collection respectively. Important primary and secondary qualitative data were also collected through document analysis, as described below.

4.7.2.1 Interviewing as a method of data collection

An interview is a method of data collection in which the researcher involves him or herself in direct contact with the participant who is asked to provide answers to the questions which relate to the research problem under investigation (Bless et al., 2013:193; 392). As a tool of qualitative data collection, interviews can be used by the researcher to elicit narratives from the respondent's perceptions about a given phenomenon in great depth (Ashengeeti, 2014:39). Interviews, therefore, are an important method of data collection as they can aid the exploration of meaning construction and negotiation in an uncontrolled setting. Interviews can thus be used to explore constructs of the worlds around them. An interview is a good data collection instrument in that it allows for the collection of verbal and non-verbal expressions which adds to the validity or invalidity of the collected information (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:349).

There are different types of interviews and include unstructured interviews, structured interviews and semi-structured interviews.

4.7.2.1.1 Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews, also known as in-depth interviews, are interviews in which the researcher, as an interviewer, and interviewee engage in a one-on-one question and answers interview in which a wide range of questions can be asked and answered in no particular order or length of time (Welman *et al.,* 2011:166). There is no list of predetermined questions which is followed in this interview. Even if the interviewee is given the freedom to talk about anything, the interviewer always remains mindful to ask questions that relate to the topic of interest. The respondent is given the freedom to give as much information as possible regarding their experiences, perceptions, and knowledge on the topic under discussion. The goal of this type of interview is to explore as much information as possible on a given topic.

4.7.2.1.2 Structured interviews

This is an interview in which the researcher conducts an interviewee by asking questions by strictly following well-prepared questions in a particular order with no chance of deviating from it (Welman *et al.,* 2011:165). Structured interviews follow an interview guide with pre-coded answers. Such a structured interview guide is also known as a questionnaire. The goal of the structured interview guide is to allow the researcher to collect specific information on a given topic. When used as a method of data collection, the structured interview guide is used among respondents with low literacy levels. This method of data collection is time-consuming in that the interviewer has to read the questions to the interviewee and complete the questionnaire by indicating the responses (Delport & Roestenburg, 2014:186).

4.7.2.1.3 Semi-structured interview as a method of data collection

A semi-structured interview is a one-on-one method of data collection in which the interviewer and the interview engage in a question and answer session that is organised to focus on one area of particular interest but with an allowance of flexibility in the scope of questioning to get as much information as possible (Greef, 2014:348). Though this interview type relies on the use of an interview guide with a predetermined order of questions, the interview has leeway to press for more complete answers from the interview. When a semi-structured interview is used as a method of data collection, a semi-structured interview guide is used as a data collection instrument.

4.7.2.1.4 Semi-structured interview guide as a data collection instrument

The study adopted the use of semi-structured interview guides as a data collection instrument to collect data from key informants on the problem of skills development and graduate employability in social science university programmes (Bryman, 2008:470). These participants included officials from government ministries and agencies, university administrators (Deans or Heads of Departments, representatives of the Zambia Federation of Employers, and the Zambia National Congress of Trade Unions.

Being a less structured data collection instrument, the semi-structured interview guide enabled the researcher to collect thorough and clear answers to the research questions about skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with respect

to social sciences. The key informants thus were given latitude to give their narratives based on their experiences and acquired knowledge on the topic of study. The interviews, therefore, helped the researcher to get deep insight from the interviewee's perspective to answer research questions in a more purposive way (Ashengeeti, 2014:43).

4.7.2.1.5 Administration of the semi-structured interview guide

A total number of six (6) semi-structured interview guides were prepared with different questions under different themes representing the research questions of the study (*cf.* Appendices E-J). These interview guides had some similarities and differences depending on the information that was collected from each of the eight (8) key informants in the study. The interview guide entitled "Dean of School or Head of Department in a University" was used to interview the Dean of a school or Heads of Department in a school at each of the universities where a social science degree programme was part of the study. Five more semi-structured interview guides were prepared to collect data through interviews from one substantive or representative official from the: Ministry of Higher Education; Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Higher Education Authority; Zambia Federation of Employers and Zambia Congress of Trade Unions.

4.7.2.1.6 The quality of the interview process

To ensure the validity of responses collected through interviews, the researcher ensured that the interviewees were asked questions that were based on the research. Each of the interviewees was not probed to give responses based on the researcher's preconceived thinking. Questions were asked as clearly as they were printed to avoid misperceptions and misunderstandings on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee respectively (Ashengeeti, 2014:43). To promote reliability in the interview, the researcher employed several aspects. The researcher avoided asking leading questions. Notes were also taken in addition to the voice recorder. Towards the end of each interview, the interviewee was asked to give a summary and clarification on some of the pertinent points raised during the interview process (Creswell, 2009:153).

From the ethical point of view, all participants in the interview were asked for personal consent to take part in the interview. The researcher clearly explained to them the

purpose of the study and the data which were collected from them through interviews. The researcher also ensured not to press the interviewees to divulge personal and sensitive information they were not comfortable sharing. To the extent that interviewees disclosed much information, the researcher promised to adhere to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity to protect their identity.

4.7.2.2 Questionnaire as a method of data collection

A questionnaire is defined as a document with different types of questions and statements meant to solicit information in a prescribed way for possible analysis (Delport & Roestenburg, 2014:186). The ultimate goal of using a questionnaire in a study is to collect facts and opinions from different people who are well-acquainted with a particular topic regarding a given phenomenon. A questionnaire is mostly used to collect quantitative data. There are different types of questionnaires. Such include the mailed questionnaire, telephone questionnaire; electronic questionnaire, and self-administered questionnaire.

The current study adopted a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire. This is a questionnaire that is physically handed to the respondents to complete in their own time but within a given time frame (Delport & Roestenburg, 2014:186).

4.7.2.2.1 Design of questions in the semi-structured questionnaires

There were three (3) different questionnaires that were used to collect quantitative and some qualitative data from the participants in the study (*cf*. Appendices M-O). These included the questionnaire for “Students”, “Lecturers” and “Employers or their Representatives”. Each of the three questionnaires was designed to accommodate a variety of questions and statements. Such included the close-ended questions, open-ended questions, ordinal questions, scaled questions, statement and follow-up questions (Delport & Roestenburg, 2014:199-201). While most questions were close-ended, a few open-ended questions were included in each of the questionnaires to get views to complement the objective responses from respondents. The rationale for the use of a variety of questions in the semi-structured questionnaire was to facilitate the collection of broad and balanced views and perceptions regarding the topic of study from the respondents.

4.7.2.2.2 Question composition of the student questionnaire

The student questionnaire consisted of four sections: **A, B, C,** and **D.** The overall objective of the student questionnaire was to collect perceptions and views of students in their final year of a social science programme of study regarding their levels of satisfaction with the acquisition of skills and the relevance of the programme of study to the needs of the labour market.

Section A of the questionnaire collected data on the demographic information of the student participants. Such data included gender, age, nationality, university attended, and programme of study details. In **Section B,** questions were designed to collect data on the social science relevance of the degree programme to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia. Some open-ended questions were used to help students bring out their perceived employment opportunities for taking that particular programme as well as their level of confidence in being work-ready. Additionally, statements, based on a Five-Point Likert scale, were used to determine each student's level of satisfaction about the competencies and attributes for work readiness associated with their degree programme of study.

Section C of the questionnaire had questions designed to collect data on the effectiveness of the work placements and internship programmes students were exposed to during the programme of study. The idea was to establish the extent to which the work placements and internship programmes helped students acquire employability skills in addition to what they were taught in class.

Section D was the last section of the student questionnaire. The questions in this section sought information from students, based on their experiences, some mechanisms which the university and other stakeholders can put in place to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs of the Zambian labour market.

4.7.2.2.3 Questions in the questionnaire for employer or representative

This was the second self-administered semi-structured questionnaire that had been designed for employers or their representatives. The word employer catered to employing government departments and parastatals, private organisations and corporate entities in Zambia. The objective of this questionnaire was to collect data,

from those who are in the business of employing others in the labour sector, on the relevance of the selected social science degree programmes offered by universities to the skill needs of the labour market.

The questionnaire had five Sections: **A, B, C, D,** and **E**. In **Section A**, the questionnaire collected background information about the employer's organisation. **Section B** captured information on the employer's perspectives regarding the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs of the labour market. Participants were asked to rank statements, using a 5-Point Likert scale, on the importance of specific skills perceived to be critical for a graduate of in a social science degree programme to possess if they are to become employable.

Section C had questions that were meant to collect data to determine the relevance of the workplace and internship programmes in promoting skills acquisition amongst graduating students who undergo through the attachments. The questions were specifically designed for employing organisations in the labour sector to assess the student internship programmes from the employer's perspective. In **Section D**, the questionnaire collected information on the benefits and challenges associated with the companies partnering with universities to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia.

Lastly, the questions in **Section E** sought to elicit views from the employers or their representatives on the mechanisms that could be put in place by universities and the labour industry to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the labour market.

4.7.2.2.4 Questions in the questionnaire for lecturers

This was the third and last questionnaire that was used to collect information on the relevance of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia from the lecturers who participated in the teaching of the social science degree programmes from the selected universities. Open – and close-ended questions were used in this question.

The questionnaire comprised five sections: A, B, C, D, and E. **Section A** had objective questions that sought background information of each participant Lecturer. **Section B**

had questions on the relevance of the social science degree programmes to the skills needs on the job market in Zambia. **Section C** collected information on the effectiveness of the work placements and internship practices in promoting employability skills amongst students pursuing a social science degree programme at selected universities in Zambia. **Section D** of the lecturer questionnaire sought views from lecturers on the challenges and benefits their universities were facing in partnering with the labour industry stakeholders in promoting market-driven social science degree programmes in the country. Lastly, lecturers were asked in **Section E** about the mechanisms which could be put in place to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills that are needed in the labour market in Zambia.

4.7.2.2.5 Administration of the self-administered semi-structured questionnaires

The self-administered semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data from employers or their representatives, university academics, and final year students in the selected programmes of study. Of the three, questionnaires, the student questionnaire was administered first followed by one for lecturers and finally, the questionnaire for employers was the last to be administered.

4.7.2.3 Document analysis

Document analysis refers to the systematic procedure for reviewing printed or electronic documents (Bowen, 2009:28). Document analysis, also known as document review, was used to triangulate the methods of collecting qualitative data in the study (Strydom & Delport, 2014:377). Key policy and other relevant documents were analysed to complement qualitative data which were collected via interviews. These documents included the socials science degree programme documents, policy documents, and other important primary and secondary data documents that enriched the study.

4.7.3 Data Collection Procedure and Processes

Before data collection, the research protocols were followed and permission was sought in advance from the authorities of different institutions and individuals who took part in the study. Before interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data, the questions in the interview guides were subjected to a thorough review by the

researcher. This process helped the researcher to revise, subtract, and add new interview questions. By reviewing and revising the questionnaires and interview guides, the researcher collected data that helped in meeting the objectives of the study on the relevance of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

The questionnaires for students and lecturers were subjected to a pre-test pilot study before their utilisation in the actual data collection exercise (Welman *et al.,* 2011:148). The questionnaires were piloted with members of the target population who were not part of the actual study but possessed characteristics representative of the members of the actual study sample. This helped the researcher to refine the questions in the questionnaire and ensure that they measured that which they are intended to measure, in line with the objectives of the study. It should also be noted that the questionnaire for the employer was not subjected to a pilot study, but was thoroughly reviewed to eliminate all bias and ambiguities. Piloting of the questionnaire was not undertaken as the researcher was unable to find volunteers to participate. The use of the questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis promoted the triangulation of the findings, which enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings.

Once the data has been collected it has to be analysed and interpreted. The process of data analysis is described first followed by data interpretation in the next section.

4.7.4 Data Analysis

As defined in Chapter 2, data analysis is a thorough process of describing what has been found by the researcher from a study. The process of data analysis is dependent on the data type being dealt with. As such in this mixed-methods study, the research employed the use of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods of data to analyse qualitative and quantitative data respectively. In the study, the rationale for the use of the mixed methods analysis emanated from the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, which were analysed concurrently.

In the data analysis process, the researcher was able to quantitate some qualitative non-numeric responses in the questionnaire to promote complementarity in the findings of the study (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003:220). This helped to broaden the focus and scope of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011:4).

It is worth noting that the responses from the self-administered semi-structured questionnaires and the semi-structured interview guides constituted the primary data, while most secondary data emanated from the analysis of the data from the key documents which were analysed in the study. In this study, data integration took place at the interpretation phase after independent but cross-sectional analyses of the qualitative and quantitative data, as discussed below.

4.7.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

According to Miles *et al.* (2014:12), qualitative data analysis is the process that involves data condensation, display, and verification. It encompasses the processes of selection, focusing, simplifying, and abstraction of the data that appear to be written in text. Qualitative data analysis also involves the organisation and compression of non-numerical information in a manner that makes it relatively easy for one to draw conclusions.

The qualitative data of this study were analysed using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool called ATLAS.ti Version 8.0. ATLAS.ti Version 8.0 is a qualitative data analysis software that analyses data by coding for themes. Coding is a process through which a researcher can identify ideas, similarities and differences in the data as revealed by participants during the interview process (Sutton & Austin, 2015:228). The process of coding can either be done manually or electronically. In using ATLAS.ti Version 8.0, coding can be achieved through the process of condensing extensive data into sizeable limits which can easily be analysed by creating various concepts and categories from the given data (Archer, Janse Van Vuuren, and Vander Walt, 2017). This software, therefore, helped the researcher to come up with several codes for the findings of the qualitative data collected through interviews from the key informants and the textual analysis of the reviewed documents to establish relationships between different variables on the problem of the study. Although qualitative data analysis computer software was predominantly used to analyse the qualitative data into findings, the manual efforts of the researcher also contributed significantly to the success of the process.

The process of qualitative data analysis is a complex one, often with various phases and steps. To discover the underlying meanings and patterns of relationships in the qualitative data, which were collected through the one-on-one interviews, a thorough

examination of non-numerical data and other observed phenomena took place. According to Schurink *et al.* (2014: 403-404), three broad categories must be followed in the process of qualitative data analysis. These include data preparation and organizing, data reducing, and the visualisation, representation and display stages. Within each of these broad phases are various steps that a researcher must thoroughly exploit to adequately analyse the qualitative data.

Various stages in the process of qualitative data analysis were taken into consideration. These included planning for data recording; data collection and preliminary analysis; data management, data recording, and writing of memos. Others were data visualization, representation, and display. The most important steps at this stage were data management, data recording, and writing of memos (Schurink *et al.,* 2014:403).

In the process of data management, all interview recordings were transcribed using the ATLAS.ti to create a database for qualitative data analysis. After the audio interviews were transcribed, the interview transcripts were uploaded on ATLAS.ti Version 8.0 to create a database of qualitative data for analysis.

The software was further used to organise, analyse and bring out insights on unstructured text or qualitative data from interviews to make sense of the respondents' views on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. Short memos were thus created which later helped the researcher to create codes for data. The coding process using ATLAS.ti assisted in generating a wide range of categories and codes of data which helped the researcher to identify the meaning units in the data in which repetitive ideas, patterns and narratives began to emerge. It is these patterns or ideas and relationships in the data which led to the identification of the themes in the study which were interpreted and presented in the subsequent sections of this thesis. The process of qualitative data analysis culminated in the transformation of data into findings.

4.7.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis, on the other hand, is a systematic process of applying statistical techniques to the numerical data to describe, illustrate, condense, and evaluate the data. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social

Scientists (SPSS) software to generate descriptive statistics in the form of pie charts, tables and graphs (Bryman, 2008:361). The researcher carried out several statistical tests to compare and test the significance of the findings on different variables (Field, 2013:89) on the relevance of social science degree programmes in promoting employable skills development amongst graduating students in Zambia.

Regarding the process of quantitative data analysis, the researcher ensured that all questionnaires had complete responses and were thoroughly coded before they were entered on the spreadsheet for SPSS. The questionnaires were also subjected to systematic reorganisation, checking, and editing to ensure that they were in the acceptable numerical format to be analysed via SPSS software (Fouché & Bartley, 2014:248). After careful study of the questionnaires, even some non-numerical responses were recoded to become numerical ones. The data sets from all questionnaires were then run in SPSS to generate the descriptive and some correlation statistics to establish the relationship between various variables in the study.

4.7.5 Qualitative and Quantitative Data Interpretation and Integration

In Chapter 1, data interpretation was defined as the process that involves the establishment of the meaning of the information by taking into a closer look at the patterns, explanations, themes, propositions as well as causal flows in the given qualitative or quantitative data (Miles *et al*., 2014:12). The goal of data interpretation is to explain the findings and results of a given study to make meaning and sense out of them. The qualitative and quantitative data in this study were interpreted concurrently. Implying that after analysing them, qualitative and quantitative data were compared and converged together at the interpretation stage. The data were interpreted within the framework of the objectives of the study. During data interpretation, reference was made to other secondary sources of information obtained through document analysis to complement the primary data of the study. Ultimately, the researcher ensured that the thorough process of data interpretation culminated in the presentation of sensible qualitative findings and quantitative results, which were used to answer all research questions of the study on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia.

4.8 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND (QUALITY) TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The section below describes how the aspects of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness were addressed in the study. This being a mixed methods study, validity and reliability were used to evaluate how valid and reliable the quantitative research data were. Trustworthiness, on the other hand, was used to confirm the authenticity and credibility of the qualitative data that was collected.

4.8.1 Reliability

Reliability in research entails the extent to which an observable or empirical measure represents an empirical concept or activity accurately over many repeated observations (Bless *et al.,* 2013:221). Reliability, therefore, is concerned with the consistency of the measures. The study, therefore, ensured that the data collected for the study was reliable. Reliability helped the researcher to ensure that the findings were credible and acceptable to the study beneficiaries (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:148). It helped the researcher to ensure that quantitative data were collected with maximum precision and accuracy, which is cardinal to ensure consistency, stability, and replicability of the findings of the study over time (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:148).

To ensure the reliability of the findings, questions in the questionnaires and interview guides were crafted with the utmost simplicity and accuracy for participants to easily understand them. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were used to capture quantitative data for the study (Zohrabi, 2013:255). The questions, therefore, were adequately prepared both in terms of their quality and quantity, for the researcher to collect the intended data on university education and graduate employability in Zambia. The researcher, therefore, ensured that measurement errors in the research instruments were reduced to the barest minimum by designing them properly and accurately to ensure consistency, stability and replicability of the findings over time (Creswell, 2014:97). Reliability, therefore, was confirmed by ensuring that the data collection instruments were designed in such a way that they produce at least the same measures when they were used at different intervals.

In addition, the three structured questionnaires were subjected to the Alpha Cronbach reliability test using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). One

question was used to test for internal consistency in each questionnaire. From the student and employer questionnaires, a question with Likert items was selected from each questionnaire and with the lecturer questionnaire, a question based on the Likert Scale was used. The rule of the Alpha Cronbach is that the reliability test should not be less than .07 or should be close to 1.0. The Alpha Cronbach reliability test results for the three questionnaires were .899 for the employer questionnaire; .738 for the lecturer questionnaire and .899 for the student questionnaire, as shown in Table 4.4 below. The reliability test thus revealed that the three questionnaires were reliable to produce credible results if used repeatedly over time.

Table 4.4: Alpha Cronbach reliability tests

Employer Questionnaire		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.899	.907	7
Lecturer Questionnaire		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.738	.735	6
Student Questionnaire		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.889	.890	22

Source: Field Data

4.8.2 Validity

Validity can be defined as the extent to which the findings of a study represent what was intended to be measured. Thus, any research can only be said to be valid if it measures what it intended or purported to measure (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:142). The validity, therefore, looks at how accurate the observable measures represent the concepts in question or whether they represent something, not in question (Bless *et al.,* 2013:221). Issues of validity were adequately addressed by the researcher to ensure that the quantitative data collected in the study was valid to accurately answer the research questions of the study. Ensuring that the data collected were valid, enhanced the accuracy of both the assessment and evaluation of the findings in the

research process (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:53), which was fundamental to ensure that the findings of the study were not invalidated.

To promote validity in this study, the questionnaire and interview guides were used as methods of data collection from various participants of a highly representative sample of the entire study population. By triangulating the data collection methods, the validity of the quantitative findings was enhanced. The sample and sampling procedures had been adequately described to clearly explain and justify how one was selected to be part of the study and how others were excluded (*cf.* sections 4.6 and 4.7). Validity was further ensured in the study through appropriate instrumentation and statistical treatment of the qualitative data (Cohen *et al.,* 2010:133).

While validity and reliability are mostly associated with quantitative data, the concept of trustworthiness was employed to help the researcher to bring out the credibility and rigour of the qualitative findings in this mixed methods study, as discussed below.

4.8.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research entails that evidence upon which the reported research findings are premised is solid and that the arguments made on the said findings are believable (Bless, et al., 2013:236). Trustworthiness thus entails that the researcher's results are reliable and above questioning. Findings from trustworthy research can be said to be grounded accurately in data and thus can be trusted completely (Shenton, 2004:63). Four important indicators must be met for research to attain the trustworthiness status and include credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the findings.

Meeting the four indicators of trustworthiness rendered the research findings valid and reliable which made the research highly trustworthy and thereby improved its scientific rigour (Bless *et al.,* 2013:238). The trustworthiness in this study was confirmed, as discussed below.

4.8.3.1 Credibility

The credibility of the research findings was strengthened through the triangulation of research methods (Bless *et al.,* 2013:336)

. The researcher used both the self-administered questionnaires and interview guides to collect qualitative data for the research. This improved the truthfulness of the research findings. More so, the credibility of the study was upheld through the use of appropriate research questions, which was in line with the embedded mixed methods design and the various methods of data collection and analysis (Bless *et al.,* 2013:336). More so, the document analysis method was used to collect further data, which added credence to the findings.

4.8.3.2 Dependability

The dependability of the study was ensured by following clearly defined research strategies or steps from data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Bless *et al.,* 2013:237). The researcher ensured that the data collection procedure was comprehensively described and collected, analysed and interpreted in a way that could be trusted to ensure reliability. The sampling process was thoroughly described together with the data collection procedure. This was followed by a step-by-step thorough description of the data analysis and interpretation processes. In short, to ensure the dependability of the findings of this study, the researcher provided thorough details of how the data for the study was to be collected, recorded, coded and analysed (Schurink, *et al.,* 2014:420).

4.8.3.3 Transferability

Transferability entails the extent to which the researcher can demonstrate that the findings apply to other contexts such as populations and situations (Schurink, *et al.,* 2014:420). To achieve this, the researcher ensured a thick description of the research process and context. The context within which data was collected for this study was clearly described together with how it related to both the researcher in his capacity and the other participants in the study. Doing so, promoted the external validity of the findings. The thick description enabled other people to compare the context in which the research was carried out with other contexts or situations and thereby helped determine the transferability of the findings to other similar settings (Bless *et al*., 2013:237). This determined the transferability of the findings of the study to other contexts.

4.8.3.4 Confirmability

Finally, the confirmability of the study was arrived at by providing a detailed evaluation of the methodology employed in the study. Such an evaluation, helped other interested stakeholders understand how this study on university education and graduate employability was carried out to arrive at the findings. This helped them to appreciate the different contexts in which the study could be replicated, thereby increasing its chances of replicability (De Vos *et al*., 2014:120).

To achieve the trustworthiness or scientific rigour of the qualitative data, confirmability of the findings was guaranteed.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refers to one's character or disposition, character or morality. An ethical issue, therefore, is that which is concerned with whether one's behaviour conforms to a code or set of principles (Bless *et al.,* 2013:28). Similarly, research ethics guide a researcher against research abuse in the entire research process.

The researcher, therefore, took into account all ethical issues that had a bearing on the welfare of the participants and the credibility of the findings of the study. To guarantee adherence to ethical issues during the study, the researcher ensured that those taking part in the study did so voluntarily without any form of coercion. This was achieved by ensuring that all participants gave informed consent to take part in the study willingly (De Vos *et al.,* 2014:117). The participants were made aware that the main objective of this study was to examine ways and extent to which universities were working together towards producing graduates in social science degree programmes with the necessary skills for enhanced employability in Zambia. Measures were taken to ensure that the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality relating to participants were adhered to. The researcher ensured that issues of privacy or the identity of any participant in the study were not violated in any given way. The data collected from the participants were handled confidentially and were not be disclosed to anyone in raw form. No data collection devices were used to collect data without permission or prior knowledge of the participants.

Lastly, the anonymity of the participants in the study was maintained by ensuring the questionnaires were not marked in any special way to identify certain individuals taking part in the study. Their names were also not used anywhere in the research report (De Vos *et al.,* 2014:120). The researcher also ensured that privileged information given was not presented in a way that easily led to the identification of the source of the information. Such information was presented using pseudonyms and averages to obscure their sources. The researcher also ensured that subjective opinions were avoided as well as personal judgements to influence the interpretations of the findings of the study. Furthermore, the research was carried out with strict adherence to the ethical standards as enshrined by the University of South Africa Research Ethics Committee. Finally, the study was subjected to ethical scrutiny by UNISA Ethics Committee at the proposal stage to ensure that the collection of data, dissemination, and publication of findings from the study was done in the interest of the participants and the community without harming them in any way. The study was carried out under UNISA Ethical approval certificate number 2019/05/15/64027848/18/MC (*cf*. Appendix A).

4.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the study focused on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia, data collection about the social science degree programmes was limited to four university cases in the country. The justification for the focus on just a few universities out of the more than 60 universities operating in the country, was due to the financial and time constraints which limited the extension of the study to other institutions and data collection for a much longer period respectively. The process of data collection was further hampered by the outbreak of COVID-19 which led to the closure of all universities in the country and hence delaying data collection. The use of a few cases in the study might be perceived as a methodological limitation of the study. However, the focus on a few universities was also meant to develop an in-depth understanding of the extent to which the social science degree programmes being offered in these universities added to the conversation of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. Although the findings of the study can be generalised to other universities running social science degree programmes, this may be done with caution

as most institutions were unique and appeared to run their programmes in different ways and contexts.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher described the research design and methodology employed in the study. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods study which allowed for the use of multiple cross-sectional methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The chapter explained how purposive, simple random and systematic sampling techniques were used to arrive at the study sample. The methods and processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation were described with each of the instruments being given an in-depth explanation. Methodological norms were discussed ensuring how the quality of the research process was maintained by explaining how the trustworthiness of the qualitative data was guaranteed as well as the validity and reliability of the quantitative data. The chapter also indicated how various ethical issues were dealt with in the study. Finally, the last section of the chapter explained the study's limitations and delimitations and their implications on the findings. The next chapter deals with the presentation and discussion of the research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the methodology and design of the study investigating the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study in an attempt to answer the research question: *To what extent do social science degree programmes offered at universities promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia?*

The chapter begins with a presentation of the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study and then to achieve the aims of the study, the findings, are presented in line with the sub-questions.

1. What does scholarly literature say regarding university skills development and graduate employability?

2. To what extent are social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities relevant to the skill needs in the job market in Zambia?

3. How effective are work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?

4. What are the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia?

The findings emerging from the four sub-questions, informs the development of a framework and answers the final sub-question:

5. Which framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skill needs in the job market in Zambia?

The empirical findings presented in this section emanated from the quantitative and qualitative data collected using structured questionnaires, interviews and document analysis.

5.2 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This section describes the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study.

5.2.1 Description of Student Participants

A total of 162 study participants comprising final year university students in social science degree programmes, University Lecturers, Employers, or their representatives from the labour industry. Others included key informants from the labour industry, The Ministry of Higher Education, its agencies, and universities.

Table 5.1: Background characteristics of students

CHARACTERISTICS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Age	
15-24	58
25-29	32.8
35 and over	9.2
Marital Status	
Single	90
Married	10
Gender	
Male	41.7
Female	58.3
University Attended	
A#B	64.2

CHARACTERISTICS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
C#D	17.5
E#F	8.3
G#H	3.3
I#J	6.7
Nature of the University	
Public University	73.3
Private University	26.7
School	
School of Humanities & Social Sciences	86.7
School of Education	5
School of Social Sciences	8.3
Programme of Study	
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	21.7
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	5.8
Bachelor of Education	5
Bachelor Arts with Social Work	67.5

Source: Field Data, 2020

As shown in Table 5.1, the 120 final year students pursuing social science degree programmes were study participants. Of the 120 students included, 58 percent were in the age range of 15-24 years, while 9% of the students were aged 35 and over. Concerning marital status, the majority (90%) of the students were single. Table 5.1 reveals that more than half (58%) of the students were male.

The majority of the student participants were from **A#B** university followed by **B#C** university. Others (8.3%) were from **E#F** university, 3.0 percent were from G**#H** university and the remaining 6.3% were from **I#J** university**.** In terms of the nature of the university, results show that 73% of the students attended public universities and 27 percent private universities. Nearly all students (88%) who participated in the study

belonged to the school of humanities and social sciences. The majority of students (68%) were studying in the Bachelor Arts with Social Work programme.

5.2.3 Description of Employer or their Representative Participants

A total number of 22 employer respondents took part in the study. Their description was premised on gender, age, their organization role, and type of sector they are in to name a few. These characteristics are summarized in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Background characteristics of employer/representative

Age	**Distribution (%)**
20-34	18.2
34-49	72.7
50+	9.1
Total	**100**
Gender	
Male	50
Female	50
Organisational Role	
Employer	9.1
Representative of Employer	90.9
Total	100
Industry Sector	
Manufacturing	4.5
Hospitality	9.1
Service	31.8
Other	54.5
Industry Type	
Private	4.5
Public	45.5
Quasi-Public	40.9
Other	9.1

Organisation Status	
Local	86.4
International	13.6

Source: Field Data, 2020

The majority (72.7%) of the participants were aged between 34 and 49 years. The gender representation was balanced (50-50). In terms of their roles, most of the respondents (90.9 percent) were representatives of the organisation employers and could be described as being in the service industry. In addition, 45.5% of the employing organisations were in the public sector with only 4.5% being private. The majority (86.4%) of the organisations were local industrial organisations while 13.6% were international.

5.2.4 Description of Lecturer Participants

Below is the description of the characteristics of lecturers who took part in the study. Their description below is on gender, age, school, the programme they teach on, position in the university, and field of specialization to mention a few.

Table 5.3: Background characteristics of lecturers

CHARACTERISTICS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
Age	
20-34 years	33.3
35-49 years	41.7
50+ years	25
Sex	
Male	75
Female	25
University Attended	
A#B	41.7
C#D	33.3
E#F	25
School	

CHARACTERISTICS	DISTRIBUTION (%)
School of Humanities & Social Sciences	91.7
School of Social Sciences	8.3
Programmes	
Development Studies	33.3
Sociology and Social Sciences	41.7
Political Studies	16.7
Economics	8.3
Position	
Lecturer	83.3
Senior Lecturer	16.7
Years of Service	
< 5 Years	41.7
5-10 years	50
>10 years	8.3
Qualification	
Masters	91.7
Doctoral	8.3
Field of Specialisation	
Development Studies	16.7
Sociology	8.3
Political Science	25
Economics	8.3
Social Work	33.3
Other	8.3

Source: Field Data, 2020

As shown in Table 5.3, a total of 12 university lecturers volunteered to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire. Of these, 75% were male with the majority (41.7%) being in the age bracket of 35-49 years. Many lecturers (97.1%) were from

the school of humanities and social sciences most (91.7%) had a master's degree as the highest academic qualification for their university teaching job. Lastly, most of the lecturers had been teaching in their universities for between 5 and 10 years.

5.2.5 Description of Key Informant Participants

The key informants included officials from different government agencies, the labour industry and higher education institutions. Eight key informants participated in the study (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Background characteristics of key informants

SN	PARTICIPANT (P)	GENDER	AGE RANGE (YEARS)
1	P#01	Male	45-49
2	P#02	Male	40-44
3	P#03	Male	40-44
4	P#04	Female	35-39
5	P#05	Male	50 and above
6	P#06	Male	50 and above
7	P#07	Male	40-44
8	P#08	Male	45-50

Source: Field Data, 2020

These participants represented different sectors with an interest in higher education, representing the higher education sector in general, the labour industry for both employees and employers and the university institutions. The key informants participated in the study through in-depth semi-structured interviews. In terms of gender composition, there were seven (7) males and one (1) female who participated in the study, and the majority of the participants were above the age of 40, as indicated.

The study, therefore, had a total number of 162 study participants. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were given to the universities that took part in the study and the human participants as shown in Tables 5.4 above and Table 5.5 below.

5.2.6 Descriptions of Universities that participated in the Study

Five universities took part in this study. Of these universities, two were public universities and three were privately run. In terms of geographical location, two of the universities were in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. One of the universities was situated in the Central Province and the other two were in the Copperbelt Province. These universities offered social science degree programmes. The schools which were specifically targeted and took part in the study were: the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Social Sciences, and the School of Education.

The four university degree programmes were randomly selected to be part of the study as described in Chapter 4. These programmes were: Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Development Studies, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Public Administration.

Table 5.5: Universities and social science degree programmes

SN	NAME OF UNIVERSITY	PROGRAMME	PROVINCE
	A#B	Bachelor of Social Work	Lusaka
	C#D	Bachelor of Development Studies	Copperbelt
	E#F	Bachelor of Public Administration	Central
	G#H	Bachelor of Education	Lusaka
	I#J	Bachelor of Social Work	Copperbelt

Source: Field Data, 2020

As shown in Table 5.5, four programmes constituted the core focus of the study in exploring the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. These undergraduate degree programmes were offered to students on a full-time basis for a duration of four years. This means that the study targeted students who were in their final year and with a possibility of graduating upon successful completion of the study.

5.3 PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The section presents the empirical findings of the study collected using structured questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Table 5.6 shows a summary of the key findings of the study. The findings are presented and interpreted as themes and

sub-themes that emerged from the analysis process of the qualitative and quantitative data.

Table 5.6: Themes and sub-theme categories

SN	THEME	SUB-THEME CATEGORIES
1	**Social science degree programmes' relevance to skill needs in the job market**	▪ Need and importance of SS to industry ▪ Employer and student perception of employability skills ▪ Graduate work readiness ▪ Availability of job prospects ▪ Demand for the SS degree programmes by students
2	**Effectiveness of internships and student work placements in promoting graduate employability**	▪ Presence of internship or work placement activities in SS degree programmes ▪ Importance of internships in ss degree programmes on skills development ▪ Nature, organization, and assessment of internship practices ▪ Challenges associated with internships to students, universities, and industry
3	**University-industry partnerships in social science degree programmes**	▪ Availability and nature of university-industry partnerships in ss degree programmes ▪ Benefits of university-industry partnership ▪ Challenges of university-industry partnerships ▪ Possible areas of partnerships
4.	**Measures to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes**	▪ Graduate placement surveys ▪ Use of labour market information from labour market surveys. ▪ Strengthen university-industry partnership ▪ Enhance internal and external quality assurance on SS programmes design and development and implementation ▪ Enhance structure policy and legislation to support student internships and university-industry partnerships ▪ Broaden the employability skills in the social science degree curricular ▪ Promote interdisciplinary approaches in SS degree programmes ▪ Open up labour industry organisations for student internships

Source: Field Data, 2020

The subsequent sections provide a detailed presentation of the key findings as summarised in Table 5.6.

5.4 THEME 1: SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE'S RELEVANCE TO SKILL NEEDS IN THE JOB MARKET

The subject of the relevance of social science degree programmes was addressed in line with the research question which sought to establish the extent to which social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities were relevant to the skills needs on the Job market in Zambia. As presented in Table 5.6 above the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs of the job market was evaluated in the context of four sub-themes that emerged. These were the Need and Importance of SS to Industry; Employer and Student perceptions of employability Skills in SS degree programmes; Graduate Work Readiness and the availability of Job Prospects for their work placement. These findings are presented in detail below.

5.4.1 The Need and Importance of Social Sciences to the Labour Industry

Regarding the need and importance of social science degree programmes, the study focused on the respondent's perceptions of the value of the four social science degree programmes which were under consideration. Most key informants who participated in the study through interviews when asked if social sciences degree programmes were still relevant to the current needs of the labour industry and society at large, responded in the affirmative. For example, P#02 responded that:

> *"We have just to illustrate what I said, they are very important to an economy or the job market in Zambia. We have heard of stories about how certain engineering companies are struggling to keep afloat basically because maybe the engineers have taken the mantle of managing those entities by themselves and they lack in certain areas. We have heard of stories where people say an engineer is not a manager unless they have had the training and in most cases, you find someone who graduates as an engineer before they can even be project lit, they usually go through project management courses because they realize that the science that they do in the engineering courses does not give them that*

acumen to run programs business or even to manage other people. So, they are very, very important. They remain key."

When P#07 was specifically asked if the Bachelor's Degree in Social Work they were offering was still relevant to the job industry, they reiterated that:

"When you look at social work, social work especially in our country where the economy is not doing very well, people have so many needs and they need a helping hand here and there. And therefore, I can see that there are a lot of Non-Governmental Organizations that have sprung up and they are doing a commendable job. Where government is failing to reach mostly its NGOs who are getting there. And you know for a person who has background information about how people should live, what help they need, what rights do these people have, definitely they will know how to handle many cases which are found in our communities. So, I feel it is contributing to those skills we still need them. And where maybe it will be difficult to quantify or to give certain figures to it, I think for me I feel it is contributing to the wellbeing of our society."

Further, from a general perspective, another key informant (P#06) during the interview stressed the importance of social science degree programmes when asked if they were irrelevant by saying that:

"No, I don't think social sciences are irrelevant, these are human sciences, they teach us human morality, human decency, and so forth, and so on. It is just the way the world has become, but I think to deny their intrinsic importance would be yielding to a very dangerous cynicism. It is just that the world is in a state of flux, it is very easy to cynically just say shut them down."

However, regarding STEM-related fields, when respondent P#04 was asked about the importance of producing more social scientists for the labour industry, she took note of the size of the economy and described social sciences as playing a supportive role to other sciences on the labour market by saying:

"But the only problem is it's the balance. If our economy is big, believe me, even the ones that we are producing were not going to be enough. By economy I mean if our industry was big enough to absorb. The problem is we have no business. It's like you are producing people who are not the core business….

the support, these are the support system because social scientists really are the support system. Industry is driven by these pure science people. But they are not there. Those who are there…are not doing anything."

From above, most respondents interviewed viewed socials science degree programmes to be relevant to the needs of the labour market and supplement and support other areas of expertise.

5.4.2 Employer and Student Perceptions of Employability Skills

The different perceptions by the stakeholders in higher education and the labour industry to a greater extent influenced the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the labour market.

To begin with, the student and employer were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the employability skills of final-year students pursuing social science degree programmes on a scale of 1 to 5 (1. Very dissatisfied, 2. Dissatisfied, 3. Neither, 4. Satisfied and 5. Very Satisfied) as shown in Table 5.7. According to students, they rated their level of satisfaction on the seven employability skills, except for accountability, as satisfied with a mean score closer to 4. The students were very satisfied with their accountability skills (mean score=4.5). The employers were satisfied with the professionalism, problem-solving, and self-management of the students with a mean score of closer to 4. Concerning other employability skills, the employers were neutral on the level of satisfaction.

Table 5.7: Student and employer perception of employability skills

	STUDENT		EMPLOYER	
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS	**MEAN**	**STD. DEVIATION**	**MEAN**	**STD. DEVIATION**
Professionalism	4.4	0.71	3.5	0.70
Ability to perform tasks in a defined setting	4.4	0.68	3.3	0.76
Critical Thinking	4.3	0.65	3.4	0.65
Problem Solving	4.2	0.80	3.6	0.60
Interpersonal Skills	4.4	0.78	3.2	0.79
Accountability	4.5	0.73	3.3	0.78
Creativity and Initiative Skills	4.3	0.80	3.3	0.73
Self-Management	4.4	0.74	3.5	0.68

Source: Field Data, 2020

Qualitative data also revealed that for social science degree programmes to be relevant, graduating students need to possess several employability skills for them to be employable. Most interviewees mentioned interdisciplinary skills, transferable skills, analytical skills, innovativeness, problem-solving skills, adaptability skills, and specialised disciplinary knowledge as being central.

When P#03, representing one of the higher education regulatory agencies in Zambia, was asked about the kind of skills that graduates should possess to make socials science degree programmes more relevant, he was of the view that:

> *“So generic skills for me need to be embedded and what we need to start doing is to think of striking a balance between disciplinary education which is extremely important and also skills education. You see, the thing is I think there’s been an evolution in terms of the purposes of education. We are no longer in that space where it's learning just for curiosity, as you mentioned, it's learning also for employability, learning also to be part of the solutions to some of the challenges we are having.”*

To this, he gave an example of the importance of communication skills by saying:

> *"There are certain generic skills…like communication skills, for example. Every student must be able to do communication skills because I see it in the workplace where I am. I look at reports of graduates, you can see that there’s a challenge because sometimes you pick a report and say this looks like a lab report but we are in a bureaucratic environment and expectations of a report. You give people the opportunity to express their ideas to an audience, it’s difficult, they don’t have those skills.”*

He also reiterated the importance of critical thinking, saying**:**

> *I know that we have skill gaps in the STEM-related field related fields but we are producing more in social sciences. So, there should be a way we should be focusing on those to ensure that they are relevant as well. Because we cannot just keep turning out but like I mentioned it's time to start moving towards interdisciplinary. It's time to start to integrate generic skills, transferable skills. It's important. It's time to also check… You know one of the big things that are very*

important is about producing somebody who will think differently very, very critical … very important.

The need for graduates in socials sciences who think differently was also echoed by P#08 from the department of labour who highlighted various generic skills that graduates needed to possess by saying:

> *"There are a number of skills which social science students should possess. Of course, being university graduates they are supposed to have excellent analytical skills. They are supposed to understand the different policies which are being implemented. They should be able to interpret those policies and then they should also be in a position to assess whether those policies are being effective or not and also in terms of coming up with measures for improving the implementation."*

To this, he added that:

> *"So apart from analytical skills, they also need to be highly innovative…. You know even interpersonal skills which are very key as they relate with a multicultural environment ... And then they also need to have some entrepreneurship skills because you know most of the courses in the social sciences were designed for someone to work in the public sector and the public sector as an employee*."

The need for interdisciplinary skills also emerged. When asked what other kinds of employability skills graduates from social science degree programmes needed to possesses for them to be employable, P#03 submitted that:

> *"So, you can still provide a student with broad experience, sometimes when a student takes a course in the first year, they really don't know much about university education or indeed sometimes what they want to do. But even as we go on to second, third, fourth year, the need for interdisciplinarity is critical when you consider some of the things that you will face today that need interdisciplinary skills."*

He further gave an example of Development Studies graduates by saying:

> *"So, if I am doing Development Studies, I really need to know something about climate change. I will be working out there in a rural setting, for example, as a*

development practitioner or facilitator and I will grapple with issues of climate change which just needs a certain science basics, you see that kind of thing. So, you may find sometimes you have your graduate of Social Sciences is operating in a sphere which is so complex that it needs interdisciplinary skills."

To sum up, the graduates of social science degree programmes needed to possess the above-highlighted employability skills for the social science degree programmes to be perceived as relevant.

5.4.3 Graduate Work Readiness

The majority of the study participants were of the view that for social science degree programmes to be relevant to the skill needs of the labour market, the graduates from such programmes must be work-ready.

For instance, a cross-tabulation between the work-readiness of graduating students with some selected background characteristics was conducted, as shown in Table 5.8. A chi-square test of independence was used to determine whether the association was significant. The results show that students aged 35+ were more likely (91%) to be ready for work compared to those aged 15-24 (77%) and 25-34 (69%). The association was not significant p>0.05. Furthermore, the study shows that there was no significant association between gender and programme of study and work-readiness of the fourth-year students from the selected universities (p>0.05).

Table 5.8: Bivariate associations between selected background characteristics and work readiness

CHARACTERISTICS	WORK-READINESS	
Age	**No**	**Yes**
15-24	23.2	76.8
25-34	30.8	69.2
35+	9.1	90.9
P=0.315		
Gender		
Male	24	76
Female	26	74
P=0.502		
Programme of Study	100	
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	14.3	85.7
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	15.4	84.6

Bachelor of Arts in Social Work	28.4	71.6
Bachelor of Education	33.3	66.7
P=0.488		

Significance level 0.05

Source: Field Data, 2020

A Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis was carried out to establish graduating students' work-readiness and selected background characteristics such as Age, Gender, Marital Status, and Programme of Study as shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9: Multivariate logistic regression between work readiness of the student and selected background characteristics

WORK READINESS	ODDS RATIO	P-VALUE	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
Age				
15-24	**Ref**			
25-34	0.64	0.38	0.24	1.74
35+	3.04	0.36	0.20	33.50
Sex				
Male	**Ref**			
Female	0.72	0.51	0.27	1.91
Marital Status				
Single	**Ref**			
Married	1.28	0.79	0.21	7.76
Programme of Study				
Bachelor of Arts Development Studies	**Ref**			
Bachelor of Arts Public Administration	0.82	0.88	0.06	9.79
Bachelor of Education	0.29	0.26	0.03	2.48
Bachelor of Social Work	0.50	0.26	0.15	1.69

Source: Field Data, 2020

The findings from multivariate logistic regression revealed that students aged 35+ years were 3 times more likely to be ready for work compared to students aged 15-24 whereas students aged 25-34 were 36 percent less likely to be ready for work. Further, results show that female students were 28 percent less likely to be ready for work compared to male students. With regard to marital status, married students were 28 percent more likely to be ready for work compared to single students. Table 5.9 also shows that students studying Public Administration, Social Work, and Education were less likely to be ready for work compared to students studying Development Studies.

The results in the multivariate logistic regression show that none of the selected student background characteristics were a significant predictor of the work readiness of the students.

The qualitative data from the key informants also revealed that most young university graduates were found to be less work-ready by most employers. For example, when asked if university graduates from social science degree programmes were work-ready at job entry level participant P#02 submitted that:

> *"There is a big problem with the regards quality and the competence of the graduates, right from the university level all the way up to colleges. There are gaps that have been noted, and in the past, before and these gaps actually do not only lie in the social sciences which are the subject matter but even in the physical sciences themselves they are and they have been noted."*

P#02 further added to this by saying, graduates:

> *"…don't know what it means to be in a workplace. Just to give an example, someone will be studying psychology or industrial psychology or something like that then they are put in a human resource department. They don't know how to interact with people, they have never done it. They don't know what a job profile is, they have seen it, they may have read it, and they may have studied it in their degrees, they may have written assignments on it but to actually do it and engage with someone physically developing a profile for a job, they have never done. So, there is that aspect which is lacking literally for all degrees and this is without exception. So that element came up from the HRs in the industry that graduates are always lacking that productivity upon employment immediately if employed directly from university…. They made it so clear and straightforward that regardless of what field, regardless of what qualification, what profession, when they employ someone from university or college mostly, they have to retrain them for a period of time before they become productive."*

The next sub-theme looks at graduate job prospects as they relate to the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skills needs of the labour market.

5.4.4 Availability of Job Prospects

The availability of job prospects for social science degree graduates was considered to be an important aspect of the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the job market skills needs. This was so especially that majority of the graduates were interested in seeking a job upon graduation as shown in Figure 5.1 below.

P=0.029
Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.1: Bivariate association of goal after programme completion and gender

Figure 5.1 shows the bivariate relationship between the goal of the student after the completion of study programmes and gender. The study reveals that more females (69%) than male students (60%) were willing to seek employment after graduation. In terms of self-employment, 31% of the males compared to 13% of females were willing to be self-employed after completion. Figure 5.1 also shows that more female (19%) students were willing to pursue further studies after completion of their programme of study than male students (8%). The relationship between gender and goal after completion was significant ($p<0.05$).

Further analysis of the goals of students in the different social science degree programmes revealed that 83% of students pursuing a Bachelor of Education were going to seek employment after completion, as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Bivariate association between programme of study and goal after completion

PROGRAMME OF STUDY	SEEK EMPLOYMENT	SELF-EMPLOYMENT	PURSUE FURTHER STUDIES
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	70.8	8.3	20.8
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	42.9	14.3	42.9
Bachelor of Education	83.3	16.7	0
Bachelor Arts with Social Work	64.2	24.7	11.1

P=0.139

Source: Field Data, 2020

In terms of self-employment, the results show that 25% of students pursuing Social Work were going to become self-employment compared to 8% of those studying Development Studies. Furthermore, 43% of students doing Public Administration were wanting to on with further studies after completion of the initial degree. The association between programme of study and goal after completion was not significant ($p>0.05$).

The finding that most graduating students desired to seek employment after their programmes of the study brought out the need for the availability of job prospects for Social Science degree programmes to be relevant to the skills needs of the labour industry. The collected qualitative data from those representing the labour industry and those from universities revealed mixed findings on the availability of job prospects.

For instance, when respondent P#05 was asked about the career prospects for graduates in their social science degree programme, he stated that:

> *"All our graduates who have left our university, have immediately been deployed. So far, we have not heard of anyone who has graduated waiting for two years on looking for employment. And those who haven't been deployed have immediately gone into upgrading their qualification to masters. At least so far that is the record we have and that is the record we get from our students."*

However, respondent P#05 also added that:

> *"But also, the economy is not growing at the rate at which may be graduates are being produced into the economy. So much as these are relevant, they are not*

absorbing them because it's not growing. You may find the same people go to maybe other countries are able to find employment whilst when they're here in the domestic economy they are not able to find those opportunities. So, I think it may also have to do with the rate at which the economy is growing to be able to absorb the same graduates.

On the premise of a similar question, P#07 also respondent that:

"For the Bachelor of Social Work, you see that it is offered by different universities at the moment in Zambia because it is something on demand. Students are needed in various industry sectors. You find social workers, working in the mines, you find them in hospitals. So, you find they are needed by government in their ministry's departments, UN agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, Faith-Based Organisations and there are some who would just want to venture in business and the like. But, basically, the job prospects are there, it is a programme which is demand-driven. It is a generic programme because we prepare them to fit into different sectors."

However, P#03 when asked about the general outlook of the job prospects for social science graduates, mentioned that:

"… there is that challenge but coming to Social Sciences, we have been producing quite a lot. But the reality of the day is that there are not many jobs out there. Basically, as a country, we have not created enough jobs especially outside the public sector and this is telling by the numbers of graduates that are unemployed and so forth."

P#03 further wondered about the limited job opportunities for graduates retorted that saying:

The question is whether this points to a mismatch between education and skills out there. It is really a question that we can't answer outrightly because it's complex. There are many dimensions to this. One question would be whether the economy is or the environment is enabling even for people that we channel out there to be able to use the skills if they have the skills.

Further, P#04 from the Department of Higher Education in the country had this to say about the size of the job prospects for graduates from social sciences in comparison to those from STEM-related fields:

> *"If our economy was big, believe me, even the ones that we are producing were not going to be enough. By the economy, I mean if our industry was big enough to absorb. The problem is we have no business. It's like you are producing people who are not the core business…, these are the support system, because social scientists really are the support system. The industry is driven by these pure science people. But they are not there. Those who are there are not doing anything."*

The findings relating to the availability of job prospects for graduates of social science degree programmes indicate that in addition to knowledge a range of skills needs to be developed. The skills range from employability skills such as professionalism, critical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, self-management and creativity, regarded as 21st century skills, to job-related skills that ensure employability of graduate students in an economy that is restricted.

5.4.5 Demand for the Social Science Degree Programmes

The demand for the social science degree programmes in the selected universities was considered in this study to examine the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skill needs of the labour market. The study revealed that the number of students who enrolled in the four social science degree programmes had not increased in the last two years. Most of those interviewed from the universities where the four-degree programmes had been on offer, responded that the number of students graduating from the degree programmes had not been increasing.

For instance, when asked about the number of students enrolling and graduating from Social Work, P#07 observed that:

> *"For Social Work from 2010, the number increased I think, the average number should be between 50 and 100, at some point we even had 150 when the government was sponsoring. Because [we] realised that social work was on-demand, so even in terms of the quota allocation, Social Work was given attention, so we had between 120 to 150 [students] per academic year, but the*

numbers reduced from 2018 because of the [lack of sponsorship] sponsorship from the government."

At another university, when P#06 was asked about the number of students in one of the social science degree programmes in the school, he mentioned that:

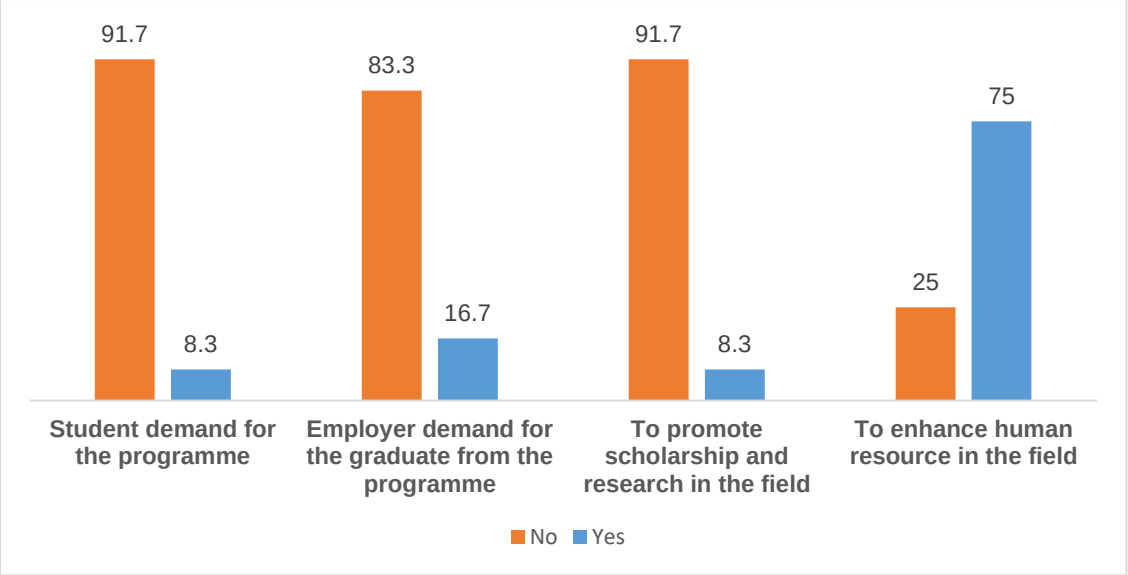
"Each year we get about, 30, 45, but the number has been going down because there has been a realisation that they don't get jobs, you see. However, those who are already employed find it easier."

In addition, at another university, when the researcher inquired about the numbers of students who had been graduating from the Bachelor of Development Studies in the last two years, P#05 revealed that:

"The range of graduates differs, but initially, when we started, the number has been changing or fluctuating due to the mushrooming of universities across the country. But on average we have graduated 150."

It was also interesting to note that the motivation by the universities to offer the social science degree programmes was not due to demand for the programme, but basically to advance disciplinary knowledge, as shown in Figure 5.2 below.

From figure 5.2 lecturers in Social Sciences considered the need to improve the human resources in their disciplinary fields (75%) as the main reason for offering their social science degree programmes. This was seconded by employer demand for the graduates from the programmes (16.7%). It was also interesting to note that majority of the lecturers (91.7%) did not consider student demand by students for the programme as the most important motivation to offer their programmes.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.2: Lecturers' perspectives on motivation to offer the programme

It seems that enrolment and extension of social science programmes are motivated by the need to improve human resources in each of the disciplinary fields rather than taking into account the job prospects in the economy.

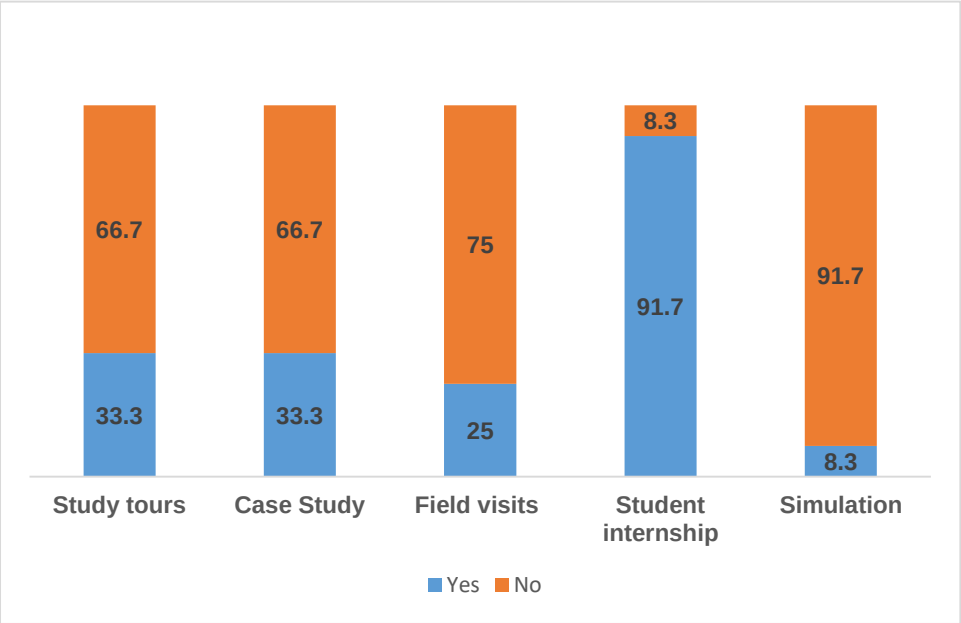
5.5 THEME 2: EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNSHIP AND WORK PLACEMENTS IN PROMOTING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

To answer the question of how effective the work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities were in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia, the study revealed several sub-themes. These included: Presence of Internship or work placement activities in SS Degree Programmes, Importance of Internships in Social Science Degree Programmes on Skills Development, Nature, Organisation, and Assessment of Internship Practices and Challenges associated with Internships to Students, Universities and Industry.

5.5.1 Presence of Internships or Work Placement Activities in Social Science Degree Programmes

Work placements or internship practices are programmes or activities put in place by a university to expose students to work experiences while pursuing their degree programmes to help them acquire practical knowledge and skills necessary to get and

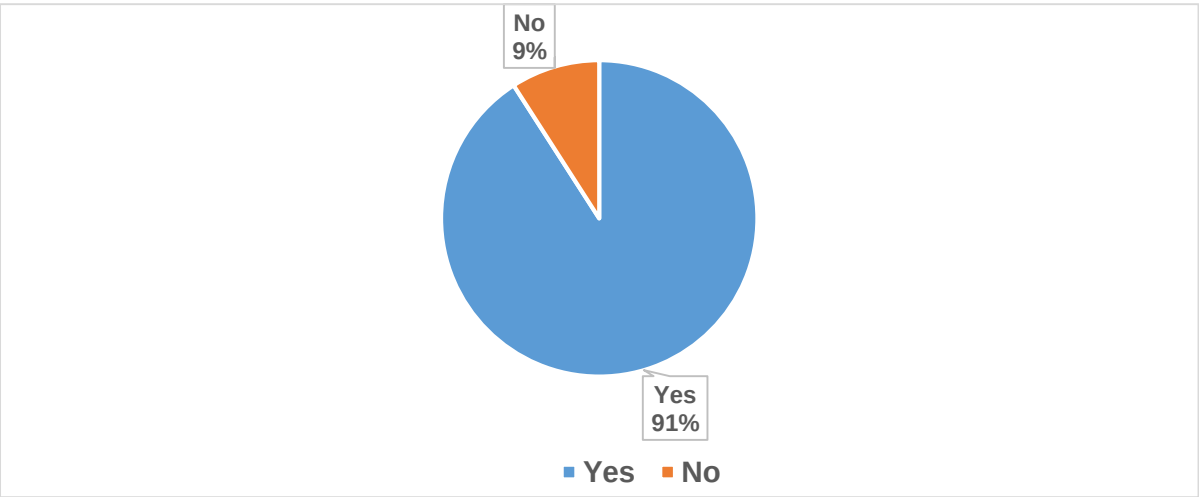
keep a job after graduation. Lecturers were asked to identify practices that were available in the programmes that they teach where classroom learning was linked to workplace practice.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.3: Workplace practices present in the degree programme

Figure 5.3 shows that the majority (91.7%) of the lecturers cited student internship as the most common practice followed by case studies (33%) and study tours (33%). It seems that simulations at 8% were the leased cited practice, as shown in Figure 5.3 above.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.4 Labour industry organisations offering internship Placements

It was also found that the majority of the labour industry organisations (91%) that participated in the study were offering internship placements for students in social science degree programmes and some organisations (9%) were not doing so (Figure 5.4).

The study found that in almost all the four programmes, students were engaged in some form of work placement or internship, see Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Bivariate association between programme study, nature of university and work placement

CHARACTERISTICS	WORK PLACEMENT	
Programme Study	**No**	**Yes**
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	25	75
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	57.1	42.9
Bachelor of Education	50	50
Bachelor Arts with Social Work	1.3	98.7
P=0.000		
Nature of University		
Public University	6	94
Private University	30	70
P=0.002		

Significance level 0.05

Source: Field Data, 2020

Some 99% of students who majored in social work were given the opportunity of a work placement followed by 75% of students in Development Studies (Table 5.11). However, only 43% of students who majored in Public Administration were given the opportunity of a work placement. There was a significant association between the programme of study and work placement ($p<0.05$). Furthermore, the study revealed that more students in public universities were likely to have a work placement in contrast to those from private universities. There is enough evidence to show the association between the nature of the university and work placement ($p<0.05$).

Table 5.12 indicates the relationship between the programme of study and the requirement for the internship.

Table 5.12: Bivariate relationship between programme of study and requirement for the internship

	REQUIREMENT FOR INTERNSHIP	
PROGRAMME OF STUDY	**NO**	**YES**
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	3.8	96.2
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	42.9	57.1
Bachelor of Education	33.3	66.7
Bachelor Arts with Social Work	0.0	100.0

P=0.460

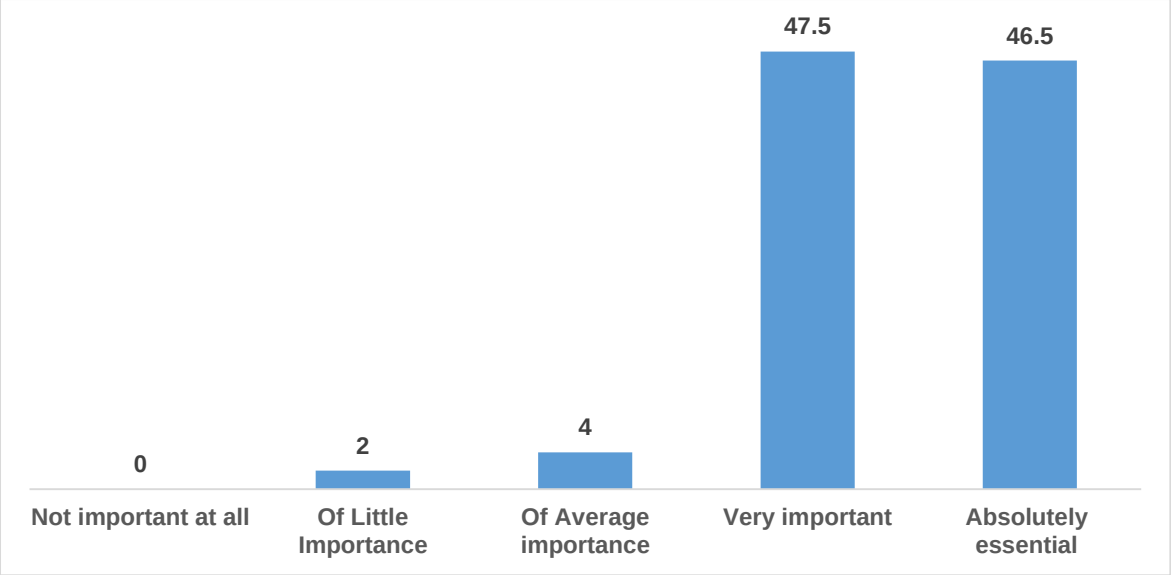
Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 5.12 shows that in certain programmes of study, is it a requirement to be engaged in some form of work placement or internship before one could graduate. All students (100%) pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work agreed that internships were a requirement for their programme of study followed by students studying Development Studies (96.2%); conversely, only 57% of students doing Public Administration degree agreed that work placement or internships are a requirement for completion of their degree. However, the association was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$).

In this section, presented are the findings regarding the presence of WIL activities in the social science degree programmes. Of the available WIL activities in the four programmes were the internships as shown in figure 5.3. The next section focuses on the importance of internships.

5.5.2 Importance of Internships in Social Science Degree Programmes on Skills Development

Work placements or student internships in promoting employability skills in graduating students are seen as a valuable component of the programme of study with the majority of the respondents acknowledging the importance of internships in social science degree programmes.

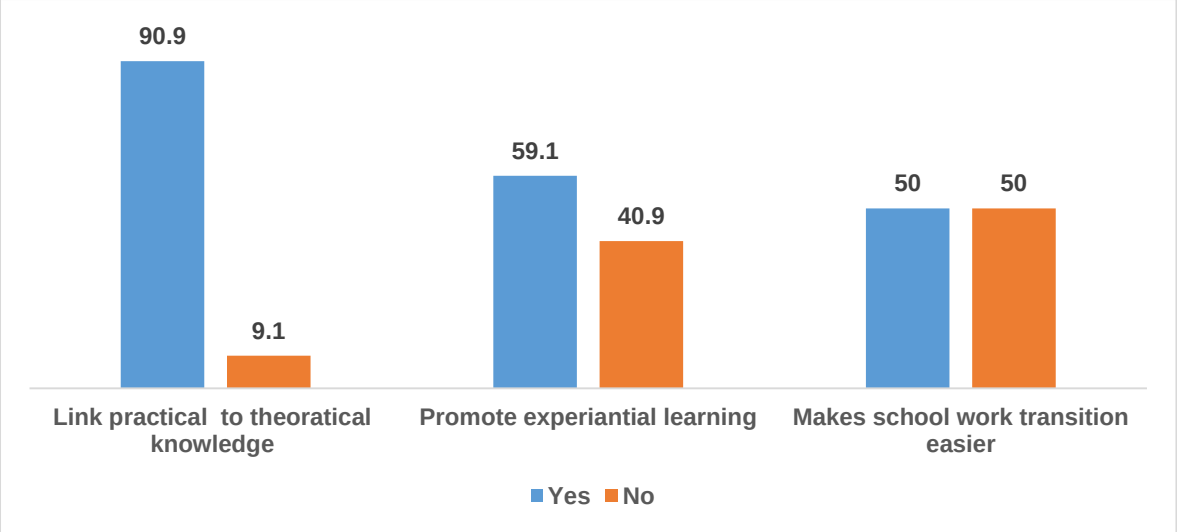


Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.5: Student ratings of the relevance of internship practices as a component of their programme

Figure 5.5 indicates that students rated the relevance of Internship practices as a component of their program. The results reveal that 47.5% of students rated internship as very important and 46.5% rating it as absolutely essential. None of the students felt that internship was not an important component of their programme. Bivariate analysis between programme of study and relevance of internship indicated that most students pursuing Social work rated internship as absolutely essential whereas few students studying Public Administration rated internship as absolutely essential.

Employers were also asked to justify why their organisations or companies needed to afford university students' work placement or internship opportunities. Figure 5.6 provides a summary of their responses regarding the importance of internships for university students.

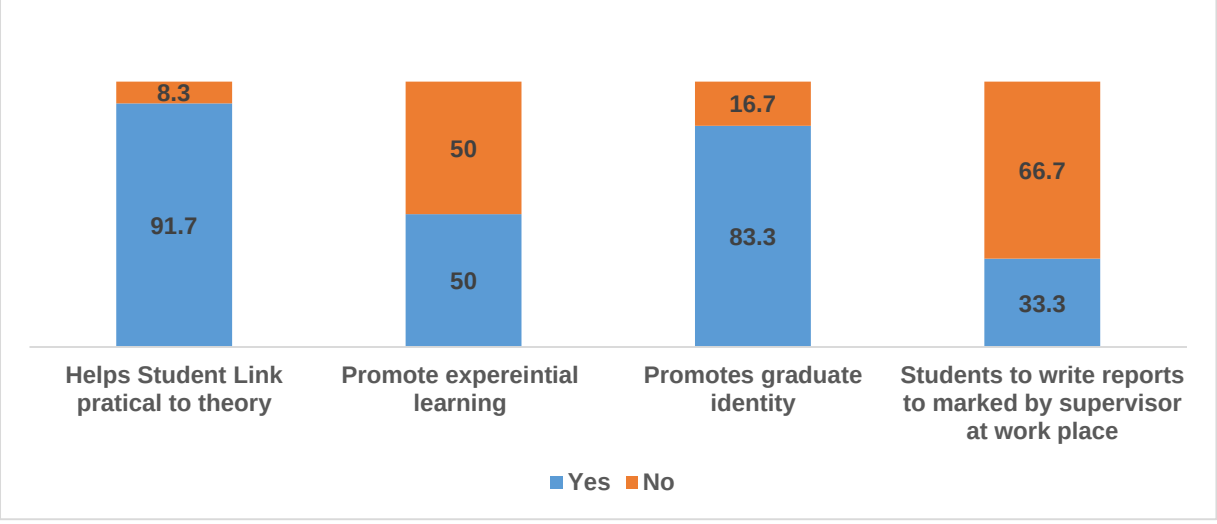


Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.6: Employers' perception of the role of work placement

The study found that the majority of the employers (90.9%) thought internships helped students acquire skills to link practical to theoretical knowledge. However, making the transition from school to work easier (50%) and promoting experiential learning (59.1%) also were considered valuable aspects of the work placement opportunity.

Lecturers were also asked to give reasons about the importance of internships for students, with the result being presented in Figure 5.7 below.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.7: Lecturers' perception of the role of work placements

Figure 5.7 indicates that most lecturers (91.7%) were of the view that the internship experience helped students to link practice to theory while 83.3% believed it promoted graduate identity. Lecturers who were interviewed also acknowledged the importance of internships in promoting skills such as the hands-on experience of what goes on at workplaces which helps students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. For instance, when P#07 was asked about the importance of having student work placements in their programme of Social Work, he explained that:

> *The internship, the field practicum is actually an important component of the training programme…Social Work, because you know Social Work is a practice-based profession, so students do two field placements, one at second year and the other one as they get into the fourth year, that is a fourth-year course. And the reason why that is done [is] because…. when they are in classroom as they are learning theories, they acquire the knowledge, they have the knowledge base, now if that is not linked to the practical aspect of what is happening on the ground, it becomes difficult for the students to actually apply the knowledge and shape their skills. So, it's part of the application of the theories to the practical aspect of what they expect in the field once they graduate. So, it helps them in terms of broadening their understanding in terms of reality and theories. So, there is that link between theories and practice. So yes, it serves that application of the theories and it broadens their knowledge and sharpens their skills because they are able to learn how to do things."*

P#05, in responding to the same question said that:

> *"Generally, I should say attachment is a very critical component for the training of a development studies student. But that attachment gives them experience so that when they go into the industry although they are going for the first time, they will have an idea of what happens there and what contributions they will do for the organization."*

In appraising the role of internships in skills development, a representative of the umbrella workers' national union body (P#01) was of the view that:

> *"I think the opportunities that they are being given are benefitting them. Yes, because you know the reality of life is for one to have that exposure and you have the experience of what people are going through. So, if institutions are*

capable of exposing these students to what is happening on the ground, I think it is benefitting."

To this, he added that:

So, the training institutions for this period should be focusing on developing these skills. But even an apprenticeship or internship should also be more like be a two-way thing where the industry is identifying to say these are the skills we want. Then even apprenticeships from the learning institutions should be directed in such directions to say ok these are the people we want to absorb and when they are still studying, they can be acquiring such kind of skills."

The views by P#01 on the importance of student internships and work placements were also echoed by a representative of a National Higher Education Regulatory board who commented that:

"You know I think in most of them they need to have that (internships). So, I am saying maybe two-three months you need students to go or during the vacation, the long vacation for three weeks, we expect them to do that and you attach them into certain sectors where they are expected to work. And in fact, it is very good where you allow the students to go for internships, they gain the skills but also allow them to do a report to reflect on the workplace experience vis-à-vis what they've learned in school so that you can have good feedback on where you need to focus and that we need to do. But also, there's this issue of having at least some form of independent projects embedded in the curriculum where a student is expected to work on an independent project. As they go on, they acquire a lot of skills as they are working on that particular project."

Lastly, P#02 also had this to say about internships:

"The solution is I think right on the table at the moment and it goes both ways like picking on international-based practice but also looking at what works for you as a country and as it where stakeholders have been sitting since 2015 discussing how it would resolve this problem and like I said identifying internship, apprenticeship, attachments, and placements as a way forward to solving this issue of half-baked and skills mismatches."

This section reported on the importance of student internships from the student, lecturer and key informants' perspectives. It seems that both the learning institutions

and labour industries need to take cognisance of the value that internships hold for graduates entering the job market so that a partnership is developed.

5.5.3 Nature, Organisation and Assessment of Internship Practices

The nature, organisation and assessment of student internships also came out as an important sub-theme in assessing the effectiveness of work placements in promoting employability skills amongst students in social science degree programmes. This took into consideration, the structure, assessment and timing of the internship programmes as a way of determining their effectiveness in promoting skills development in social sciences. Table 5.13 presents the relationship between programme of study and the length of the internship.

Table 5.13: Bivariate relationship between programme of study and length of internship

PROGRAMME OF STUDY	4-12 WEEKS	>12 WEEKS
Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies	6.3	93.8
Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration	25.0	75.0
Bachelor of Education	0.0	100.0
Bachelor Arts with Social Work	5.1	94.9

P=0.410

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 5.13 shows that most internships had a duration of 12 weeks or more. All Bachelor of Education students (100%), Development Studies students (93.8%) and 75% of the students in Public Administration had an internship that lasted 12 weeks. There was no enough evidence to prove the relationship $p>0.05$.

In terms of assessment of students on internship, Table 5.16 shows that both lecturers and employer participants supported the use of several methods by both lecturers and workplace supervisors as a method of evaluating students on internships. The use of several observations by lecturers only was the least supported method.

Table 5.14: Comparison of student assessment on internship by lecturer and employer

	LECTURER (%)		EMPLOYER (%)	
STUDENT ASSESSMENT DURING INTERNSHIP	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
Single observation by both lecturers and workplace supervisors	25	75	27.3	72.3
Several observations by lecturers only	8.3	91.7	4.5	95.5
Several observations by both lecturers and their workplace supervisors	75	25	72.7	27.3
Student reports to be marked by their workplace supervisors	33.3	66.7	36.4	63.6

Source: Field Data, 2020

The qualitative data also revealed that the nature, organisation, assessment and period of internships were not systematic in the different programmes of study under consideration. For instance, participants representing different schools where the different social science degree programmes were asked about how the internship or work placement programmes were designed and conducted, they gave varied responses.

P#07 responded that their students:

> *"…are given a number of assignments on case studies if it is a research, they do develop proposals and then they focus on programme evaluation, or policy evaluation, or project evaluation. So will develop a proposal and then after developing a proposal under the supervision of the assigned supervisor and then they come and analyse it and then present the report and then that depending on the topics or the issues that are handled by the agencies that they are attached to. They are attached to different institutions. For those who do the first placement, field practicum is community or rural-based, and then the second one is urban placements. Meaning that they are attached to organisation. But even in the field, the community-based, it is about organisation. So apart from reports or the assignments that they submit, there are also field supervisions, lecturers go to those various places to conduct field supervision. So, they are supervised, they are observed in different organisation. For the community-based, it is the department that facilitates, but for the urban [one] we give them the opportunity, to say since we know we want you to learn the skills and acquire the skills on*

how you can apply for this and that within a year also we give them the opportunity to apply but when they don't make it, the department comes on board and facilitates."

Another participant (P#06), when asked about how the internship programme was designed for their students, they explained that:

"Well what we normally do is to, social work has got a good practice, we have a questionnaire when our students go out into these various places to work with the poor-poverty alleviation programmes, we ask those who have agreed to take them to answer this questionnaire to let us know how they have performed, we also involve these organisations in the design of the questionnaires, so that there is ownership on their part. And the results have been quite good. At a certain point, lecturers do go there to observe how students are working and also to confer with those that are hosting them."

Further respondent P#05 also indicated that:

"There are two ways or many ways of doing this, but what we do specifically, we ask students to pick places of placement and then they get back to us, and then we will look at what that organisation does and see whether what they will be doing is relevant because one of the reasons of attachment is to test some of the skills acquired in the industry and see how it works for them. We make sure that the attachment is related to what they have undertaken for three years or so. Then after that, we give them documentation as evidence that they are at our institution. And also, we give them two documents, one to fill in details for the organisation. The other one is for the student to document whatever; they do and they give us how they applied whatever they do. And then we also visit them in their attachments and just discuss with their supervisors, just to learn how they worked with our students. Whether there is any new thing which our student brought to their industry and what benefit that brought to their organisation."

When further asked how students were prepared for work placement, P#05 pointed out that:

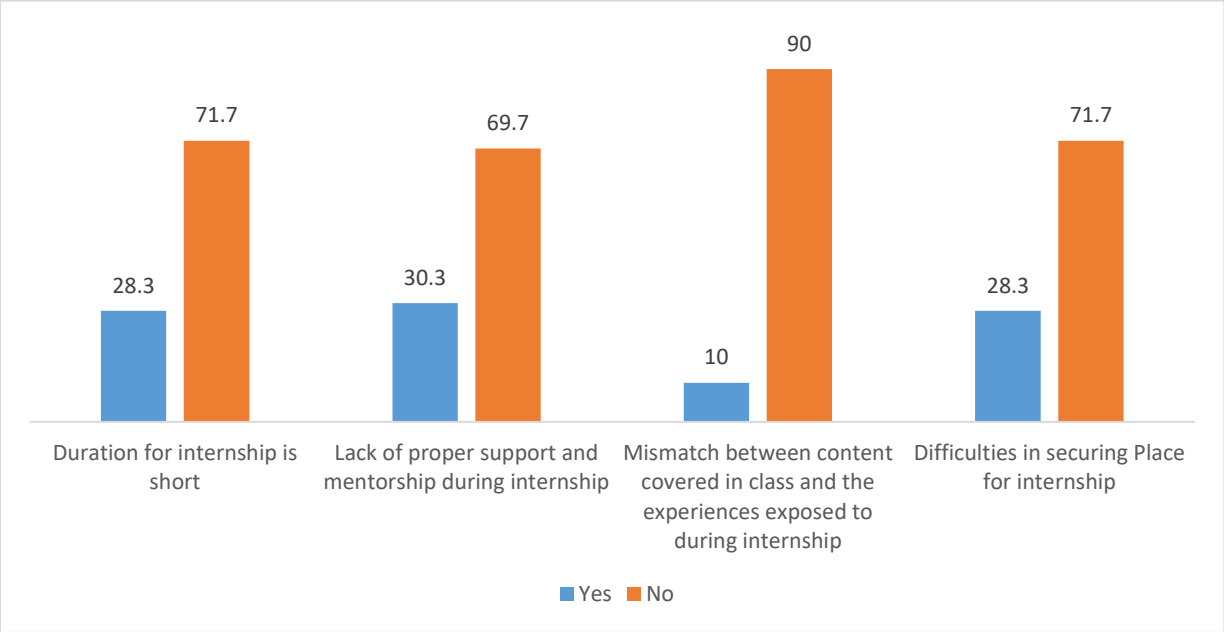
"Ok, first of all, we don't just send them there. Internship orientation or briefings are done especially in a particular year that they will be attached. So, what we do is that we hold classes, not credited classes, but classes where we teach

them what to do, we teach them how to write reports, we teach them how to contribute to their organisation. So, when they come back, they bring us a report of what they accomplished. And then we ask them to present to the audience of all students and lecturers, so we want them to tell us what they did and we ask them questions. So that we tell them here this is not what we discussed, here you said that you did not accomplish goals because the organisation did not have written policy and what a view, what did we tell you? So, we try to have interactive sessions where we try to correct them and try to affirm them."

The concept of internships is a solid one and in theory, should work well in preparing students for the world of work, offering them time to take the theory, knowledge and skills learned at university and apply it in the workplace. However, in many instances, internships are not successful or are fraught with challenges.

5.5.4 Challenges Associated with the Implementation of Internships to Students, Universities and Industry

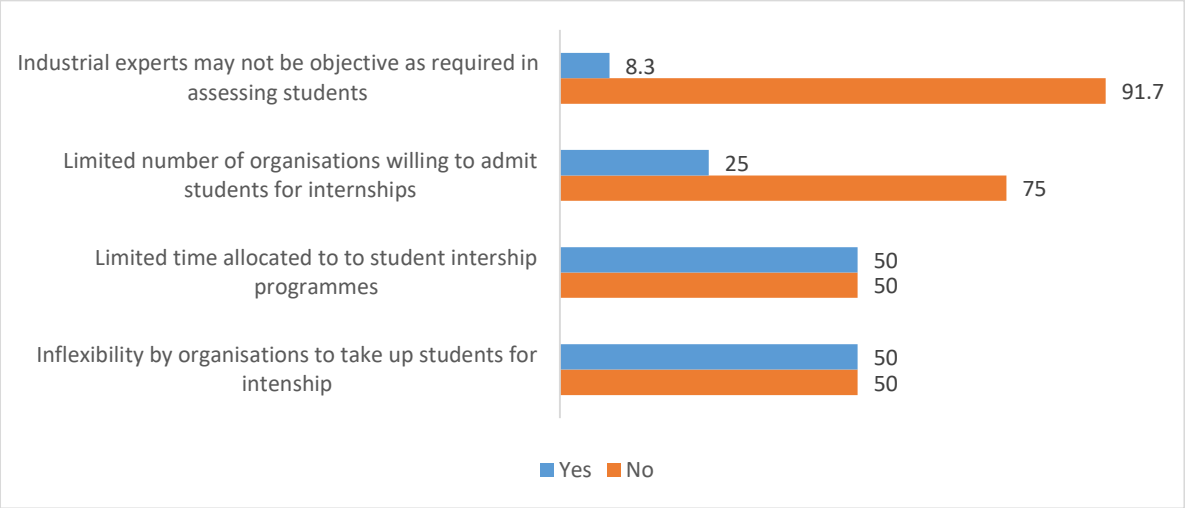
Upon inquiry, students were asked if any challenges were faced during the internship, 72.5% of the student respondents answered in the affirmative. These challenges are presented in Figure 5.8 below.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.8: Challenges faced by students during internship

As shown in Figure 5.8, the most common challenge faced by students during the internship was found to be the lack of proper support and mentorship (30.3%) followed by the inadequacy of duration for internship experience (28.3%) and difficulties in securing a place of internship (28.3%). Lecturers also expressed their perceived challenges associated with implementing the internship programmes for their students.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.9: Lecturers' perception of the challenges associated with student internships

Figure 5.9 shows that lecturers were divided over the issue of the time allocated (50%) for student internships as well as the inflexibility (50%) by some organisations to take up students on internships. However, most of them did not consider the perception of industry experts lacking objectivity in assessing students during internships as a challenge. A few lecturers (25%) considered the limited number of organisations offering internship placements as a challenge.

Most of the findings above were in line with what qualitative data revealed as presented below. P#05 appraised the importance of internships and work placements in social science degree programmes at their institution but highlighted the challenges of securing placement for students within the industry.

> *"As a matter of policy, we are supposed to do this. It is very important because it gives them and makes it possible and easier to open doors of opportunities when they eventually graduate. But the challenge again has been that firms, in the*

public sector, have not been able to accommodate our students at the third and fourth-year level, unless somebody is connected by parents are well known so forth and so on. What we do here we simply prepare these letters. But these letters are not very good, because the experience has been that they don't get it [work placement]. So simply put the idea is good. The notion of the internship is good but the reality is completely different. Absolutely and make it easier for them to prepare themselves for the world of work. Because then if they get the opportunity, they will hit the ground running. they will have little time to learn, the learning curve will be shorter."

The other challenge associated with how internships were organised in the country was due to the lack of a proper policy and legal framework to guide the provision of student internships. According to P#04, the policy could guide work placement; however, this is outdated:

"We have had an internship policy or an apprenticeship policy because then we have also had an apprenticeship act but it's under the Ministry of Labour. The only problem is that it's an old act and most of the things have changed so it does not address many things. But the idea of having a framework is that looking forward we want to do ...policy and be able to regulate the internship."

Respondent P#02 reiterated the challenges faced by the industry on taking in students for internships, particularly in the absence of policy or framework to guides the process and procedures, when he said:

"The biggest challenge that they [industry] have been pointing out is that when they do take on interns, they face the challenge of what relationship are they entering into with the intern. There is no law to guide on what relationship, how do they relate to that person? Is that person an employee or not? Are they entitled to employee benefits or not? So that is where the challenge has been and the examples are [many]. Where it's like what one company said, we stopped taking on interns because we took on one gentleman as an intern for six months. After the six months elapsed, after separation a few weeks later we received a summon from the Labour Office that we had separated with an employee without paying terminal benefits. And so, they said for us this was a no-go area after that. So, all those things are to be guided by these documents. So that's the idea to

sort out these issues of relations between employer and intern attached and things like that."

The respondent (P#02) also expressed dissatisfaction with how universities had structured their internship programmes when he said that:

"Many institutions do them at their own will and in their own ways. We do have a lot of experience in industry where young people who are either still in university or just out of university come through with letters written "to whom it may concern" asking for placements may be for the vacation and things like that. But all in all, those programmes are not really achieving the intended purpose. The reason being is like I said, they are uncoordinated, they are unstructured. So sometimes companies just open up to these young people just for the sake of they want to help someone or the young person knows someone at that company and they end up being put in there. And then sometimes you find the young person is desperate themselves and actually they use those letters to look for employment not because they want to get experience when they come out of it. So, you find that they end up doing vacation employment or placements in jobs that are not related to what they are studying which becomes counterproductive because it is not helping, it's not adding to what they are learning."

He further questioned the effectiveness of the internships by saying that the student internships or work placement are:

"First, unstructured, meaning that there is no guarantee that a person even if they are in an internship, they will gain anything. Secondly, uncoordinated, everyone is doing whatever they are doing so there's no uniformity. Thirdly, there's that component of rank or just going after money and not really going out to gain the experience that they require. So those three components make these programs not be very effective."

This section presented the challenges associated with the internships from the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study from the perspectives of students, lecturers and key informants from the labour industry. It seems that for these challenges to be overcome, universities and industry need to enter into solid partnerships to ensure the effectiveness of the internships.

5.6 THEME 3: UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

To identify the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia, the study elicited several findings as presented by sub-themes such as Availability and Nature of University-Industry Partnerships in Social Science Degree Programmes, Benefits of University-Industry Partnership, Challenges of University-Industry Partnerships and Possible Areas of Partnerships. These are presented below.

5.6.1 Availability and Nature of University-Industry Partnerships in Social Science Degree Programmes

Regarding the availability and nature of university-industry partnerships, most of the participants interviewed acknowledged engaging with industry; however, it seems that university-industry partnerships in Social Science degree programmes were weak.

For instance, when P#07 was asked if they were engaged in any partnerships with any organisation concerning promoting the relevance of the Social Science degree programmes, he stated that:

> *"Yes, we have a number of institutions that we have partnered with and the ones that we have worked with quite for some time. For instance, we work with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, and those are spread across the country and they also work with various organisations so it becomes easier for us to be linked to the organisations. So, we have also been working with Child Fund because they are also based in different districts, so we have a number of partners that we have been working with."*

When P#05, was also asked whether their school or institution was engaged in any form of partnerships with organisations from the labour industry to promote social science degree programmes, he answered in the affirmative that:

> *"Yes, as a university, again not as a spokesperson, on a larger scale I would say yes, we are. Because we are running some programmes, for example with other organisations such as Mopani. We are running a teaching programme for them, where they give us students, it's like a residential school. So, we get our*

manpower from here which go to train these Mopani employees in various skills then they come here for graduation. So that is how we partner. So, they tell us we need this, it's like a tailored programme. Also, we have been having interactions with a number of organisations like the Zambia Army, Zambia Police, Zambia Prisons, were we look at them to say these people may not have time to come and sit here for four years… a long time due to the nature of their work. So, we have been asking them if we can tailor some programmes for them, which we can run at their institutional base, and we have received overwhelming support to that and soon we will be going in that direction."

When a similar question was asked to respondent P#06 concerning their university, the response was that:

"Well, we have tried to forge partnerships with a number of organisations, we are in touch with ZRA, in fact, last year or the year before last, I went to the Authority, I wanted to see the director of HR, to plead for our students so that when they finish their programme or whilst they are still studying, they can go there, but we don't have MOUs in terms of facilitating, their placement, that we don't have, we are trying with ZRA, we have spoken to the foreign ministry, but that hasn't born any result, we are trying with Zambian army, we have written them to try and have this relationship but that hasn't moved forward. The idea is there but it is just that these institutions are just restrained, but we recognise working with them."

Those from the labour industry also gave their perspective with regards to the nature of the partnerships that exist between organisations in the labour industry and the universities that offer these social science degree programmes. For instance, respondent P#02 acknowledged the limited number of partnerships by saying:

"They are a few partnerships and mostly the partnerships would be maybe in form of an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] *to maybe provide a service to the university, could be an MOU to avail the university some room, for instance, for those that are into equipment training for them to train their students or maybe for universities to place their students for attachments and things like that but I think the relations are a bit haphazard and at a very small level."*

The continued development of university-industry partnerships in social science degree programmes is vital to ensure that there are constant benefits for both parties in these partnerships.

5.6.2 Benefits of University-Industry Partnerships

Employers and lecturers were asked about the benefits associated with university-industry partnerships concerning social science degree programmes. The need to help university students apply theoretical knowledge in the real world through placement was supported as the main benefit, followed by the need to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market, as shown in Table 5.17

Table 5.15: Summary of the benefits of university-industry partnership

	EMPLOYER (%)		LECTURER (%)	
BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND UNIVERSITIES	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
Help university students apply theoretical knowledge in the real world through placements	77.3	22.7	58.3	41.7
Enhance the relevance of degree programmes to the needs of the labour market	50	50	33.3	66.7
Allow industry experts to participate in the design and implementation of the degree programmes	22.7	77.3	25	75
Enhance public confidence in the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market	45.5	54.5	33.3	66.7

Source: Field Data, 2020

The above findings align with the qualitative findings emerging from interviews with key informants. P#05 outlined benefits associated with partnering with industry concerning the social science degree programmes they were offering:

> *"…there are a lot of benefits because through such interactions as workshops, seminars, conferences at some point, we are able to market our courses, we are able to tell them this is what we are offering, what do you think we should also be offering? Like for instance recently we developed a number of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes and that resulted from those interactions."*

To a similar question, P#06 was of the view that with such partnerships:

> *"… it will enable us to design courses that are relevant. You know there is a disconnect between what we are offering in universities and what the real world*

requires…. So, when we have links with them, they will tell us what works and what doesn't work, what is relevant, and what is not relevant."

Further respondent P#05 had this to say about their university graduates concerning partnerships with the industry:

"Yes, I will talk about Mopani. Mopani we have been running a programme for five years plus. It is only that the mines are also struggling but honestly after our graduates leave this place, they would love to get our graduates than any other universities because of the partnership that we have, they are also beneficiaries of what we doing here. So am sure they appreciate us more than they appreciate the universities that they do not exactly know what they are doing."

As with benefits associated with university-industry partnerships, challenges may also arise which need first to be identified and then addressed.

5.6.3 Challenges of University-Industry Partnerships

Lecturers and employers were asked to identify the challenges in developing a partnership with the labour industry to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market. Table 5.18 shows these perspectives concerning the challenges associated with university-industry partnerships concerning social science degree programmes.

Table 5.16: Challenges in implementing partnerships between industry and universities

	EMPLOYER (%)		LECTURER (%)	
CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND UNIVERSITY	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
Weak partnerships between the industry and the labour markets	68.2	31.8	83.3	16.7
Some degree programmes are irrelevant to the needs of the industry and thus cannot attract collaboration	54.5	45.5	25	75
Lack of strong national legal and policy framework to guide university-industry collaborations	59.1	40.9	33.3	66.7
Lack of trust between lecturers and industry experts	4.5	95.5	0	100

Source: Field Data, 2020

Both the employers (68.2%) and university lecturers (83%) pointed out that the weak partnerships between the universities and organisations within the labour industry are the main challenges. Employers also pointed out the lack of proper legal and policy framework to guide university-industry promotions (59.1%) and cited the irrelevance of some social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour industry (54.5%).

Most of the key informants interviewed also echoed the above findings on the challenges associated with university-industry partnerships.

For instance, when P#02 was asked about the challenges associated with enhancing beneficial university-industry partnerships, he responded that:

> *"The biggest challenge that is there is …human resources training and development has been seen to be a government responsibility and then everyone else just sits and folds their arms and they wait to get what has been produced. But at the same time, we need to remember that there was a time that this country's economy was largely in the hands of government like major industries were in the hands of the government. So now at that point training institutions were in the hands of the government. The major employers were in the hands of the government. So, you find that the government was able to see both sides to the extent that these institutions there are not seeing any need for them to communicate directly by themselves because they are being controlled by one mother entity which was seeing both sides and able to fit to give feedback from both sides. So that historical arrangement I think has kind of continued where everyone operates, operating in their own corner but we are seeing a slow change here and there with the coming of private universities. They are more open to these partnerships and they are actually actively seeking to engage in these partnerships. We have a few approaching us wanting to partner with us."*

To this, he added that while partnerships are there:

> *…they are not to the level of what we would expect from what we are discussing in actual materialize. They are a few partnerships and mostly the partnerships would be maybe in form of an MOU to maybe provide a service to the university, could be an MOU to avail the university some room, for instance, for those that*

are into equipment training for them to train their students or maybe for universities to place their students for attachments and things like that but I think the relations are a bit haphazard and at a very small level.

The employer's perspectives on the challenges associated with university-industry collaboration were also affirmed by the responses of respondents from universities. For instance, when asked about the challenges faced to secure the partnerships with industry, P#06 had this to say:

"The challenges have been to secure partnerships, partnerships, MOUs, that has been really difficult for us, but perhaps we haven't done enough ourselves, but that has been the major issue, we have succeeded in having, working with collaborative arrangements."

To this, he gave an example that:

"Getting in an MOU with Zambia Revenue Authority, an MOU which guarantees our graduates a certain number of places of internships that has been difficult, we have tried, endeavoured to see if we could work out some arrangements with the MOFA but they have not been responsive. You see the problem is the demand and supply matter, there are many universities at the moment, and look at where we are located. It is not easy to get here."

Besides, P#05 was also of the view that:

"I wouldn't say all is rosy, and the challenges are that most of the industries are struggling like I have already said and so they may not have time unless the kind of training that we are offering is plug and play then they would quickly accept us. But things like students also going to learn from them whilst the contribution may not be much to the industry, that is already a challenge. So we are trying to also look at the kind of courses that we are offering and try to fine-tune it so that it is just not like any other ordinary course, we want it industry-oriented and also to be more practical, more practicum than theoretical so that our students can be able to stand on their own than just formal employment. So that is the direction we are looking at."

This section has shown that there are challenges associated with implementing university-industry partnerships on university students, universities and the labour

industry organisations themselves. The next part looks at the possible areas of partnerships between universities and the labour industry.

5.6.4 Possible Areas of Partnership

The researcher further inquired about the possible areas of collaboration between universities and the labour industry to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes.

Table 5.17: Possible areas of industry-university collaboration

	EMPLOYER (%)		LECTURER (%)	
POSSIBLE WAYS OF INDUSTRY-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**No**
Industry expert participation in university teaching	18.2	81.8	33.3	66.7
Industry expert participation in curriculum design and reviews	18.2	81.8	50	50
Industry-university research collaboration in skills transfer	31.8	68.2	50	50
Technology and knowledge transfer from industry to university	22.7	77.3	25	75

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 5.17 shows that in terms of the possible areas of partnership between the industry and the universities concerning social science degree programmes, the majority industry employers were not willing to willing to engage in any form of partnerships, such as teaching on university programmes, curriculum design and review, collaborative research and technology and knowledge transfer, with universities offering social science degree programmes. However, a small percentage of employers were willing to engage in skills transfer (22.7%) and through university-industry research collaboration (31.8%). But most of the employer respondents did not want to be involved in teaching in university social science degree programmes (81.8%), participation in curriculum design and development (81.8%), and technology transfer from industry to universities (77.3%).

On the other hand, the study found that most lecturers objected to industry experts teaching on the social science degree programmes (66.7%) and being involved in technology transfer from industry to universities (75.5%). In terms of support by industry experts in curriculum review and design, there was an equal (50%) split

between those who were for it and those against. Lastly, lecturers were also divided concerning whether the industry could be involved in skills transfer through industry-university collaboration, as shown in Table 5.19.

Concerning the areas of possible collaboration between the universities and industry, the qualitative data collected through key informants revealed the need for the labour industry to participate in curriculum design and implementation. When one key informant (P#02) was asked if the industry should take part in the design and implementation curricular for Social Science degree programmes, the answer was in the affirmative that:

> *"Clearly yes. And again, I would refer to these same documents that I have just shown you. They have stipulated that and it was deliberate that we put those issues in there. The bottom line is whomever a university is training will end up being employed in industry one day. So, the industries are the end-users of whatever universities are producing. So as end-users they must have an input in what is being reproduced for them also to give proper feedback because these are the specifications I want. It's like a person who is starting a project in a mountainous area. If they want, they can go to Toyota Zambia and tell them the specifications I want on my car is this and that and that because this is the terrain, I am going to be using my car in. Sure. So equally the industry should be able to engage with training institutions not only to give feedback to say this is what we are seeing in your graduates but also to give feedback in terms of curriculum development. What should be in the curriculum at what time?"*

P#04 from the Department of Higher Education when asked the same question, responded that:

> *"You know that the training programmes are developed and are run through curricula, so every learning programme has a curriculum, and that curriculum has to be developed and is approved by the relevant authority. In this case, like for University education, Higher Education Authority will come and regulate. For TEVET, TEVETA will come and regulate the curricula. Now there's a procedure for developing curricula. You don't develop curricula without involving industry*."

To this she added:

"When you are developing a curriculum for economists there will be people taken from sectors who are working in professions that are economists to come and be part of the process for developing that curriculum. So those are the measures that the Government puts in place. efforts are really there to strengthen the linkages between industry and the training institutions. Because like I have said, when we are doing the curricula, we make sure that that is done. Because it means it is not a complete committee if you don't have industry represented. Whenever we are doing in policy anything, it should be consultative and the rule is that industry should be a part of it. So, for me yes, I know that it can be strengthened but I know that there's collaboration that is existing we probably just have a small industry to talk about. We don't have a major industry to talk about. Because really… if you say industry it's really very thin. Like in this Ministry we don't only do university education, we also do TEVET. So, you find that most of this industry requires the skills. You find that industry is even contributing to the skills development fund."

The need for the industry to be involved in curriculum design and implementation was also supported by key informants from universities and the industry. For instance, when respondent P#02 was asked if those in the labour industry should be involved in the curriculum implementation, he confidently responded that:

"I know some universities do have seats for private sector players on their senate or their councils so that when they are scrutinising these programs or curricula at senate or council level, there must be an eye from the industry who would give feedback, that feedback to say wait a minute, this I think in the industry is going to face ABCD challenges. This I think can fit better in the industry if we do it this way rather than waiting until they've trained people and then they get feedback from the industry. To incorporate industry players at that level either senate or council I think would add some value to the development of those programs. And also, just having programmes that universities with promote industry."

He further added that:

"There must be a deliberate programme to say ok this class there's someone from either the banking sector or business sector to give a guest lecture or for this week you are going to have a tour of company X just to understand what

is happening in the industry as they are learning and relate what they are learning in class to industry."

Pointing out the need for those in the labour industry to teach on some social science degree programmes, he also referred to one programme saying:

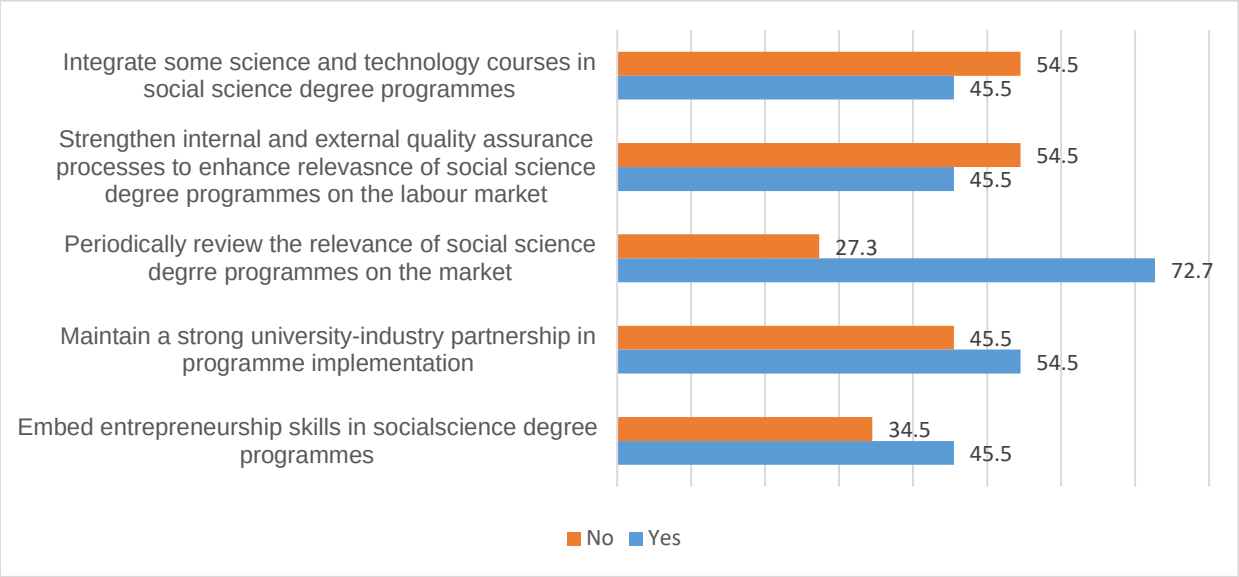
"Public Administration students could be taken to or maybe just call someone who is an experienced public administration expert to give a guest lecture and things like that just constant interaction and opening up to industry and also researching."

This section has presented the quantitative and qualitative findings on the possible areas of partnerships between the universities and the labour industry. The findings show that majority of the labour industry organisations were not willing to engage in some forms of partnerships with universities offering social sciences even though value could be added to the programmes if there was some representation from experts in the various fields and disciplines. The next section focuses on measures to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability.

5.7 THEME 4: FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEGREE PROGRAMMES TO SKILLS NEEDS ON THE JOB MARKET IN ZAMBIA

In line with the question of which framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skills needs on the job market in Zambia, the study revealed several measures and suggestions that may help to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes. The findings are presented in line with sub-themes that emerged from the data and include: Graduate Placement Surveys, Use of Labour Market Information from Labour market Surveys, Strengthened University-Industry Partnership, Enhanced Internal and External Quality Assurance on Social Science Degree Programmes Design and Development, Enhance Programme Structure, Policy and Legal framework for Student Internships, Broaden the Employability Skills in Social Science Degree Curricular and Promotion of the Interdisciplinary Approach in Social Science Degree Programmes.

Figure 5.10 shows the summary of the findings regarding measures that could be put in place to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes and consequently, graduate employability.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.10: Employers' perception of measures to enhance market relevance of the social science degree programmes

The figure indicates that the majority of the employer respondents cited the need to periodically review the relevance of the degree programmes to the labour market (72.7%). This was following by the need to develop a strong partnership between the universities and the labour industry (54.5%). The study also revealed the need to embed entrepreneurial skills and some science and technology courses in social science degree programmes as one way of enhancing their relevance. It was also clear from the study that improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms was key in promoting the relevance of programmes to the labour market.

In addition, employer and lecturer participants were asked how the industry can support universities to ensure that the social science degree programmes on offer are relevant to the needs of the labour market. Table 5.18 shows the frequencies of their views.

Table 5.18: Suggestions to enhance the relevance of social science degree Programmes

	EMPLOYER (%)		LECTURER (%)	
SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
Industry participation in programme design and review	63.6	36.4	75	25
Labour industry organisations to financially sponsor students in these programmes	27.3	72.7	50	50
Open up institutions for student work placements and internships	77.3	22.7	91.7	8.3
Offer employment opportunities to some university graduates	50	50	58.3	41.7

Source: Field Data, 2020

Both employers (63.6%) and lecturers (75%) supported the need for the industry to participate in programme design and review for universities. More so, the study revealed that 77.3% of employers and 91.7% of lecturers supported the need for employing organisations to open up for student work placements and internships, as shown in Table 5.18

5.7.1 Graduate Placement Surveys

The need for graduate placement surveys was also reported to be one of the ways through which universities offering such social science degree programmes could know the relevance of their graduates on the labour market. Concerning graduate placement surveys from social science degree programmes, the qualitative data revealed that not all universities were undertaking them. When P#07 was asked about the importance of graduate placement surveys and if they were conducting them, he mentioned:

> *"They are very important… One of the reasons why it will be justifiable and important for us to undertake those studies we would want to make adjustments in terms of the programmes. Are they demand-driven? Are they responding to the needs of the industry and society at large? So, once you track down the number of graduates who may have been employed in different sectors it will be very easy. It would help, rather than just offering the programme without it. It becomes a problem at the end of the day you find people lose interest. So, it is*

very important because it helps you to plan and make adjustments to the programme."

When asked if the department or school was undertaking these placement surveys, P#07 answered that:

"That has been a challenge…as a department we have not paid much attention to that … we have taken it for granted. Maybe because of interest, no one has been interested in those areas and I think the other reason is because of lack of funding we have had challenges for undertaking research in certain areas and also because funding organisations would like to focus on issues in other areas like issues of children, children rights and the like."

At another university, P#06 expressed a strong desire to undertake such surveys despite it being a challenge when he stated that:

"I have repeatedly, recurrently emphasised this point to the three faculties in my school, that we need to find out, we need to have tracking mechanisms, we don't do it, the information that we have is impressionistic. But impressionistic is not scientific, it lacks scientific reliability, rigour, precision. No, we don't, that's a weakness so most of the staff is impressionistic."

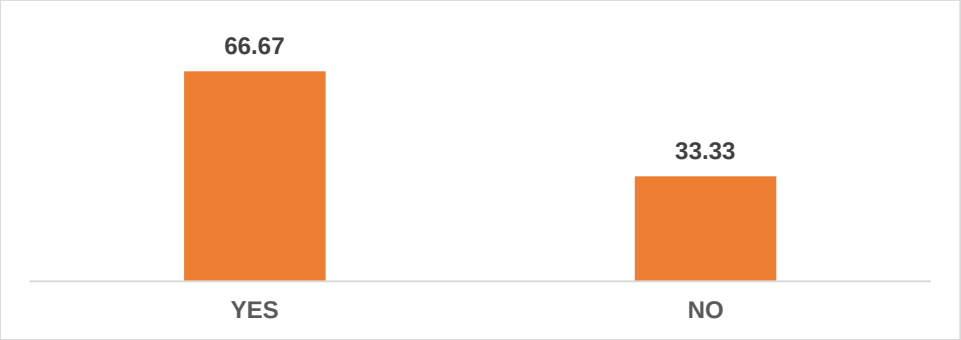
However, when asked if graduate placement surveys were done, P#05 mentioned that:

"In our faculty, we do that. And it's a two-way system, at times students themselves, they call us back, oh now I am here, I am there and in other cases, we also just try to take interest to follow up on some students by using peer contacts. I think so far most of our students are doing relevant professions that are related to what they have studied, so far, I can't remember anyone that is doing something irrelevant to what they did."

The qualitative findings regarding the graduate placement surveys as a measure to enhance the relevance of socials science degree programmes indicate its value in addition to the use of labour market information survey.

5.7.2 Use of Labour Market Information from Labour Market Surveys.

The findings revealed that most universities used labour market information to enhance the relevance of the social science degree programmes they were offering. For instance, Figure 5.11 shows that 66.7% of the lecturer respondents pointed to the use of labour market information.



Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 5.11: Use of labour market information to inform social science degree programmes

The study further revealed the main reasons behind the use of labour market information to enhance the relevance of the social science degree programmes to the labour industry in Zambia as shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: Use of labour market information in social science degree programmes

	LECTURER (%)	
REASONS FOR USING LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION	**YES**	**NO**
The basis for Evaluating the Relevance of Social Science Degree Programme on the labour market	66.7	33.3
The basis for which the SS Degree Programme can be realigned to the Skill Needs of the Labour Industry	66.7	33.3
The basis for Enhancing the Skills and Knowledge of Lecturers Teaching on SS Degree Programmes	33.3	66.7
The basis for Discontinuing a SS Degree Programme with no relevance to the Labour industry	83.3	16.7

Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 5.19 above shows that the majority of the lecturers reported that Labour Market information should be used to evaluate the relevance of their programmes and ensure

that the social science degree programmes are realigned to the Skill Needs of the Labour Industry.

The use of labour market information in social science degree programmes in conjunction with other measures discussed above can strengthen university-industry partnerships.

5.7.3 Strengthened University-Industry Partnership

The need for a strengthened relationship between the universities offering social science degree programmes was emphasised. Regarding how industry-university partnerships can be promoted, respondent P#02 proposed that:

> *"I know some universities do have seats for private sector players on their senate or their councils so that when they are scrutinising these programmes or curricula at senate or council level, there must be an eye from the industry who would give feedback, that feedback to say wait a minute, this I think in the industry is going to face ABCD challenges. This I think can fit better in the industry if we do it this way rather than waiting until they've trained people and then they get feedback from the industry. To incorporate industry players at that level either senate or council I think would add some value to the development of those programmes."*

The respondent was also of the view that:

> *"And also, just having programmes that universities promote with industry. For instance, we know that… the School of Engineering does run some promotional programs with industry, for instance, the Engineering Council of Zambia… has some programs running with the School of Engineering where it exposes young people through what is happening in the industry. We could also have these Social Sciences, where they deliberately engage with industry players so that they give that exposure. There is a bit of it happening in the School of Economics with Economic Associations for students, …but I think it's not enough. There must be a deliberate programme to say ok this class there's someone from either the banking sector or business sector to give a guest lecture or for this week you are going to have a tour of company x just to understand what is happening in the industry as they are learning and relate what they are learning in class to industry. Public Administration students could*

be taken to or maybe just call someone who is an experienced public administration expert to give a guest lecture and things like that just constant interaction and opening up to industry and also researching."

On strengthening partnerships with industry, P#06 had this to say:

"…I think we should have a constant dialogue with the Zambia Federation of employers, we have the career fairs, people who come to talk about their organisation, but what is critically important is that we have an ongoing dialogue, strategic dialogue with the Zambia Federation of Employers. So that they tell us what works and doesn't work."

A representative of the labour movement in the country, P#01, was also of the view that:

"So maybe if they have a say they put it on record that this is what we need in our industries and the trainers also look at that and say I think according to our curriculum we need to move out this and fuse in these other topics. That way it will help both the institutions training the trainees and the employers."

Presented above are the qualitative findings regarding the strengthening of university-industry partnerships. In the next section, empirical data is presented regarding quality assurance in social science degree programmes.

5.7.4 Enhanced Internal and External Quality Assurance on Social Science Programmes Design, Development and Implementation

The need for institutions offering social science degree programmes to enhance their internal and external quality assurance was stressed. In terms of the aspects of quality assurance respondent, P#03 reiterated that:

"So, the Zambia Qualifications Authority has developed a qualifications framework and that qualifications framework has already worked out what competencies are required, for example, if a person is graduating with a certificate or a diploma or a degree or a Masters. So that work has already actually been done by the Zambia Qualification Authority. So, when a programme is developed let's say it's a Masters or a Ph.D. or it's an Undergraduate Degree, it sits on the Zambia Qualifications framework and we expect then that the

learning outcomes in that learning programme correspond to what is in that particular framework."

The respondent was also of the view that they were putting in place several programmes as a quality enforcement agency when he said:

"[we are] *… rolling out a lot of capacity-building activities just to ensure that we strengthen the teaching and learning in universities. This year we have had a workshop on quality assurance on how universities can embed quality assurance systems in their programmes."*

Respondent P#04 from the Department of Higher Education was also of the view that:

"Part of that external examiners should involve people that are coming from the industry so that they see how [students] are being prepared for the industry."

Another respondent was of the view that to promote quality assurance in social sciences:

"One of the mechanisms that should be put in place is the continuous curriculum review, that's key in order for the university to respond to the changing needs of society. There should be that continuous process in terms of curriculum review, trying to design courses that are relevant to the changing needs of society as well as changing the titles of the programmes. We shouldn't just be saying, no… this is how it is, but we should be an open system. We should be able to change with time."

As another way of ensuring quality in the social science degree programmes, P#05 opined that:

"I think it is to start spending a bit of money into market surveys. Because market surveys will bring out what people really need out there. So that we go into an industry, and we just do not do as heavy research, but us it is what are you looking for, what do you do, how do you accomplish that, what are your gaps. So that we are able to see how we can move in to say maybe this component we can provide and also just to use the industry to evaluate our courses. To evaluate our courses because introspection is better but also

involving the external look or eye will also be quite profitable because they will be able to tell us here, why can't you do that or that."

Quality assurance measures can be used to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market as indicated above, by informing the revision and development of the programmes. However, in order to enhance and promote student internships, policy and legislation need to be developed and implemented.

5.7.5 Enhance the programme structure, policy, and legislative framework to promote student internships

Regarding the design of the degree programmes to accommodate internships, P#02 submitted that:

"I would propose that they cut it to three and a half years, not that after three and half years someone graduates, no. Three and a half years of academic learning then the last semester or the last six months of their degree it should be in industry so that after the four years someone has had at least six months of being in the industry. They can structure it in, either way, whether it is at the end or in the middle somewhere that will be something else, but the big things there must be a period when someone is in the industry for them to qualify for that degree that's number one."

The respondent was also of the view that:

"I think for me what is good for the universities is to structure their programmes in such a way that all the programmes should accommodate a period of industrial attachment and this period of industrial attachment should not be left to vocational time and it should be compulsory."

The need for quality internships through proper programme structure, policy, and Legislation improvement was also suggested to promote employability skills. P#02 commented on the need for a policy framework for internships in the country:

"So, this is the document that came out of that work-based learning framework. It's meant to be a guide on how the country can coordinate these programs and out of this document there came now this, as you can see this one is smaller and

very precise. It's about internship guidelines. So, this is meant to guide those that want to engage in internships on how should they do it in Zambia. And the idea is that we have a national internship program which those that want can ascribe to but that is not to say those that want to have private they can't have private ones but they will be guided by this. So, this is what has been done in terms of trying to redress the issue of unstructured programmes. So, there are these programmes that have been developed but all these are supposed to lead to the development of an Act."

When asked about how the launched internship guidelines were going to improve student internship, the respondent from the Department of Higher Education expressed scepticism when she said:

"It is a framework and a guideline which is very clear... The only problem is if it is not government policy, it has less weight… it's just a guideline, it has less weight. The moment you have it as a policy and it is regulated then it becomes stronger and it's easier to enforce."

Respondent P#08 also added that the Department of Labour was:

"…also, in the process of reviewing the Internship and Apprenticeship Act so that we can strengthen and smoothen the transition from school to work life because this has been a problem. Government is repositioning itself to assist the industry as well as the education sector to enhance the quality of graduates through work-based learning as well as the internship programmes."

Concerning how the industry relates with those on internships, a representative from the Department of Labour, P#01, was of the view that:

"And also, we want to guide in terms of the employee-employer relationship because when you are in a workplace setting even if you are in an internship you are providing a service. It is only when you are an employee even that you are still learning. So, there are still obligations of an employer and certain obligations of an employee which we want to streamline so that if need be if possible, even those who are in an internship they should be rewarded for their labour. It may not be a salary but it can be an allowance but a way of appreciating their labour."

Empirical findings on how a strengthened legal and policy framework can be used to promote student internships have been presented. The section that follows presents the findings on how the broadening of employability skills in social sciences degree programmes can enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour industry in Zambia.

5.7.6 Broaden the Employability Skills in Social Science Degree Curricular

The need to broaden social science degree programmes with employability skills in social science degree programmes was also suggested. P#03 was in support of continuous learning when he submitted that:

> *"Because you see I will tell you something the world we are in even if we talk about a social science degree or natural science degree it is so complex and things are moving so fast that a degree you graduate with today becomes obsolete tomorrow. So, the focus should not have been on the degree but continuous learning. So continuous learning, continuously getting new skills, and so on. And I will tell you one thing, our universities are doing a bad job when it comes to that. When a student enters, all the student is thinking about is sociology. And you know this sociology must be able to integrate with certain necessary skills training that will allow that particular graduate thrive where they are going."*

The need for critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills was also emphasised:

> *"We need to develop critical thinking skills and this goes through how we structure and design our curriculum. It also goes to the kind of learning material we expose the students to. The kind of teaching approaches that we actually use. Many of us treat most of our students as a hole in which to fill in knowledge; fill in the sand and so on instead of facilitating a scenario where students get to have that culture of learning, and learning not just learning, but to be able to do. So, this requires a lot of changes in the way we teach, a lot of changes in our curriculum, and the way we see our discipline. I think we need to integrate into a lot more if we are going to make our education extremely relevant."*

Concerning entrepreneurial skills, he said:

"And then there is also need to have some entrepreneurship skills because you know most of the courses in the social sciences were designed for someone to work in the public sector and the public sector as an employer."

To this, respondent P#08 added:

"So, we need a different set of skills. So even in the field of, I mean, social sciences, I think they have to be a very big rethinking in terms of what are the new skills which will be required in the world of work which is ever-changing in the wake of globalization, artificial intelligence whatever, what is the role of a social scientist? The traditional way of training people like it used to be in past no longer hold."

Another respondent when asked on how employability skills could be enhanced, was of the view that:

"Universities in Zambia…need to expand their research horizons. Social sciences let me just say the social sector field has got a broad range of research topics we do not really explore. These are things which should be explored in conjunction with industry. One big example we keep hearing people talking about Zambians are not very productive. Productivity in Zambia is very low. Where a Zimbabwean will lay 15 bricks a Zambian would have only laid 5. Why can't someone doing public administration sociology or human resource management just take that up as a study point or even a university itself, a department in a university to take it up to study why that is a case. Is it a psychological or sociological problem? Is it a cultural problem? How can we solve it? Because universities should have solutions and this shouldn't only be in pure sciences even in social sciences. Universities can offer solutions to problems that are faced in industry. That is my belief."

This section presented the findings on how broadening the teaching and assessment of employability skills can promote the relevance of social science degree programmes. The next section presents empirical findings from interviews on how interdisciplinary approaches can be used to achieve the same objective.

5.7.7 Promote Interdisciplinary Approaches in Social Science Degree Programmes

Regarding the promotion of interdisciplinary approach in social science, P#03 from the Department of Higher Education was of the view that:

> *"There are certain things that perhaps have been a challenge for us as a country. One of them is the way we train our students. You have already mentioned Social Sciences, immediately you say Social Sciences, you are assuming that they will not have any training in Natural Science. Ok, and of course this is the model we all found, especially when we went to the university, we found if you belong to this school you can't cross to that school, you can't cross to that school, you know that kind of thing. And by and large, almost all universities that are coming are also adopting that particular trend. You see that kind of thing. But you see the move now is towards interdisciplinarity, you see that kind of thing."*

To this, he also added that:

> *"The fact that I am a social scientist doesn't mean that I can't do what natural scientists do. So, when I went to study myself, I was shocked to find a first-year student who picks history and economics and has a physics course. You know part of the challenge that we have is this idea between disciplinary education and practice."*

Presented above are the empirical findings on how the interdisciplinary approach can be used to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skills needs of the job market. The last sub-theme presents findings on how the opening up of the labour industry organisations for student internships can promote their employability skills.

5.7.8 Open Up Labour Industry Organisations for Student Internships

It emerged from the qualitative data that calls were being made by participants to have more organisations open up to accommodate students during internships. P#02 had this to say:

> *"For instance, we have talked about the industry opening up to internship and apprenticeship attachments. Other than that, I think there's a drive from the*

government point of view, let me just say from a policy point of view to come up with sector skills advisory committees. Like each sector should have a committee that advises the skill needs. This is where the industry will have to be key and also the training institutions have to identify their training programmes by sector. Because gone is the time when you can train general players. Now is the time when people are becoming more and more specialised."

The need for the industry to open up for student internships was emphasised by P#07 who said:

"The most important thing is internship, field practice …we have encouraged them to be coming to the office to get recommendation letters so that during vacation they should be able to get internships because it helps them, it also helps the department, and the university at large to incorporate some of the key components that may be missing in the curriculum. So, it helps us to make changes to the content of our courses. So, from time to time, we are able to get feedback from the field through the students. So, we make adjustments. So, we have encouraged them to be doing that so they should be able to do the practical aspect of the programme, so that by the time they graduate they will have gained the experience or known what is happening in the industry and most of the students like that."

P#03 was also of the view that:

"We need to begin to bridge the gap between academia and industry, government and so forth. This is about the way we develop our curriculum; we need the input of industry but not just to train we also need placement for our students."

This part has presented empirical evidence on how the labour industry can help students in social science degree programmes to acquire more employability skills by affording them internship placements.

The findings presented in the sections above informed the proposition of a model framework for enhancing the relevance of social science degree programmes to promote skills development and graduate employability as discussed in Chapter 6.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter provided a thorough presentation and interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study. It highlighted the major findings on skills development and graduate employability in the four social science degree programmes. The findings have been presented in line with the themes and sub-themes that emerged to be important during data analysis. The next chapter provides a thorough discussion of the result of the study through cross-referencing with the theoretical literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the empirical findings of the study were presented in line with the themes and sub-themes that emerged. The quantitative and qualitative findings were presented beginning with the data from the structured questionnaires, followed by the narratives from interviews, and finally document analysis. The present chapter provides a discussion of the empirical findings of the study. In attempting to meet the overarching aim of the study meant to examine the extent to which the selected social science degree programmes were able to promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia, the key results of the study were analysed, interpreted and discussed in line with the theoretical literature presented in Chapter 3. This helped the researcher to develop a clear understanding of how the results corroborated with or departed from what is known on skills development and graduate employability and in the context of the theoretical framing (Chapter 2) adopted in the study. The discussion of the results was done in line with the key objectives of the study set out in Chapter 1. This chapter begins with a discussion of how the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were used to answer the research questions in the study. This is followed by a brief discussion of scholarly literature on university skills development and graduate employability. The last section discusses the empirical findings of the study. The chapter ends with a summary that illuminates the key aspects of the study and the preview for the subsequent and final chapter.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature for this study was divided into two chapters: Chapter 2 represented the theoretical framework and Chapter 3 discussed the literature review of the study.

6.2.1 Discussion of the Theoretical Framework

The study was framed within the lens of three theoretical underpinnings. These were the Human Capability Approach, The Human Capital Theory and the Screening Hypothesis. The characteristics of the three theoretical perspectives constituted the conceptual framework (*cf.* Chapter 2, Figure 2.1) that guided the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings of the study.

6.2.1.1 The Human Capability Approach

The Human Capability Approach was the leading theoretical framing of the study on skills development and graduate employability in social sciences. The Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen and further improved upon by Martha Nussbaum (*cf.* Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1), is an approach that focuses on the understanding of individual wellbeing. It is an approach that could be used to understand social justice and human development. It is a theoretical approach that focuses on how opportunities can be expanded for every individual concerning their quality of life and the freedoms of choice available to them to enhance social justice. the "functions" and "capabilities", "means", "conversion factors" and "agency" were the key characteristics that were used as lenses to explore the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in empowering graduates with the freedom to be skilled and employable (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). It was about helping graduates from social science degree programmes to act and become whomever they wanted to be after graduating.

Within the context of the Human Capability Approach, Capabilities are taken as available opportunities for an individual, while functions are what those opportunities (capabilities) allow one to do or be (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.3). Capabilities thus were considered as opportunities that gave one freedom to achieve possible outcomes (functions) in line with what they valued to improve their wellbeing. In addition, within the human capability approach, the "means" in this study implied access to educational activities to enhance one's wellbeing. Whereas, conversion factors (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5) that may be personal, social, or environmental in nature, may constrain or help one to achieve their wellbeing. In the context of the study on skills development and graduate employability in social sciences in Zambia, the conversion

factors could include one's background, policies, laws, power relations, and labour market conditions that may either positively or negatively affect one's ability to achieve their desired goals and wellbeing. Ultimately, the human capability approach was used to seek understanding of the extent to which graduating students from social science degree programmes from selected universities were given opportunities (capabilities) to acquire employability skills (functionings) for them to be employable (achieve wellbeing) (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.4).

6.2.1.2 The human capital theory

The Human Capital Theory (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.7.1) is another theory that was used in the study to look at skills development and graduate employability in social sciences. The Human Capital Theory was used as a theoretical lens in the study due to its supposition that individuals' productive capacities can be enhanced through investment in education, on-the-job training and health (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.1). In addition, the assumption by the theory that investment in education can lead one to skills acquisition was of interest to this study.

The Human Capital Theory was thus used to understand how different education practices such as internships and student work placements could be used to help university students in the selected social science degree programmes acquire the skills demanded by the labour market in Zambia.

6.2.1.3 The signalling or screening hypothesis

The signalling hypothesis (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.2) on the other hand, is premised on the supposition that the actual productivity of prospective employees can only be determined by looking at the credentials acquired by an individual from a learning institution and that the screening of the qualifications held by graduates, is a proxy that can be used to assess their competencies. This implies that the perceptions held by prospective employers over a given qualification are to a greater extent likely to have a positive or negative bearing on students' employability on the labour market.

The screening hypothesis was thus essential to the study of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia's labour market. In a nutshell, the three theoretical

underpinnings (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.8.1) helped the researcher to explore how the developed skills (human capital), obtained by graduating students from the selected social science degree programmes (means) helped them acquire the qualifications (screening hypothesis) to open up opportunities and freedoms (human capability approach) for them to be employable and reach their potential wellbeing in full. These theoretical framings brought an interesting perspective to the study that the concept of graduate employability was not linear but complex (*cf*. Chapter 2, session 2.6). The next section focuses on the discussion of the scholarly literature on university skills development and employability.

6.2.4 Discussion of the Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was looked at in the context of the literature reviewed in line with the sub-research questions and provided a lens to help the researcher answer the sub-research questions in the study.

6.2.4.1 University skills development and graduate employability

Through document analysis, scholarly literature was reviewed concerning university skills development and graduate employability. The literature highlighted generic (employability) skills as being critical for university graduates to possess (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). The underlying principle was that the possession of the employability skills can spur a graduate to effectively apply their disciplinary knowledge in a given employment setting. The employability skills are important not only in social sciences but also in business and STEM-related programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.5.3.1). The highlighted employability skills are central to one's employability. While universities have the core responsibility of providing graduates from undergraduate programmes with skills, no graduate could acquire all necessary skills without the involvement of organisations within the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.4.3.3). The literature revealed that some skills could only be fully developed in students through exposure to industry work experience. This, therefore, justifies, the essence of student internships in university programmes to expose students to the pre-work experiences to strengthen their employability skills.

In answering the question of what constituted university skills development and graduate employability, the conceptual framework of the study (*cf*. Chapter 2, figure

2.1) helped the researcher to consider the process of skills development as one that commenced with access to university education programmes (means to achieve) and that the educational experiences that come with that access, should open up opportunities for a university student to be exposed to quality teaching and learning processes to acquire employability (generic) skills as human capital (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8.2). Such skills and other attributes acquired through effective learning experiences should enable a graduate to carry an identity that widens their employability. With the aid of the conceptual framework, the researcher explored how the academic credentials obtained and other unknown factors influence a graduate's employability on the labour market on the premise of how such a qualification is perceived by the players in the market (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8.1).

6.2.4.2 Relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs in the labour market in Zambia

Concerning the relevance of social science degree programmes, reviewed literature revealed that the relevance of social sciences should be based on their significance to the needs of the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1). If the social science qualifications obtained are not in line with the skill needs, then that may amount to a skills mismatch between what is produced by the universities and what the industry anticipates. It was also evident from the literature that the potential employers' perception of skills acquired from pursuing a social science degree programme may have a bearing on programme relevance and consequently graduate employability in the labour market. Moreover, many scholars suggest that though social sciences are generally important to our understanding of humanity and society at large, (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.2) in labour industry context where higher education focus is more on STEM-related programmes, and not social sciences, the latter are considered to be of less importance to the needs of the labour market. This is especially so where social sciences are described as generalist programmes with no clearly defined career trajectory compared to STEM programmes.

In addition, the study also sought to evaluate the extent to which the four social science degree programmes were relevant to the skill needs of the labour market. Within the ambiance of the conceptual framework (*cf*. Chapter 2, figure 2.1) the researcher developed hindsight of how the relevance of social sciences could be looked at in the

context of conversion factors. As espoused by the Human Capability Approach, any social science degree programme taken by a student was shrouded in several conversion factors concerning their relevance on the labour market. In terms of social conversion factors, a social science degree programme is relevant to the skill needs of the labour market to the extent that the potential employers perceive the qualification to be of value to them (screening hypothesis), and the support received by universities from the labour industry to promote such a programme. Equally important were the environmental conversion factors such as the policies and policies put in place to support how the universities related to the universities where the social science programmes were offered (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.3). Further, the relevance of the social science degree programme was looked at in terms of the availability of job opportunities and a conducive labour market situation to favour the use of the acquired skills (achievements) by a social science graduate from a university. Lastly, the conceptual framework also highlights the importance of individual agency in promoting the relevance of the social science degree programmes pursued by a graduate (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.6). That having some form of social capital could help one to easily attain the employability status from a given social science degree programme.

6.2.4.3 Availability and effectiveness of student internships and student work placements to promote employability skills in social science degree programmes

Literature abound that supports student internships as an important example of WIL practices. Internships are considered to play an important role in skills development (*cf*. Chapter 3, session 3.4.1). Internship programmes help students acquire practical experience with hands-on experiences in the work setting. The acquired skills are important in helping one to be work-ready (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). This is because they provide university students with an opportunity to engage in authentic workspaces where they apply their theory in practice. In so doing, university students are helped to acquire skills necessary for their employability. A plethora of literature further highlights internships as an important component in university education for skills development (Rastrick, 2014:21). Literature also shows that the effectiveness of

internship programmes in promoting skills transfer in any programme is dependent on how well they are designed and assessed (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2).

Given the foregoing, the conceptual framework of the study was used to assess the effectiveness of student internships and work placements in the four social science degree programmes that were considered. In this study, the availability of internships or work placement practices was taken to be one of the most important ways of giving freedom and opportunities (capabilities) to university students to achieve employability skills (functionings) that could make their transition to the world of work easier as a result of the acquired freedom of being employable (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8.2). For the internship experiences to be effective, literature revealed that university students in social sciences must be exposed to quality learning experiences in the labour industry for them to acquire such skills (Jackson, 2015:350).

6.2.4.4 Challenges of the benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes

In Chapter 3, the literature on the challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry shows that to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour market, the universities needed to partner with the labour industry organisations (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). It is also reported that strong university-industry partnerships can promote graduate employability and that such partnerships can make it easier for universities to engage in collaborative activities meant to benefit both the labour industry and university students. Many scholars highlight the different ways through which the universities have partnered with the labour industry in different countries for the benefit of university graduates (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). Through the different forms of partnership, universities can benefit by producing graduates who are relevant to the need of the labour industry. It is also clear from the literature that despite the benefits, such partnerships have their challenges.

The assessment of the challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in the selected universities was also looked at in the context of the conceptual framework of the study (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8). In this study, the researcher used the conceptual

framework to look at how various conversion factors (human capability approach), such as employer perception of the social science degree programmes and qualifications, influenced the labour industry organisations decisions to partner with the university or their units that offered social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.2). The researcher also looked at how the roles played by various stakeholders, such as the government ministries and agencies as well as the labour industry organisations, created opportunities (benefits) that promoted or constrained partnerships between the universities and the labour industry in elevating the relevance of the social science degree programmes to the labour market in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8.2). the underlying assumption was that partnerships between the universities and the labour industry could be affected by the available policies and legal guidelines or lack thereof and the available prevailing labour market conditions (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.6). All these aspects could affect the university-industry partnerships in one way or the other in promoting labour market-relevant social science degree programmes.

6.2.4.5 Framework to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs on the job market

To enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the labour market, the study sought to come up with measures that would inform a theoretical model to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes in Zambia. Available literature reveals that to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes both internal and external quality assurance measures were to be put in place (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.6). The study, therefore, sought ways through which various stakeholders could contribute towards enhancing the employability of graduates from social science degree programmes. Within the context of the conceptual framework of the study (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.8), the researcher was helped to see how various individual, social and environmental conversion factors could be used to help various stakeholders to positively work together in promoting the freedoms and opportunities that can help graduates from the social science degree programmes attain graduate identity and consequently employability (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1). This section has provided a discussion of the conceptual framework as used in the study.

6.3 UNIVERSITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

To appraise what scholarly literature says about university skills development and graduate employability, the research sought to answer the research question: *What does scholarly literature say about university skills development and graduate employability?* This research question provided a precursor to the inquiry in establishing what constituted skills development and graduate employability from the scholarly perspective. Document analysis played a key role in helping the researcher to adequately answer this question. The review of scholarly literature on what constituted university skills development and graduate employability revealed two important aspects of the discourse. The researcher found that university skills development and graduate employability were anchored on two main factors. The first one is the presence and assessment of the development of generic (employability) skills development in all undergraduate university degree programmes. The second one is the need for the contextual understanding of the aspects that constituted graduate employability in university degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2).

The review of literature highlighted that, unlike technical and vocational training institutions that are mandated to train students to acquire technical and vocational skills that are job-specific, universities were established to produce graduates with the capacity to learn how to learn for easy adaptation in any given working environment (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1). The argument of exposing university students to soft generic skills, also known as employability or transferable skills, was key to the understanding of university skills development for the non-technical degree programmes, the social sciences (Osmani *et al.,* 2019:1). Universities appear to be better suited to provide graduates with generic skills.

As defined in Chapter 1, generic skills are also referred to as employability skills, as they increase one's chances of being employable. The generic skills are key competencies that are meant to enhance critical thinking and knowledge generation within an individual (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). The employability skills are therefore key to the discourse of skills development and graduate employability. They can help one to easily grasp and analyse complex information to overcome some work-related obstacles and help achieve organisational goals. The employability skills

must constitute a major component of the curriculum learning outcomes for any given programme in a learning institution (Cunningham & Villasenor, 2016:104). Recent research suggests that helping students to acquire employability skills can help them attain graduate identity and consequently employability status (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1). Several key employability skills that graduates of any degree programme at the university level must possess are well documented (*cf*. Chapter 3, Table 3.1). Universities that offer degree programmes must therefore provide a clear articulation of the programme knowledge and skills outcomes for all programme courses on offer. Also, the methods of teaching must promote the acquisition of such competencies as clearly set out in the programme curriculum (ZAQA, 2016:19).

In addition to the possession of employability skills, the content analysis of scholarly literature revealed that graduate employability was context-bound. As such, those concerned with graduate employability need to take into consideration several aspects that may affect graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). As such aspects include employer perception of graduate work readiness and identity, university attended and programme pursued, it may have a limiting effect on the employability prospects of every prospective graduate. It has also been demonstrated that a graduate's social capacity and lack of the universal conceptualisation and model of what constitutes employability could also influence how the question of graduate employability is looked at in different contexts. This entails that the way the discourse of graduate employability is looked at in other countries, may not be the same as the way it is viewed in Zambia. Graduate employability is context-bound. Reviewed literature indicates that the concept of graduate employability is not universal - it has many meanings (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). This has implications in understanding employability. The next section focuses on the discussion of the Empirical Findings of the Study.

6.4 DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The discussion of the findings focused on the empirical data collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. The findings are discussed through cross-referencing other chapters of the thesis.

6.4.1 The Relevance of Social Science Degree Programmes to The Skill Needs of The Labour Industry in Zambia

The question of the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skill needs of the labour industry was understood by looking at various aspects that constituted the perspectives that informed the usefulness of the selected social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour industry. To evaluate the relevance of social science degree programmes focusing on the four programmes under consideration, the researcher used findings from the interviews and questionnaires to discuss the question: *To what extent are social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities relevant to the skills needs on the job market in Zambia?*

To evaluate the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market skill needs in Zambia, I discuss the themes that emerged from the study as findings. The findings include the Need and importance of social science degree programmes, Perception of employability skills in the social science degree programmes, Graduate Work readiness in social sciences, Availability of graduate job prospects, and Demand for the social science degree programmes in the targeted universities. This study focused on four socials science degree programmes. These were the: Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Education (Social Sciences), Bachelor of Public Administration and Bachelor of Development Studies.

6.4.1.1 Importance and need for social sciences

To discuss the importance and need for social sciences, empirical data from the interviews and questionnaires was used. In determining the importance of social science degree programmes, the majority of the key informants interviewed viewed social science as being relevant to the needs of the labour market and society in general (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.1). However, some considered the social science degree programmes as being secondary to STEM-related fields and playing a secondary role in the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.1). The finding indicated that the social science degree programmes were considered to be important to the needs of the labour industry and point to the views expressed by one scholar (Goma, 1975:8) that the social sciences degree programmes were important especially in helping us understand human societies in terms of their history, culture, language, and

social interactions (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1). Social sciences are important. For instance, Development Studies help us appreciate the various aspects and complexities that underpin the development processes for different societies. Social Work, as an academic and practice-based discipline, is meant to produce graduates with skills to promote social change and empowerment by ensuring social justice and community engagement. Such programmes are essential to overcome inequalities. Public Administration is another academic discipline that leads to the production of graduates who are trained as public administrators responsible for implementing public policy. Lastly, a Bachelor of Education degree programme focusing on either History, Civic Education, English Language, Religious Studies, or Geography, was aimed at training teachers to teach social sciences in secondary schools. It should be noted that from the four programmes that were considered, students at some universities had the major and minor study area except for social work. Minor study areas included sociology, political science, gender studies, demography and others.

Albeit important, the social science degree programmes were perceived differently concerning their contribution to the labour market in comparison to STEM-related fields such as Engineering, Mathematics, Computer studies, and others. The STEM-related fields are often referred to as the programmes that produce people with qualifications that anchor the economy in the labour market. Social sciences on the other hand are considered as being of less value compared to STEM qualifications (*cf*. Chapter 3, para 3.3.1). This unappreciative perspective of the role of social science degree programmes can be noted in descriptions such as being nothing but complementary disciplines to science and technology (Yonezawa, 2017:31) and as generalist programmes with no clearly defined career pathway (Kinash *et al.,* 2014:24). This perspective excludes Economics and Law programmes that have well-defined career paths. This understanding was echoed in the classical speech by Goma (1975:8) who stated that despite their importance to understanding society, social sciences are perceived as not having immediate manpower relevance to the labour industry.

In the context of this negative perception, Goma (1975:8) encouraged universities in Africa to relook at the importance of social sciences by not underestimating the potential and actual “usefulness of the useless disciplines”. The downplaying of the importance of social sciences compared to STEM programmes is premised on the

thinking that the relevance of any university degree programme can only be determined by their usefulness to the needs of the labour market and that any departure from this may result in skills-mismatch and qualification irrelevance (Rastrick, 2018:24). The supposed negative perception of social science degree programmes, can be looked at as one of the social conversion factors that universities offering social science degree programmes must work to overcome (*cf*. Chapter 2 section 2.3.2.5.2)

The next sub-section considers perceptions of social science degree programmes.

6.4.1.2 Perception of employability skills in the social science degree programmes

Using data from questionnaires and interviews, the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market was also considered by looking at how various stakeholders rated their level of satisfaction with employability skills students had acquired from their programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.2). The student and employer quantitative data (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.7) revealed that students and employers rated their level of satisfaction with employability skills differently. Presented with eight employability skills on a Likert scale of 1-5, 1 representing being very dissatisfied and 5 very satisfied, students rated more satisfied with accountability (4.5) than any other skill. This was followed by professionalism, ability to perform tasks in defined settings, interpersonal skills and self-management (4.4) This was followed by their satisfaction with critical thinking, creativity and initiative skills (4.3). The students in the four social science degree programmes were least satisfied with problem-solving skills (4.2). The results were indicative that students were not fully or very satisfied with the employability skills they had acquired in their programmes of study.

Subsequently, employers were also requested to rate their level of satisfaction with the employability skills of their graduate employees with social science degree qualification at job entrant level on the same Likert scale of 1-5 (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.7). The employers' mean score was closer to but less than 4. The employers' results indicated that graduate employees were better in professionalism and problem-solving skills (3.5). They were less satisfied with their employee's ability to perform tasks in

defining settings, accountability, creativity, and initiative skills (3.3). the new employees scored least in interpersonal skills with a mean score of 3.2.

The comparison of the student and employer responses regarding their level of satisfaction with the employability skills acquired by university students in their final year of study, and those of the new graduate employees from the field of social sciences, revealed that students overrated themselves compared to how the employers rated their employees. While students considered themselves more satisfied with problem-solving skills acquired whilst at university, the employers were least satisfied with the interpersonal skills of their graduate employees (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.7). Thereafter, the students rated themselves satisfied with the accountability skills (4.5), but the employers were less satisfied with the performance of their employees concerning accountability (3.3). The variations in the perceptions of the rate of satisfaction with the employability skills of university students and graduate employees with social science qualifications, signify the variations in skills assessment between the university and the workplace setting. This could also imply that students may not be in a position to clearly understand these skills and consequently rate themselves accurately compared to what employers were able to see (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1).

Moreover, while the student's self-ratings with their level of satisfaction with employability skills acquired may demonstrate how confident they were with acquiring skills, it is the employer rating of the employees' use of employability skills at a workplace setting that matters most. The employers' perception of employability skills has more of a bearing on graduate employability than student self-ratings. The fact that employers were not very satisfied with the graduate employees' performance concerning skills such as the ability to perform tasks in clearly defined settings, accountability, interpersonal skills and creativity skills implies that graduate employees were less competent in these areas at the job entrance level (*cf*. Chapter 3, Table 3.4). Further, the fact that employers were almost neutral in their ratings of most of the eight employability skills is a clear indication that graduates were not adequately prepared to demonstrate those skills at work without difficulty.

A detailed thematic analysis of the qualitative data also revealed that if the students in the four social science degree programmes are to be employable, they needed to

possess employability skills. The study revealed that generic skills such as communication skills, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, ICT skills, critical thinking and, entrepreneurial skills, amongst others, were key in promoting the employability prospects of graduates (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). The importance of these skills was in line with Riley (2013:681) who also found interpersonal skills, spoken skills, creative skills, critical thinking, adaptation, self-confidence, work experience and job-specific technical skills and job-specific competencies to be key in guaranteeing graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.2). Other scholars (Gao *et al.,* 2014:440; Osmani, 2019:3;) have all found such similar employability skills to be essential for graduate employability. It is possible however to note that the perception of the importance of employability skills is likely to vary depending on the industry in which one finds oneself.

Employability skills are thus central to the discourse of employability for social science graduates. Unlike their counterparts in STEM fields, those with social science qualifications may not easily demonstrate their skills compared to those in practical sciences where their jobs speak directly to their practical skills (Kinash *et al.,* 2014:24). The variations in the perceptions of the skills graduates may acquire from social sciences for them to be employable, means that their importance is not valued by all in comparison to STEM programmes. This understanding implies that students in the four social science degree programmes must be well equipped with employability skills (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.2), which could be the only way they can demonstrate their usefulness with the acquired skills to the labour industry.

Further, in trying to promote the relevance of employability skills in the discourse of graduate employability, Osmani *et al.* (2019:1) argues that universities must focus on empowering students with the capabilities to learn how to learn and not just equip them with job-ready skills. This line of thinking is critical to the demands of the 21st Century workplace and where knowledge has become more dynamic and keeps on changing within the work environment. As such, rather than just equipping university students with job-ready skills or disciplinary knowledge, that may be rendered useless with the advancement of technology and job profiling, a graduate must be helped to acquire employability skills and the principles that govern their field of study. However, the downside of teaching university students to learn how to learn, entails that the employers may become the final determiners of work readiness. This entails

employing organisations within the labour industry which has a latent function of teaching graduates at job entrant level how to carry out their work. If that were the case, the exposure of university students to experiential learning in the job industry before graduation may be instrumental in promoting graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 3, section, 3.4.1).

The importance of employability skills in social science degree programmes to enhance graduate employability underscores the need to rethink the teaching of social sciences in universities. The fact that most programmes do not give students practical skills as in the STEM programmes, it may be possible that lecturers are exposing students more to information about disciplinary knowledge of the academic discipline at the expense of exposing them to skills such as interpersonal skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills, to name a few. More so from the study, it appears that there are no clearly defined skills that may constitute graduate employability skills in most of the social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1). This, therefore, requires that both universities and the labour industry focus on how employability skills can effectively be taught to students with a common understanding of what they are, for students to be employable after graduation.

Generic (employability) skills thus were considered indispensable in the training of students in social sciences. The views of one of the respondents, P#03, summarises this well when he said:

> *So generic skills for me need to be embedded and what we need to start doing is to think of striking a balance between disciplinary education which is extremely important and also skills education. You see the thing is I think there's been an evolution in terms of the purposes of education. We are no longer in that space where it's learning just for curiosity, as you mentioned, it is learning also for employability, learning also to be part of the solutions to some of the challenges we are facing.*

6.4.1.3 Graduate work readiness in social sciences

Graduate work readiness was another important aspect that was used to evaluate the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the skill needs of the labour market. Using data from questionnaires, the study sought to establish the work-

readiness of the final year students in the four social science degree programmes. This was achieved by carrying out a bivariate association analysis and multivariate regression analyses on the background characteristics of the student respondents. In addition, the analysis of qualitative responses from key informants was used to determine graduate work readiness in social sciences (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.3).

The two statistical analyses on quantitative data brought out interesting findings (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.10 and Table 5.11). To begin with, the study revealed that the age of a student in any of the social science degree programmes was a determining factor of work readiness of some students (P=0.315) in that the much older students (35 and above) were more likely to be work-ready compared to those who were younger. It was also found that students who were married were perceived to be more likely to be work-ready compared to single ones and those pursuing the Bachelor of Development Studies were found to be more likely to be work-ready compared to other programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.3)

Although the background information was found to be less of a predictor of association between work readiness and the background characteristics, there were some possible explanations for the association that existed. The possible explanation to the outcome that students pursuing the Bachelor of Development Studies were more work-ready compared to others, stems from the likelihood that the programme had more students who were older and married compared to other programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.11). This could also imply that the programme had more students with exposure to prior training and work experience and had enrolled at the university to upgrade their qualifications to a degree in social science. This could be the reason they may have had the financial capacity to attend a private university. With exposure to prior learning and work experience, such students were more likely to be work-ready compared to younger students without work experience apart from the internship attachment stint (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). From the statistical point of view, the majority of the students were found to be lacking in work readiness. This finding underscores the importance of prior work experience through internships for graduates to be ready for the workplace.

The quantitative findings corroborated with the qualitative data in terms of how key informants perceived university graduates from social sciences concerning work

readiness. There was consensus from those interviewed that most university graduates were not ready for work at the time of securing a job opportunity and were, hence less productive. This was evidenced by submissions such as:

> *They made it so clear and straightforward that regardless of what field, regardless of what qualification, what profession, when they employ someone from university or college, mostly they have to retrain them for a period of time before they become productive (Respondent P#04).*

Work readiness entails a graduate demonstrating optimal competencies and attributes necessary at job entry-level (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1). Thus, not being work-ready implies that the employer found that graduate employees did not have the necessary skills requisites expected of them at the time of getting a job (Gonzalez-Roma, 2016:144). With most graduates being found not to be work-ready by employers, it is indicative of the supposition that they were missing exposure to quality work-integrated learning activities such as internships to acquire employability skills and become work-ready (Singh *et al.,* 2014:854). It also reveals the existential mismatch between the universities offering skills development and the expectation of the industry they are to work for (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.7). This results in reduced productivity if work organisations find graduates not to be work-ready. More so, employing organisations were likely to incur extra financial costs to retrain graduates from the fields of social sciences to fit in the industry to take up new tasks and assignments.

6.4.1.4 Availability of graduate job prospects

In discussing the availability of job prospects, data from questionnaires and interviews were used. The aspect of graduate job prospects came out as one of the themes that had a bearing on the employability of graduates in social sciences. Both qualitative and quantitative results revealed different job prospects for graduates in the four social science degree programmes. It was established that the majority of the graduates from the four programmes were more interested in getting employment compared to engaging in self-employment or pursuing further studies (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.4). The implication of this was that many pursued these programmes to secure a job (*cf*. Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2). Employability to them would therefore entail securing a job after completing their programme. For instance, the fact that most of those pursuing

the Bachelor of Education programme opted to become employed after graduation, was indicative of the limited employment and self-employment ventures outside the public teaching service in Zambia.

The finding that 25% of those who pursued social work were willing to venture into self-employment is a clear indication of the availability of job opportunities especially in the private sector where such graduates could form their Non-Government Organisations or other already existing CBOs, FBOs, and UN Agencies established to promote social justice and poverty reduction through empowerment programmes to the marginalised sections of the Zambian population especially in the rural areas. The majority of the students in the Bachelor of Public Administration programme opted to venture into further education after graduation. This could signal the desire to pursue employment opportunities that come with accessing postgraduate education. This could as well imply limited job opportunities for graduates at the undergraduate level.

The results thus revealed variations in the existence of job opportunities for graduates from the social sciences in the labour sector. More job opportunities were likely to be available for graduates from social work compared to the other programmes. Therefore, the limited job opportunities for graduates in the other programmes could point to a mismatch between the graduate outputs from social sciences and what the labour industry was demanding (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.6.4). This was echoed by Moono and Rankin (2013:1) and Khare (2014:39-40) on how skills mismatch and graduate oversupply could lead to increased graduate unemployment. Labour market saturation could be another reason. This entails that most social science graduates were likely not to have a chance to secure the limited jobs available on the market. They may as well lack capacity and an enabling environment for them to engage in self-employment activities. This view was in agreement with what one key informant (P#03) pointed out when he said:

> *But the reality of the day is that there are not many jobs out there. Basically, as a country, we have not created enough jobs especially outside the public sector and this is telling by the numbers of graduates that are unemployed and so on. The question is whether this points to a mismatch between education and skills out there. It is a question that we can't answer outrightly because it's complex. There are many dimensions to this. One question would be whether the economy*

is or the environment is enabling even for people that we channel out of there to be able to use the skills if they have the skills. So, there is also a big question.

In Zambia, the government is the largest public sector employer for teachers; however, the finding indicated that even those trained to be teachers had limited job prospects which pointed to the lack of financial capacity for the government to recruit every teacher. The results also reveal that the issues of job prospects were not a challenge to those who were already in service and pursuing a social science programme for them to secure a higher qualification.

The limited job prospects in social sciences could as well be understood in the context of conversion factors, as espoused by the Human Capability Approach (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5). The social (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.2) and environmental (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.3). Conversion factors could border on the labour industry's negative value perception of the social science qualifications and institutional reputation of where such qualifications were acquired (Robeyns, 2005:99). This could limit their participation in the labour industry. Similarly, the Screening Hypothesis (Page, 2010:34) may be at play in creating an impression for the labour industry that some qualifications by graduates from social science degree programmes were of no immediate relevance to the labour industry, hence limited job prospects for such graduates (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.2).

6.4.1.5 Demand for the social science degree programmes in the targeted universities

Qualitative data from the study established that the number of students pursuing the four social science degree programmes has not been increasing. It was reported that on average, most programmes enrolled between 30 and 150 students in the 2019 academic year (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.5). The Bachelor of Social Work had more students compared to the other programmes, which is indicative that the programme was in demand compared to the others. The fact that the demand for social science degree programmes is often linked to the demand for skills in the labour market, provides a basis for explaining the dwindling numbers of students pursuing social science degree programmes in Zambia. Although the number of students pursuing social science degree programmes appears to be decreasing, The Ministry of Education found that almost 65% of those who were entering the university were

pursuing social science degree programmes that had less demand for skill needs of the job market (MOE, 2017:58). The report by the Ministry of Education that more students were enrolled in social sciences compared to STEM programmes, could hold in that majority of more than 50 universities in the country were offering social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, Section 3.2.6.3). Despite having so many universities offering social science degree programmes, the number of students pursuing such programmes with less demand in the labour market experienced a decline in the number of enrolments. The limited demand for some social science degree programmes could be linked to the limited job prospects for graduates and employability skills such as entrepreneurship skills for them to become independent.

The cost attached to accessing either of the four social science degree programmes could be an inhibiting factor for those who may want to pursue such programmes. Historically most university programmes had been offered by public universities where students used to access government scholarships regardless of the programmes selected, whether in social sciences or STEM programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.7). However, since 2018, the government policy and legislation have changed towards providing student loans to university students in programmes that were of strategic importance to national skills development to realise the Zambia Vision 2030 (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.7). Government policy has been biased towards STEM-related programmes and this had led to a decline in the number of students receiving government support in social science-related fields. Many parents too were reluctant to spend money on a social science degree programme with minimal or no chances of their child securing a job in the labour market (Finch *et al.,* 2013: 681).

Furthermore, to justify the lack of demand on the labour market for social science degree programmes, most lecturers indicated the need to improve the number of human resources in their field of social science (75%) as the key motivation to offer a social science degree programme and demand for such programmes by the employers (26.7%) was secondary (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.2). The limited demand for the programme's skills in the labour market justified the reduction in the demand for some social science degree programmes such as development studies, public administration, and education. In the context of the Human Capability Approach

(Classens, 2010:104) the programmes did not increase their freedoms to acquire the skills that would improve their employability status (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.6).

6.4.2 The Availability and Effectiveness of Student Internships and Work Placements to Promote Employability Skills in Social Science Degree Programmes

To establish the effectiveness of internships and graduate work placements in promoting employability skills in graduates of social science degree programmes, the researcher sought to answer the following question: *How effective are work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?*

In answering this question several aspects were brought to the fore regarding the student, university and industry perspectives of the internships programmes for promoting employability skills amongst social science degree graduates in Zambia, as discussed below.

6.4.2.1 Presence of internships or work placement activities in social science degree programmes

The study, using data from questionnaires and interviews, found that student internships and work placements were available in all four social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.2). It was also found that of the four programmes of study, those who did social work, followed by those in development studies had internship placements as a requirement for their programme of study (*cf*. Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1). The presence of internship practices as an integral part of the social science degree programmes can be justified in the wake of promoting employability skills, that universities alone cannot sufficiently nurture in their students (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). Different names such as “Student Attachments”, “Field Experience”, Community Experience” or “School Teaching Experience” are used to describe the work-based internship practices in the four programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.1). The presence of internships in the four university programmes further signifies the need for labour industry involvement in the process of developing employability skills in university students. This is in agreement with Jackson (2015:350) who found Work Integrated Learning Activities such as internships and student work placements to be

an integral part of any programme curricular with intentions to promote skills development in graduates (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). The presence of employability skills in the degree programmes does not however translate into the express acquisition of employability skills. However, the presence of student internships in student degree programmes could be justified due to several reasons, as discussed in the next section.

6.4.2.2 The importance of internships in social science degree programmes on skills development

In this discussion, the presence of internship practices in the four programmes of study underscored their central role in skills development, as revealed by data from questionnaires and document analysis. In rating the importance, students described the internship practices as being "absolutely essential" in the four programmes of study (*cf*. Chapter 5, figure 5.3). Equally, employers found internships essential in helping students link practical work to the theoretical knowledge acquired in their programme of study (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.6). Internships also promoted experiential learning. Lecturers (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.7) agreed with the employers from labour industry that internships helped students to link practice to theory (91.7%) and that they promoted graduate identity (83.3%). By helping university students acquire the graduate identity after completion of their programmes, prevented the production of the graduates who were insufficiently prepared and inexperienced (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.2).

Internships by their definition are important Work Integrated Learning activities that expose students to some work experience in the labour industry to acquire skills and practical knowledge as to be ready for the world of work upon graduation (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). Internships thus are meant to help a student to obtain a glimpse of future work expectations in their likely profession (Hartman, 2014:1). In social science degree programmes, internships remain the major option through which university students can effectively engage with the labour industry to acquire and develop employability skills such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills, communication skills, creativity and innovativeness to name but a few (Osmani *et al.,* 2019:3) through experiential learning (Silva *et al.,* 2018:5). Consequently, internships help to smooth the transition of graduates from the university to the world of work with fewer difficulties

(*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). Students are helped to apply university theories to reality.

The importance of internships further extends to providing university students with opportunities to get noticed by their potential employers who may end up extending employment invitations to them in the future. Internship exposure, therefore, can help a graduate to acquire some social capital (*cf*. Chapter 3, section. 3.3.2.3) and use their agency to secure employment opportunities on the premise of their satisfactory interaction with their potential employer (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.,* 2016:144). Furthermore, the importance of internships in promoting employability skills can be appreciated through the lens of human capital formation involving skills acquisition during industrial attachment (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.1). While it was clear that internships were important in helping students acquire practical skills, the quality of their internship experience and assessment outcomes depended on how such programmes were designed and organised.

6.4.2.3 Nature, organisation, and assessment of internship practices

To appreciate the nature, organisation and assessment of internships or student work placements in the four social science degree programmes, the study, using data from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis, assessed the structure, timing or period, and assessment of internship practices in promoting effective skills development and transfer among university students. The study revealed several contrasts in both the organisation and assessment of the internship programmes by universities.

6.4.2.3.1 Length of internships

In terms of the length of internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.15), there were variations in the four-degree programmes. Except for the Bachelor of Public Administration, most students in the Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Development studies reported spending more than 12 weeks on internship attachment in an organisation (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). The length of the internship programmes thus ranged from 4 to 12 weeks and above. While the study did not delve into the factors that determined the length of internship attachments for students, one could think of the universities as determiners of the period of internships as they are

the programme designers. It was also not clear whether the 12 weeks (three months) on average, was adequate time for students to acquire and develop employability skills.

6.4.2.3.2 Student internship structure and assessment

Through interviews, the programmes' representatives identified varied perspectives on how the internship components were designed and embedded in the degree programmes. For example, in the social work degree programme, students attended the two internship attachments, Rural Based Internship and Urban Based Internship (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). For the remainder of the degree programmes, there was only one internship attachment within the programmes. Interestingly, some participants even reported having not attended any internship programmes at the time of data collection (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). The findings reveal that the internship practices were likely to have been structured differently in the five universities that took part in the study.

In terms of student assessment during the internship, both the employers and the lecturers used several observations by both lecturers and on-site supervisors to evaluate student learning outcomes from the internship experience (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.16). In addition to supporting the use of repeated observations to assess students on internships, universities in the four programmes employed different assessment methods to evaluate student performance during the internship (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). These methods included but were not limited to physical observations at internship sites by lecturers, student submission of reports detailing their experiences during the internship, oral presentation of the internship experiences to lecturers and case studies to research and report on. In some programmes, a questionnaire was designed to be completed by the student onsite supervisors. This was a form of evaluation by an expert from the labour industry. The questionnaire was supposed to be completed by the supervisors during observations regarding the student's performance in meeting both the industry and university expectations in terms of skills development and accomplishing of the daily and weekly tasks in the section they were attached (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3).

6.4.2.3.3 Securing placement for internship

Using qualitative data from interviews and document analysis, the study further revealed that in most cases, students had the responsibility of applying for an internship within the organisation of their interest but relevant to the programme of study. It was only in one programme, where it was found that for the rural field attachment, the department secured placement for students. But students were required to secure their placement for the urban internship experience. Most departments' efforts to secure student internships ended at writing "To Whom It May Concern Letter". Some students even assumed they could use such a letter to permanently secure employment for themselves after completion of their study programme (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). Due to the lack of a unified way of conducting internship programmes for students in the four programmes, one key informant wondered if students were adequately meeting the intended objectives for participating in attachments. It was also not clear whether the students on internships were paid by the organisations to which they were attached to acquire employability skills. Lastly, it was also found that some students attended internship practice in labour market organisations that were not relevant to their programme of study (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). Generally, the status of the internship practice in university degree programmes at the time of this study could best be summarised by what P#02 said when asked about the effectiveness of internships in promoting the graduate acquisition of employability skills:

> *From the time that debate discussion around lack of employability upon graduation of the young people and discussions have been how do we resolve that issue and the issue of internship and placements and attachments came up and even we tried to launch one with Ministry of Labour in 2013, 2014 but the challenge that was there then was that the law that is there is not covering enough to accommodate that to properly function and the biggest challenge which there is that, of course, these internships and placements do happen but they are unstructured and they are uncoordinated.*

The finding that the internships were designed and assessed in a variety of ways by the universities reinforces the observation by Hartman (2014:2) who also found that universities evaluated students on internships in different ways depending on the

quality assurance measures put in place. This to some extent is true in Zambia where all universities, public or private operate as autonomous institutions with the power to decide how the internships are to be designed and assessed (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). However, the need for well-structured and supervised internship programmes is cardinal to achieving the intended objectives of skills transfer (Sattler & Peter, 2013:114). The variations in the structuring and assessment of internship programmes at the universities that took part in the study may point to the fact that internships in the social sciences were a recent phenomenon compared to STEM-related programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). Most importantly, there has never been a national law or policy to guide the organisation and administration of internships between the university institutions and the organisations that take up students for internships in the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). Such a piece of legislation is key to provide for effective participation by the labour industry in fostering skills transfer for students in social science degree programmes.

The implication of the findings regarding the internships may point to the understanding that universities, together with some organisations in the labour industry, were learning the ropes on how best internship programmes could be organised, supervised and assessed. It is clear that universities conducted student internship programmes differently. While this study did not identify the internship component contribution to the overall programme assessment mark, available literature points to internships not exceeding 40% of the total course work (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). This entails that in the assessment process, the number of marks internships contribute to the overall coursework should be carefully arrived at, taking into consideration the importance of the skills acquired during the internship and their overall contribution to graduate identity and employability.

6.4.2.4 Challenges associated with the implementation of internships to students, universities and industry

The other important finding under the effectiveness of internships in promoting employability skills in social science degree programmes, focused on the challenges associated with the implementation of internships to the students, universities and the labour industry. The quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires and interviews revealed several challenges that were associated with the effective

implementation of student internships and work placements. It was clear that most of the challenges spoke to the design, organisation and assessment of social science degree programmes, as discussed below.

6.4.2.4.1 The students

When students who had been on an internship in their programmes of study were asked if they had faced any challenges during their internship programme, 72.5% admitted facing challenges (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4). Of the 72.5% who affirmed facing challenges during the internship engagement with the industry, only 30.3% pointed out the lack of proper support and mentorship in the organisation to which they were attached (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.8). Moreover, 28.3% of the student respondents lamented the inadequacy of the duration for the internship to learn more. Others admitted facing challenges to secure the internship placement (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.8). From the student responses, it can be deduced that apart from looking at the lack of adequate support during the internship and the difficulties of securing a place for internship attachment, most students could have been pointing to other personal challenges they may have had encountered such as lack of money for personal needs during the internship such as transport for instance, and overlooked the other challenges. It is also reasonable to state that the internship programmes may not be without challenges for students who may be having their first work experience encounters in workplace settings different to their school environment (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). This is especially so in that securing an internship means finding, meeting, working and interacting with new people with power and influence in a completely new environment. Such an environment can be hostile to students. As if that were not enough, the personality of the supervisor may make the internship experience either a good or bad one for the student. This may as well affect the student learning outcomes from the internship experiences.

Most students who faced challenges reported the lack of adequate support from those they worked with during internship, which may be attributed to the lack of a blueprint (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3) to explicitly inform the on-site supervisors and mentors of the kind of support students were supposed to be given concerning skills transfer (Sattler & Peters, 2013:114). However, this explanation can also be attributed to the rigidity of some organisations to take up university students on internships. In the

absence of formalised partnerships through memoranda of understanding, labour market organisations were under no obligation to offer university students internship placement by merely presenting to them the “To Whom It May Concern” letter. In addition, labour industry organisations may also have considered taking up students on internships as a share waste of time and resources. This was so for all programmes except for the Bachelor of Education where universities students could easily secure internship placements in secondary schools in Zambia.

The duration that students spent during the internship experience depended on the way the degree programmes were structured by their universities (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). This may as well be understood in the context of the lack of properly defined timeframes of the duration of the internships.

6.4.2.4.2 The lecturers

Apart from experiencing challenges during internships, lecturers in social science degree programmes also expressed concern with challenges associated with implementing the internship component of their social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4). Although the self-reporting of lecturers revealed that they did not experience challenges when it came to the implementation of the internship programmes, they reported the inflexibility (50%) of some organisations to take in their students for internships attachments. Associated with this inflexibility, it was also found that some organisations were not willing to offer placement to students for internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.9). Lecturers also expressed concern with the limited time students had for internships.

The challenges expressed by lecturers spoke to the organisation of the internships in terms of time allocation and lack of a proper structure or framework to guide the administration of internships between the universities and the labour industry organisations (Alpaydin, 2015:964). It may have also been possible that the inflexibility and rigidity by some organisations to offer students an internship placement may be due to a lack of any perceived value to their organisation (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2).

6.4.2.4.3 The employers

Employers representing the labour industry organisations in both the public and private sectors revealed their unwillingness to offer internship placements to university students from the social science degree programmes. This was attributed to the lack of clearly defined rules of engagement between the universities and the labour industry organization (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4) as there was a lack of a legal framework and policy to spell out how the universities and the labour industry were to coordinate student internships. Without proper rules of engagement, university students were only left to use their social capital to secure passage to the internship placements (GRZ, 2019:1). In the absence of a formal relationship between a university and the labour industry organisations, the latter took up students for internship only if the presence of an intern in their midst was perceived to be beneficial to the organisation (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2). The importance of having a public legal framework in place to guide how internship programmes are administered may also be appreciated as it may be impractical for a single university to enter into memoranda of understanding with all actors in the labour industry.

Through document analysis, it was found that although the National Apprenticeship Act No. 13 of 1997 existed, it did not provide for university students to attend apprenticeships. It was enacted specifically to cater for students pursuing vocational and technical programmes in colleges and not university students. Apart from its inapplicability to university students, the Apprenticeship Act was also outdated and out of sync with the best practices of modern university-industry student internship practices (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3).

In response to the lack of policy guidelines for student internships, the Government, through the Ministry of Higher Education in Partnership with MLSS and ILO, launched the 2019 National Internship Guidelines (GRZ, 2019:1). The guidelines were introduced to guide the provision of internships for graduates from higher learning institutions. The Internship Guidelines, however, did not carter for internships for students who were still at university. It was designed for those who had just graduated from their degree programmes. It must be noted that the best time for students to acquire employability skills is when they are still at universities. While promoting graduate internships may be one way of helping graduates secure employment,

extending the guidelines to cater for students within the university may be helpful to both the universities and the labour industry on how best internships can be provided for students to promote their work readiness through the acquisition of employability skills. The document, as its name suggests, was a mere guideline, implying that it was not legally enforceable on the part of the student, and the labour industry organisations. All in all, the launched 2019 National internship Guidelines did not cure the challenges associated with internships for university students in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). The lack of a legal and policy framework to promote quality internship experiences for university students in the labour industry created challenges for students and students faced many hurdles in securing internship placement.

The lack of tangible support from the universities to help students find attachment placements coupled with the lack of adequate support and mentorship in some organisations, left students being described as a “Double-Blind Orphan”. There is a need to formalise a legal policy framework to address some of the challenges the students, universities, and the labour industry organisations are facing to improve student experiences and the administration of internships. The legal policy framework is necessary owing to the importance of internships for student skills development and to clearly define the tripartite roles of the student, university, and place of internship in the labour industry (GRZ, 2019:10).

The next section discusses the challenges and benefits of university-industry partnerships

6.4.3 Challenges and Benefits of Universities in Partnering with The Labour Industry to Promote the Market-Driven Social Science Degree Programmes in Zambia

The study, using both data from interviews and questionnaires, further sought to assess the challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-relevant social science degree programmes. To meet that objective, the study sought to answer the question: *What are the challenges and benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia?* To assess the challenges and benefits associated with universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes, the sub-themes which emerged are

discussed below. These include the: Availability and nature of university-industry partnerships in social science degree programmes, Benefits of university-industry partnerships; Challenges of university-industry partnerships and possible areas of partnerships, as discussed below.

6.4.3.1 Availability and nature of university-industry partnerships in social science degree programmes

Before an assessment is made on the university-industry partnership in promoting market-driven social science degree programmes, the study wished to establish if any partnership between universities and the labour industry existed and if so, interrogate the nature of such partnerships. Using findings from interviews and questionnaires, the study revealed that from the perspective of social science degree programmes, partnerships with industry were available for both the public and private industries. However, such partnerships were found to be weak (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.1). From the qualitative findings, it was found that the universities offering the social science degree programmes were engaged in some partnerships with government ministries and other NGOs.

In one university (C#D), the available partnerships were with the mining industry and other government agencies. However, it was also found that some universities failed to secure partnerships with the industry due to a number of reasons. For those who secured partnerships, they were premised on some Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), especially where the industry wanted to provide the university with some services, secure training placement for organisational employees, or create space for students to attend internship attachments (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.1). These partnerships were not very common especially in social science degree programmes except for the Bachelors of Economics and Laws, which often had a strong linkage with labour industry.

There could be many possible explanations for the lack of strong linkages between the universities and the labour industry when it comes to social science degree programmes such as Development Studies, Public Administration, Political Science, and Social Science-Based Education Programmes. One explanation could be the lack of appreciation by the labour industry of the benefits they may accrue from engaging with universities in promoting such partnerships. It could also entail that the

universities were not reaching out to the labour industry to market their programme or promote the relevance of their programme to the labour industry. This may as well entail that the industries may have had no space to accommodate more social science students compared to those they may have already accommodated. Or possibly it could be that the industry is still small to cater to the many social science degree programmes that universities were offering in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.6.4). The last point is supported by Mafumbate (2014:59), who argued that the graduates produced by the learning institutions should match the available job opportunities in the labour market.

Given the foregoing, it can be deduced that the appreciation of the university-industry partnerships can only be realised to the extent that both the universities and the labour industry perceive the engagement to be of benefit to both the students and the industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4). While graduates were one of the end products of universities, they eventually ended up as a critical human resource input to enhance industrial productivity. As such, universities and the labour industry must forge partnerships that are meant to benefit both parties. This is what was found in Egypt that the nature of partnerships that existed between universities and the labour industry involved university technology and transfer through consultancy and pieces of training with industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5).

Partnerships are developed through teaching and learning and research and providing internship spaces for university students in the labour industry. The nature of partnerships in Egypt and other countries (El Hadidi & Kirby, 2017:195), appears not to be the case in Zambia with regards to the four social science degree programmes and others. The labour industry in Zambia seems to be so divorced from the universities especially in social sciences in areas such as research, participation in teaching and learning, and technology transfer (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). These forms of engagement, however, were not common in the linkages between the universities and the labour industry, except for creating space for students for student internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section, 5.6.1), which could suggest many things. The industry may not have been willing to engage in any strong collaborations with universities, especially in social sciences. Several collaborations however exist between the labour industry and the university departments offering STEM programmes.

6.4.3.2 Benefits of university-industry partnerships

This finding arose from the question to assess ways in which universities were partnering with the labour industry in promoting social science degree programmes that are relevant to the needs of the labour market. It was evident from the results obtained through questionnaires and interviews that the university-industry partnerships were beneficial in helping university students in social science degree programmes to apply their theoretical knowledge to the real world of work during internship attachments (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.2). Exposing students to the industry was one way the social science degree programmes were being marketed in terms of their relevance to the industry. Though not supported by the majority, some employers were of the view that such partnerships did enhance public confidence in the relevance of social science degree programmes in the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.17), because the industry is often the end-user of graduates from university programmes. That being the case, the industry is in a better position to give universities feedback on the relevance of social science degree programmes. Such feedback is what could guide university departments on how best the programmes could be designed, reviewed, and packaged to meet the needs of the labour industry practices and enhance the employability of graduates (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). For instance, it is organisations in the labour market that are involved in social work-related programmes and projects in the country that may be better positioned to comment on the kind of social workers the universities were supposed to produce for the 21st Century.

The benefits associated with the university-industry partnerships regarding the four social science degree programmes reinforced the observation by Simon (2016:87) that university-industry collaborations were better placed to enhance graduate employability by helping students to acquire skills that could only be exposed by students engaging with the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). It was clear that university-industry collaboration created a friendly avenue for universities to reach out to the labour industry. The university-industry collaborations are essential in arriving at a common understanding of what constitutes graduate employability. Graduate employability requires a multi-stakeholder approach. It requires the sharing of information between what the universities are offering, what industries are

anticipating, and what the graduate is equipped with, to carry the employability identity (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.7).

The undertaking that the concept of graduate employability is a shared responsibility between universities, employers and students, implies that each of the three had a role to play in the graduate outcomes. For example, university students must commit themselves to attain a graduate identity and acquire the personal agency to navigate the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.3). In further justifying the returns associated with university-industry partnership, Bonvin and Galster (2010:72) urged governments, universities, and all actors in the labour market to work together by putting in place measures to remove or lessen the individual and social conversion factors such as the negative perception of social science qualifications, that may hinder graduates of such programmes from enjoying their freedoms and aspirations of being employable (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3..2.5.2) The many benefits associated with university-industry partnerships should motivate universities to offer the social science degree programmes with the assurance of student exposure to real work experiences through effective internship programmes to sharpen their skills and ensure that they are work-ready (Simon, 2016:87).

6.4.3.3 Challenges of university-industry partnerships

The study also found that many challenges impeded effective university-industry partnerships. As earlier discussed, the collaboration between the universities and the labour industry in the context of social science degree programmes was scant and weak as both the employers (68.2%) and academics (83.3%) confirmed (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.3). There are many reasons attributed to the weak partnerships.

Admittedly, most employers were of the view that some social science degree programmes had no relevance to the needs of their industry (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.18). By implication, this meant there was no value for the industry organisations to engage in any form of partnerships with some university institutions or departments where social science degree programmes were on offer (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.2). While from the perspective of university education providers, there was no social science degree programme that was perceived to be irrelevant, certain employing organisations considered some programmes to be irrelevant (*cf*. chapter 5, Table 5.18). This could be explained from the perspective that most graduates from the

STEM-based programmes tended to secure work placements faster than those from social science due to the demand for skills of the former. The challenges by universities to secure working partnerships with the labour industry players for the benefit of students in social sciences could also be looked at from the perspective of the shrinkage in the economic space to accommodate students and graduates from social science degree programmes, for whom some organisations had no immediate demand.

Furthermore, just as there is no national policy and legal framework to guide the organisation and administration of student internship programmes especially concerning social sciences, the study found that there is no national law or policy that was put in place to guide the relationships between the universities and the labour industry to promote graduate employability in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). As such, all partnerships that existed between independent universities and the labour industry organisations were born out of the initiatives by either the universities themselves or the labour industry organisations. It could also be true that more often than not, such partnership initiatives can only be taken up by the industries if they stood a chance of benefitting (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2).

It could also be possible that the poor university-industry partnerships could be understood from the historical point of view where the GRZ, since the 1964 political independence, had monopolized Human Resource Development through public university and college education (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2.6.3). Labour industry organisations during that time had no role to play and left the function of human resource development to universities alone. Today this perception still holds. Many employing organisations take the task of human resource development as an onerous task of university institutions alone. The labour industry, while not taking an active role and involvement in human resource development, mainly due to financial implications associated with it, has always expected universities to produce work-ready graduates to meet their labour needs (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). However, without the knowledge of what the industry expects in terms of graduates from social sciences, the universities may likely be blind and dumb to the skill demands of the labour market.

The other challenge is associated with the lack of a clear understanding of the roles of the academicians and the industry experts concerning social science degree

programmes' implementation in universities. There was consensus among lecturers against the idea of industry experts participating in teaching on social sciences degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4). This finding was a challenge to university-industry partnerships as it was in contrast with what was established as common practice in other countries. For instance, El Hadidi and Kirby (2017:195) found that industry experts were invited to teach at universities to help students gain insight into the relevance and applicability of theoretical and conceptual knowledge to the real world of work. This may, however, not be the case in STEM-related programmes where the university-industry collaborations were common (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). It could be that some academics in social science were worried about industry experts usurping their teaching responsibilities.

In addition, it could also be explained that the scant and weak university-industry partnership may be due to the lack of motivation by university departments offering social science degree programmes to reach out to the labour industry and work together towards promoting graduate employability. The cause of such demotivation to reach out to the labour industry may be due to the limited number of labour industry organisations concerned with the social science study areas universities were offering (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.2). This may stem from the variations in the study areas and skills the universities were offering and what the industry perceived to be the relevant programmes for their involvement (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1). This is especially true when one compares the social sciences and natural or physical science fields of study. In support of this view, El Hadidi and Kirby (2017:200) found that the mismatch between the practical objectives of the industries compared to the theoretical ones for universities have been the reason why the university-industry linkages were weak in Egypt. To some extent, this could be true in the Zambian context. Industries are often interested in networking with institutions offering programmes that are aligned to their strategic objectives (*cf*. Chapter 3, section, 3.2.3.4). Those pursuing social sciences, therefore, tend to be disadvantaged in that aligning their programme outcomes to the strategic objectives of independently existing labour industry organisations may not always be easy in both practical and theory-based careers (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.5.3.1).

6.4.3.4 Possible areas of partnership

In assessing ways through which the university-industry partnerships could promote the relevance of social science degree programmes, the study using findings from questionnaires and interviews, established that identifying possible areas where those partnerships could be strengthened, was important.

One of the areas was that industry employers were of the view that continuing the offering of student internship placements was key for securing the university-industry partnerships (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.4). This view is cardinal as it avails the industry an opportunity to take part in the skills transfer training of university students in social sciences. Employers were also in support of skills through university-industry research collaboration (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4). As generators of knowledge and consumers of knowledge, universities and the labour industry respectively, have the responsibility of working together to produce graduates with the capacity to respond to the social challenges that confront the labour industry and society at large.

The study further inquired whether industry participation in the design, development and implementation of social science degree programmes was one of the possible ways of enhancing partnerships with the university (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4). The majority of the employers were against industry expert involvement in curriculum, design, development, implementation and review. This finding was also in sharp contrast to the common practice in other environments where industry experts were involved in the development and implementation of other university degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3. section 3.2.5.4.2). This finding of the industry being disinterested in being involved in the design, development, review and implementation of social science degree programmes through teaching, could be that such activities were perceived to be best left in the hands of academia without industry involvement. The finding was however similar even on the part of the academics. Most lecturers (66.7%) did not support industry expert participation in teaching on their social science degree programmes but were in support of them participating in curriculum design, development and review (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.19). Lecturers also objected to technology transfer from the labour industry to the university. The lack of interest by both academics and the labour industry to work together in programme design,

development and implementation, could be a reflection of mistrust between the two parties to some extent, though not supported by many (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.19).

From the possible areas of partnerships, this study found that both the representatives of the universities, where the social science degree programmes were taught and the labour industries where they ended up working, were willing to continue cooperating to provide student internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4). Besides, the need for the university-industry research collaboration for skills transfer was favoured. However, the study also established that both university and industry actors had reservations concerning the active involvement of the labour industry in the social science degree programmes' curricular design, development and implementation. It was also noteworthy that both the employers and academics (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 5.19) were not willing to promote technology transfer from the industry to the universities. This could stem from the premise that universities, as centres of research excellence, were to initiate the process of technology transfer from their research to the industry.

The rejection by the labour industry and university academics on some possible areas of engagement towards the production of graduates from social science degree programmes that may be attuned to the immediate skill needs of the labour industry may as well be due to a lack of a clear understanding of the principles that may guide effective university-industry partnership with clear boundaries of what each part could accomplish in promoting graduate skills development and employability in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3).

This revelation underscores the need to rethink the university-industry partnerships, especially in social science degrees. The engagement of industry experts in development studies, public administrations and social work, for instance, may help shape the programmes in line with the expectations of the labour market. In the 21st century, the labour industry must not only be at the receiving end of university graduates, they must take a clear and active role in producing them. Therefore, inviting industry experts as guest lecturers, for instance, may help university students to have a futuristic glimpse of what the industry may anticipate from them upon completion of their study programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5).

Finally, the mixed views between employers and academics on the possible area partnerships could clearly be understood from the lack of clear policies and legal

framework to guide the university-industry partnerships and internships in Zambia. In the context of the Human Capability Approach, this lack of policy and a legal framework to guide the university-industry partnerships has been a major environmental conversion factor that has affected how the labour industry has been interacting with the universities concerning social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5.3). The lack of policy and a legal framework on university-industry partnerships leaves a gap on how to relate with universities and on what basis. It is true that in a free market economy, any entity has the latitude to choose with whom to transact and how. Therefore, the presence of legislation that speaks to how university-industry relations are supposed to be governed, could have created a conducive environment for universities to easily engage with the labour industry in producing graduates from social science degree programmes who were employable (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). However, this conducive environment for the university-industry partnership may only be clear to some extent in STEM-related fields such as Medicine, Mining, and Engineering to name a few. In the case of social science degree programmes, the labour industry in most cases appeared to be divorced from the activities of the universities until university students pursuing social science degree programmes knocked on their doors with the "To Whom It May Concern" letter to ask for internship placements (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3).

The next section discusses the proposed framework for skills development and graduate employability in Social Science Degree programmes.

6.4.4 Proposed Framework with Measures to Enhance the Relevance of Social Sciences Degree Programmes to Skills Needs on the Job Market in Zambia

In an attempt to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes in terms of skills development and graduate employability, the study sought to propose a model framework that could be employed by the universities to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the job market in Zambia on the premise of the findings emerging from this study. To meet this objective, the study inquired into measures that could be suggested and put in place to promote a framework for market-relevant social science degree programmes. This was preceded

by the question*: What framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skill needs in the job market in Zambia?* Several suggestions that speak to the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the study were used to design a framework to promote the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the skills of the labour market and graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.10).

The answers to this question supported the understanding that to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs of the labour industry in the country, several measures needed to be put in place. The measures highlighted by the majority of the participants were as discussed below:

6.4.4.1 Graduate placement surveys

The study established that of the five universities, two had engaged in some form of graduate placement surveys in their social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.1). This implied that the other institutions were not carrying out the tracer surveys in their social science degree programmes. The inability by some universities to carrying out the graduate placement surveys could have disadvantaged the providers of such social science degree programmes to get feedback regarding the numbers and industry sectors where graduates from their programmes were working. According to Ebert, Lwankomezi, Pistor and Sella (2017:8), graduate placement surveys have become increasingly popular in promoting the market relevance of university degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.6.4). A tracer survey gives universities positive or negative feedback regarding the market demand for degree programmes.

Graduate tracer surveys thus act as external quality assurance when it comes to assessing programme relevance to the skill needs of the labour market. One sure way of conducting graduate placement surveys or tracer surveys was through the development of a strong university alumnus system. Such a system may make it easier for the universities to conduct follow-ups on where the graduates from the social science degree programmes were being placed after completing their programmes. The study also established that those who carried out graduate placement surveys did not use any systematic way of doing so and relied on informal reports regarding graduate placements from their programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.1).

Universities need to adopt systematic and scientifically acceptable methods of tracing the whereabouts of their graduates in the labour market.

6.4.4.2 Use of labour market information from labour market surveys

In addition to the use of graduate tracer surveys, the study revealed that the use of labour market information was another way of promoting the employability of graduates from social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.2). Literature shows that many nations have adopted the use of labour market information as a means of assessing the labour market's skill needs and demands. Since labour market information provides information regarding the labour dynamics and employment situation in a country, the use of such information can help the providers of the social science degree programmes look at the demand and possible relevance of their social science degree programmes in the labour market. Such information can help the university departments make the necessary adjustments to their programmes of study in line with the market indicators (GRZ, 2018:17). While 66.7% of the degree programmes' representatives from the five universities affirmed the use of labour market information (*cf*. Chapter 5, Figure 5.11) to review their programmes, by aligning them with labour market needs or even discontinue offering some programmes with no relevance to the industry needs, the study could not establish the effectiveness with which the labour market information was being used by the university departments where the four social science degree programmes were housed (*cf*. Chapter 5, Table 20). To enhance skills development and graduate employability in social science programmes, there is a need by the universities to evaluate how the social science degree programmes on offer were speaking not only to the disciplinary needs but also to the skill needs of the labour market.

6.4.4.3 Strengthened university-industry partnership

The need for a strengthened university-industry partnership was also suggested as one of the key ingredients in promoting the market relevance of social science degree programmes (Pitan, 2016:4). It was clear from the study that a weakened university-industry partnership had created a negative perception of how some social science degree programmes were perceived in terms of their market relevance. That with a strengthened partnership, the universities and the labour industry could work together

to produce graduates with skills that were demanded by the latter and that through such partnerships, universities and the labour industry could engage in more activities apart from merely providing internship placements for university students. Collaborative partnerships such as research for skills transfer could enhance the contribution of social science degree programmes to the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.3). Such partnerships were likely to improve the industry's perception of the importance of social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3.1).

6.4.4.4 Enhanced internal and external quality assurance on social science programmes design, development and implementation

The need for effective internal and external quality assurance processes in social science degree programmes was suggested through participant responses as a key aspect in fostering graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.4). Among the various quality assurance practices that the study identified, was the need to ensure that graduate learning outcomes for all courses in the accredited social science degree programmes were in line with what was enshrined in the Zambia Qualification Framework (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.6.5). There was also a need to build capacity in academia to continuously improve the quality of the teaching and learning process in the social science degree programmes. The study also found that the use of external examiners was an important quality assurance practice that could help the universities improve and benchmark their students' assessments. Lastly, it was suggested that universities needed to invest in continuous review of the social science degree programmes to ensure that they were in tandem with the industry demands at all times (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.4). The labour industry players from employing organisations were supposed to be engaged in reviewing the study programmes.

It was found that internal quality assurance measures such as the use of pedagogical and assessment methods that focus on harnessing employability skills and not just disciplinary knowledge, would enhance skills development. It was also suggested that industry participation in the assessment of students on an internship in social science degree programmes was one way of ensuring quality in skills development. These were important strategies and if well instituted between the universities and the labour industry, could promote graduate employability in social sciences. Previous studies have shown that if quality assurance practices are well implemented, they could have

a positive effect on the acquisition of employability skills and enhance programme relevance to the industry (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2).

6.4.4.5 Enhance the programme structure, policy and legislative framework to promote student internships

The need to improve the effectiveness of internship practice in the social science degree programmes featured prominently in questionnaire and interview findings. Student internships were considered to be an integral part of the social science degree programmes. However, even when the internships were available in all the programmes, they were found to be less effective in promoting employability skills amongst students. The internship programmes were not well structured and organised and there is a need for a defined well programme structure, policy, and legislative framework to guide the administration of student internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.5). In the absence of a policy and legal framework, students' rules of engagement with industry, the period of internship, and assessment methods were not very clear (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). The need for policy and a legal framework was thus emphasised to ensure effective internship programmes that were guided by the provisions of the law on how students were to be engaged, mentored and assessed during the internship. The goal was to achieve the best learning outcomes in terms of skills transfer and graduate employability as expected by the authorities in the higher education sector (MOHE, 2019:2).

6.4.4.6 Broaden the employability skills in social science degree curricula

The need to broaden the employability skills in the social science degree curriculum to promote graduate employability was highly recommended. The possible explanation for the need to broaden the scope of employability skills in social science degree programmes, could be that by being less practical, the programme providers could focus on teaching content knowledge of the academic programmes at the expense of the most important skills. There was a need to focus more on how skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, ICT, communication skills, innovativeness, and many others could be promoted in student assessment (*cf*. Chapter 3, Table 3.1). The need to promote and focus more on employability skills could best be explained from a comparative perspective with STEM Programmes.

Unlike most STEM-related degree programmes that are usually practice-based, social sciences are more theoretical. As such, it could be possible that the said employability skills could easily be overlooked if the emphasis is placed on information-giving during course delivery and assessment (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). To ensure that focus is also on employability skills and not just disciplinary knowledge, academics and industry players must be well vested in what constitutes employability (generic) skills (ZAQA, 2016:18).

Embedding entrepreneurship skills, communication skills and critical thinking to mention a few, in student assessment both during theoretical classes and during the internship, may be an important way of promoting skills transfer (Eide & Showalter, 2010:32) and graduate employability in social sciences (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.4). In amplifying the importance of employability skills within the context of graduate employability in the social science degree programme, reference was made to the rubric framework of employability skills (Reibe & Jackson, 2014:321-323) with descriptors to the presence of skills within a programme. Such a rubric thus provides a common platform for assessing graduate readiness in social science degree programmes. The rubric thus could make it easier for both the universities to clearly understand the graduate outcomes to be assessed and the potential employers to be aware of the perceived graduate readiness by having a common reference point for the actors in the education-industry continuum (*cf*. Chapter 3, Table 3.4).

6.4.4.7 Promote interdisciplinary approaches in social science degree programmes

The need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in social science degree programmes as a measure to promote graduate employability was supported by data from interviews (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.7). This could be explained in light of the global knowledge divide into hard sciences and social sciences which has resulted in some labour industry players looking down on the relevance of the social sciences in promoting personal and national development compared to STEM programmes.

Many African countries, Zambia included, have developed human resources development policies whose focus is on promoting STEM rather than social sciences. In Zambia, higher education and student financing policies all point to the development of STEM through the TEVET policy (GRZ, 2013:33; World Bank, 2016:30). While this

national focus may be justified (UNDP, 2016:84), the country still needs social scientists. The relevance of social sciences to the needs of the labour market and society at large could still be embraced by embedding some courses from STEM and business fields into social science degree programmes. This may imply that a student pursuing Development Studies as a major could minor in mathematical statistics, and the one taking Public Administration could minor in Chemistry for example. Although the interdisciplinary approaches still exist in universities, this study focused on a well-structured and balanced interdisciplinary approach that may render a graduate relevant to the labour industry both as a social scientist and natural scientist and thereby enhancing their employability. Further, the challenges confronted by society today are complex in nature and impractical to resolve from a mono-disciplinary approach. So, graduates from social sciences must be multi-skilled to be equal to the task to face the challenges of the 21st Century from a multidisciplinary perspective (*cf*. Chapter 3, section. 3.2.4.2.2).

6.4.4.8 Opening up institutions for student work placements and internships

The study participants during interviews suggested that the labour industry organisations needed to run an open-door policy to accommodate university students from the social sciences in internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.7.8). This was important to help each university student with the capacity to link theoretical work to practice. The need for labour industry organisations to be more flexible and open for students to access internship placements could best be understood by reflecting on the importance of such practices in promoting skills acquisition and individual agency in students of social sciences. In the context of the study, individual agency as espoused by the Human Capability Approach, means that a student in one of the social science degree programmes must be empowered with employability skills to carry with them the graduate identity necessary to push their agency towards employability (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.5.1). A graduate needs to overcome any negative perceptions that the labour industry employers may have on the qualification obtained (James *et al.,* 2013:958).

6.4.5 Proposed Framework

The findings of the study informed the proposed framework as shown in Figure 6.1 below. The framework was meant to address the deliberate actions that must be taken by universities, the labour industry, and the government to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market as highlighted in the subsequent section.

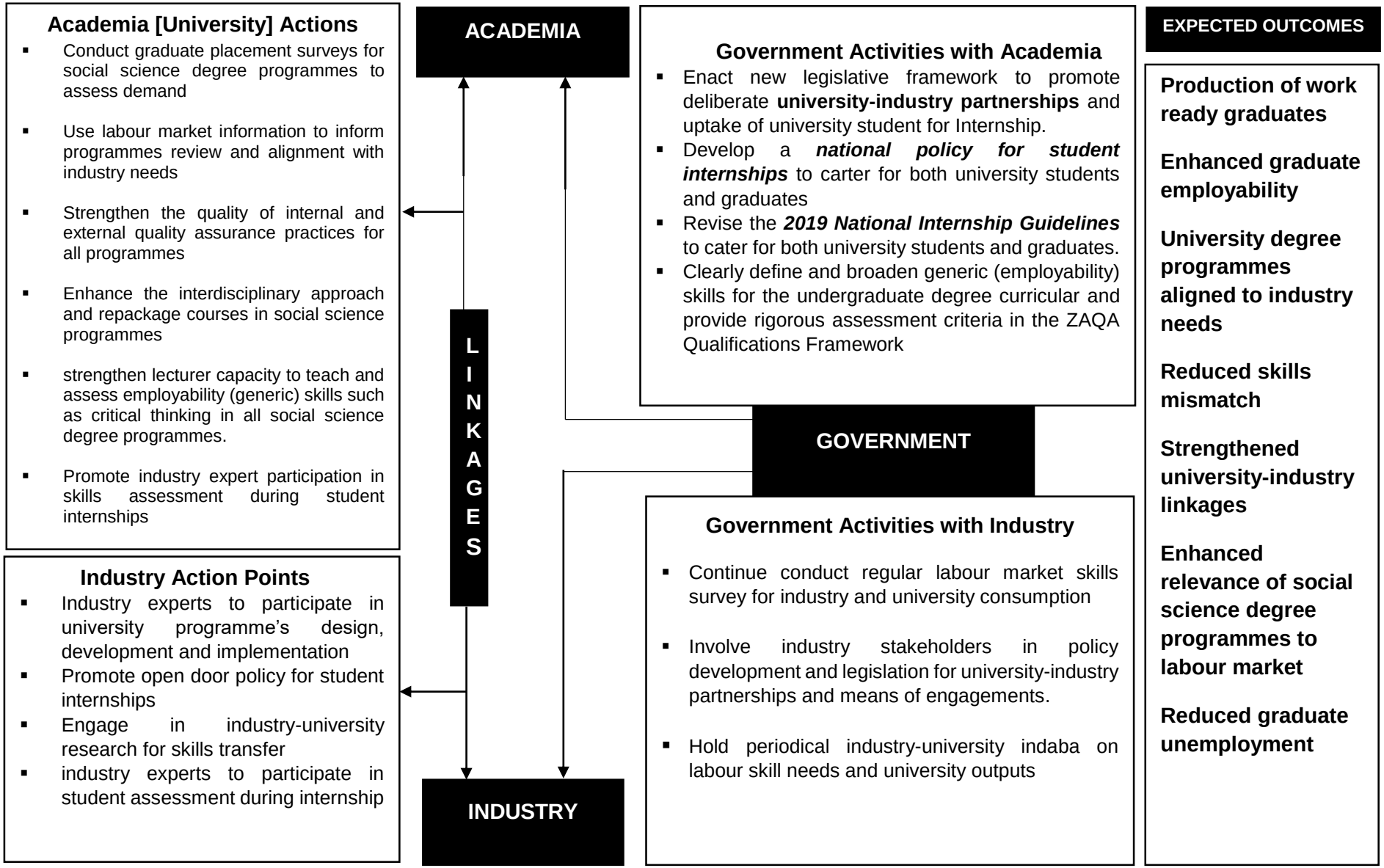

Academia [University] Actions
Conduct graduate placement surveys for social science degree programmes to assess demand
Use labour market information to inform programmes review and alignment with industry needs
Strengthen the quality of internal and external quality assurance practices for all programmes
Enhance the interdisciplinary approach and repackage courses in social science programmes
strengthen lecturer capacity to teach and assess employability (generic) skills such as critical thinking in all social science degree programmes.
Promote industry expert participation in skills assessment during student internships
Industry Action Points
Industry experts to participate in university programme's design, development and implementation
Promote open door policy for student internships
Engage in industry-university research for skills transfer
industry experts to participate in student assessment during internship
ACADEMIA
LINKAGES
INDUSTRY
Government Activities with Academia
Enact new legislative framework to promote deliberate university-industry partnerships and uptake of university student for Internship.
Develop a national policy for student internships to carter for both university students and graduates
Revise the 2019 National Internship Guidelines to cater for both university students and graduates.
Clearly define and broaden generic (employability) skills for the undergraduate degree curricular and provide rigorous assessment criteria in the ZAQA Qualifications Framework
GOVERNMENT
Government Activities with Industry
Continue conduct regular labour market skills survey for industry and university consumption
Involve industry stakeholders in policy development and legislation for university-industry partnerships and means of engagements.
Hold periodical industry-university indaba on labour skill needs and university outputs
EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Production of work ready graduates
Enhanced graduate employability
University degree programmes aligned to industry needs
Reduced skills mismatch
Strengthened university-industry linkages
Enhanced relevance of social science degree programmes to labour market
Reduced graduate unemployment

Figure 6.1: Skills development and graduate employability framework for social science degree programmes

6.4.5.1 Synthesis of action points in the framework

This section provides a synthesis of how the proposed framework can be operationalised by the universities, government, and labour industry to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skill needs of the labour market in Zambia.

6.4.5.1.1 The Universities (Academia)

For the universities, the framework proposes the need to conduct graduate placement surveys to assess the differences in social science degree programmes. Knowing where their graduates were domiciled in the labour industry, it would help to know that the labour sector had a demand for such graduates or where graduates could end up if they decided to engage in self-employment. Apart from carrying out tracer surveys for their graduates, universities should take advantage of the information provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security through the Labour Market Surveys (GRZ, 2018:17) to get first-hand information on labour skills needs and employment opportunities available in the market. Such information is likely to be helpful to universities in planning for the numbers to be enrolled in the social science degree programmes.

Furthermore, all universities must endeavour to strengthen and participate in both internal and external quality assurance practices in all social science degree programmes to ensure that the programmes are taught and assessed adequately. Quality assurance measures should be embedded and strictly adhered to in all teaching and learning programmes. Such practices may include all university departments where the social science degree programmes are taught by qualified academics and the use of external quality assurance practices such as inviting lecturers from other universities to peer review the quality of assessment processes.

The study also emphasised the need to promote the interdisciplinary approach in all social science degree programmes. As a result of the knowledge divide between social sciences and STEM-related programmes, the latter has been said to have more demand on the Zambian Labour Market compared to the former. Interestingly, the

study found that rather than just sticking to the disciplinary knowledge of social sciences, the demand for social sciences concerning graduate employability could be enhanced if the disciplinary courses were embedded in existing courses. This could entail the integration of STEM, entrepreneurship and business courses in social sciences through the major-minor approach. While prospective students could be majoring in Development Studies or Public Administration, one may decide to minor in Mathematics, Science, ICT, or Entrepreneurship. Such an approach, it is believed could enhance the employability of graduates in social sciences

Furthermore, universities may be required to build capacity in lecturers to embrace not only the teaching of disciplinary knowledge in social sciences but embrace the teaching and assessment methods that may help students acquire the generic (employability skills). These include critical thinking, communication skills, interpersonal skills, innovativeness and creativity, problem-solving, and many others (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). It is only through the acquisition of such employability skills that graduates from the social science degree programmes will be able to find their space in the labour industry. This is given the understanding that employability skills empower such graduates to apply their disciplinary knowledge with fewer challenges. Such graduates can easily adapt to a new working environment. Moreover, the evidence presented so far supports the idea that labour industry experts must be given opportunities to participate in assessing students during the internship, as opposed to the academics doing this alone.

6.4.5.1.2 The Labour Industry

As illustrated in the framework (*cf.* Figure 6.1), to enhance the linkages between academia and industry, the labour industry is expected to be engaged in some way by the universities to participate and have a say in the processes involving degree programme design, development, implementation and review. The industry should not be allowed to take a back seat and then simply criticise university graduates who join the labour sector, as being not work-ready. They must actively participate in ensuring that social science degree programmes offered by the universities speak to the needs of the labour industry. It has also been established that while some universities have been reluctant to allow labour sector players to participate in teaching as guest lecturers in some social science degree programmes, this is a common practice

elsewhere and it must be embraced by all universities. The labour industry experts must also engage in assessing students undertaking internships placements. The industries must implement measures to ensure that those who participate in assessing students during internships have the experience and expertise to assess students professionally and objectively. This is cardinal, especially as the input of industry is likely to have a bearing on the quality of graduates produced by universities and end up in the labour industry. More so, industry and universities must engage in collaborative research to promote research skill transfer between the labour industry and the universities on the best practices in different fields of study and how best they stand to benefit society.

Lastly, the study has demonstrated that some industry organisations had been reluctant and inflexible to offer internship placements to students in social science degree programmes. In the proposed framework, the labour industry should make it a deliberate policy to create places for student internships as a way of contributing to skills development and student work experience. Such a deliberate policy should be taken by both the private and public labour industry sector players and should of course be done in line with the capacity and strategic goals and needs of such institutions.

6.4.5.1.3 The Government

The current study has shown that there had been few and weak to no partnerships between the universities and the labour industry organisations concerning four social science degree programmes. By extension, this situation could apply to many other social science programmes. However, this excludes Economic and Law programmes that have strong linkages with the industry. To strengthen the partnerships between the universities and the labour industry to promote the relevance and visibility of social science degree programmes to the labour market, the Government of the Republic of Zambia should take the referee role in creating an enabling environment that has been lacking through the development of legal and policy frameworks to guide the university-industry partnerships in Zambia. Even the current higher education Act No. 4 of 2013 was silent about university-industry partnerships. To effectively promote the university-industry partnership, the study found that the government should develop a legislative framework specifically to promote the university's industry partnerships for

the benefit of the students. The enforcement of such a partnership should make it easier for industry or academia to engage in promoting degree programmes to produce graduates with skills and practical knowledge relevant to the needs of the economy. Such a legislative framework together with a policy on student internship programmes is likely to promote internship programmes not only for social science degree programmes but also for others to undergo work-based learning. This is likely to offer university graduates from social science degree programmes the opportunity to link practical work to their theory while smoothening their transition from university to work, as highlighted in the national employment policy (GRZ, 2011:1).

Developing such a legal and policy framework is timely, especially that the available Apprenticeship Act no. 13 of 1997 does not cater to university students (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.4.3) with it comes to apprenticeship and internships. Apart from developing a legal framework to promote university-industry partnerships, the government should revise the current National Guidelines on Internships (GRZ, 2019:1) to cater for university students and not only for those who may have already graduated, thus extending the Internship Guidelines to cater for third and final year university students. This is critical for university students in social sciences who have had to endure hardships to secure internship placements using their negotiation skills in the absence of any law or policy to support them.

Previous studies have also shown that equipping students with employability skills can broaden their chances of employability (Hartman, 2014:2; Numley *et al.,* 2016:37; Rastrick, 2018:21). Therefore, there is a need for the universities through ZAQA to broaden and clearly define the employability (Generic) skills in the National Qualification Framework for the undergraduate degree programme curricula. Equally, providing rigorous assessment criteria for such skills would help many graduates, especially those from social science degree programmes, to not only get into the labour industry with disciplinary knowledge but with skills critical for their employability.

For the benefit of both the universities and the labour industry, the government through the Ministry of labour and Social Security, should conduct regular market surveys and provide timely and accurate information on employment and skill needs situations for universities to use for reviewing their programmes and enrolment numbers. The timely

information would help universities to prepare and market the social science degree programmes that speak to the needs of the labour industry.

Finally, the framework seeks for government to continue engaging both the labour industry actors and academia in resolving matters that relate to skills development, graduate unemployment and employability, industry growth, and strengthened partnerships. It is expected that when the labour industry, universities, and the government work together, the outcomes for graduates of social science degree programmes and other university programmes, in general, would result in the production of work-ready graduates, university degree programmes aligned to industry needs, reduced skills mismatch, strengthened university-industry partnership, reduced graduate unemployment and enhanced relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills labour market in Zambia.

Given the above, it is clear that producing employable graduates in social science degree programmes requires a tripartite approach involving the government, academia, and industry. Without the involvement of the three stakeholders, employability for social science degree programmes, students would remain a pipe dream. This approach requires urgent action from all the actors to ensure that graduates produced from universities are relevant to the skill needs of the labour industry. Without such interventions, universities would continue producing graduates who were of less value to the current dictates and demands of the labour market. Such could not only disadvantage the graduates, but also rob the nation of the precious time, energy, and resources spent to produce human resources with skills that are divorced from the needs of the labour industry.

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis and discussion of the results of the study to address the main aim of the study. It has highlighted that the discourse of skills development and graduate employability in SSDP is complex and multifaced and that it requires the interaction of the government, higher education institutions and the labour industry to unite and promote the provision of quality and relevant social science degree programmes that speak to the skill needs of the labour market in Zambia. Furthermore, the discussion has demonstrated that the employability of

graduates from social science degree programmes can be enhanced if they are helped to acquire employability skills. Finally, a framework has been proposed that can be used to foster skills development and graduate employability in Zambia through the tripartite actions of the government, academia, and industry. The next and final chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the findings of the empirical study on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The findings were discussed through cross-referencing to chapters 2, 3, and 5. The present chapter highlights the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the empirical study. The chapter is structured in a manner that presents the summaries of the previous chapters, literature review, empirical study, and conclusions as they relate to the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability. The researcher also presents the recommendations of the empirical study to the government, the labour industry organisations, and the universities on how the relevance of social science degree programmes can be enhanced on the labour market. Further, the chapter outlines the contributions of the empirical study on university skills development and graduate employability in social science degree programmes in Zambia. Finally, the chapter highlights the proposed future studies and final reflections on the empirical study undertaken.

7.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

This section provides a summary of the previous chapters of this study. This study was organised into seven chapters as outlined below.

This study investigated the effectiveness of the four social science degree programmes in selected universities in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. These were the Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Development Studies, Bachelor of Public Administration, and Bachelor of Education (Social Science). The first six chapters are summarised as below:

Chapter 1: This chapter provided the introduction and orientation to the study (*cf.* Chapter 1). It highlighted the background information and rationale of undertaking the

study on the effectiveness of Social Science Degree Programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 1, section 1.2). The chapter provided the aim of the study, the problem statement, the main and sub-research questions. It also provided a preview of the theoretical framework, literature review, and research methodology. The key terms in the study were defined and the programme outline was presented (*cf*. Chapter 1, section 1.10).

Chapter 2: This chapter provided the theoretical framework for the study (*cf.* Chapter 2, Section 2.1). It dealt with the three theoretical frames that guided the interpretation and discussion of the findings on skills development and graduate employability in social sciences. The chapter described and explained the key characteristics of the Human Capability Approach, the Human Capital Theory, and the Signalling or Screening Hypothesis and how they relate to skills development and graduate employability in social sciences (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.4). Lastly, the chapter also highlighted the conceptual framework that emanated from the characteristics of the three theoretical frameworks to guide the study (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.8).

Chapter 3: This chapter dealt with the literature relating to university skills development and graduate employability in different countries including Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.1). It dealt with what scholarly literature says about university skills development and graduate employability (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2.4). The chapter further conceptualised what literature says about the relevance of social sciences on skills needs on the labour markets, the importance of effective student internships and work placements in the acquisition of employability skills, and the challenges and benefits of universities partnering with labour industry to promote the relevance of social science sciences (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.5). Lastly, the chapter provided a conceptual understanding of skills development and graduate employability from the global, African and Zambian perspectives (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.7).

Chapter 4: This chapter provided the research design and methodology for the empirical investigation (*cf.* Chapter 4, section 4.1). Using a sample of 162 participants drawn from universities, government departments, and the labour industry, the study used the convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore the effectiveness of social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 4, section 4.3.3.4). Using structured

questionnaires, semi-structured interview guides and document analysis, empirical data were collected from the key informants, lecturers, employers from the labour industry, and university students in social science degree programmes.

Chapter 5: The representation of the findings was provided in Chapter 5. The findings presented and interpreted in this chapter, were collected through the semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interview, and document analysis (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.3). The quantitative data collected through the lecturer, student and employer questionnaires, were analysed using SPSS version 22, through which statistical tests were run and the descriptive statistics presented in form of tables and graphs. The qualitative data from interviews, on the other hand, were presented as verbatims of the key informants interviewed from universities, the labour industry organisations and government ministries and agencies. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data brought out insights on the effectiveness of the four social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.5).

Chapter 6: This chapter provided a discussion of the literature review (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.3) and empirical findings of the study on the effectiveness of skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter, section 6.4). The findings of the study from questionnaires, interviews and document analysis were discussed in the order of the sub-research questions of the study through cross-referencing to Chapters 2, 3, and 5. The discussed research findings informed the model framework and recommendations for universities, government policymakers, and the labour market actors on how the relevance of the social science degree programme could be enhanced (*cf.* Chapter 6, section 6.4.4).

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the study was divided into two chapters - Chapter 2 which presented the theoretical framework and Chapter 3 discussed the conceptual framework on which the study was founded. In the first sub-section, a summary of the theoretical framework is offered and in the subsequent section, a summary is given of the conceptual framework.

7.3.1 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

In this study, three theories with characteristics that were relevant to the discourse of skills development and graduate employability in social sciences were used, as summarised below.

The effectiveness of the social science degree programmes in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia was explored in the context of three theoretical lenses. These were the Human Capability Approach, the Human Capital Theory, and the Screening Hypothesis. These theoretical framings were found relevant and applicable to the study of university skills development and graduate employability in social sciences (*cf.* Chapter 2).

Looking at the Capabilities and Functionings of the HCA (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2), the study focused on the freedom and opportunities that university students pursuing social sciences could be afforded to acquire employability skills and attributes necessary for them to be employable. In the context of the conversion factors, the literature revealed that the freedom of social science university students could be affected either positively or negatively by the presence of conversion factors (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.5). The conversion factors could be individual, social, or environmental. They imply the personal background characteristics of each university student and the laws and policies that may be put in place by the government and the labour market conditions that may affect the employability status (capability) of a graduate from a social science degree programme to promote their well-being. This theory helped the researcher to evaluate the extent to which the opportunities for employability were available for graduating students from social science degree programmes in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.4).

In the context of the Human Capital Theory (HCT), the study focused on how education and training programmes in social science degree programmes helped university students acquire certain skills (human capital) to render them relevant and employable in the social science degree programmes. This theory thus helped the researcher with insight into how different employability skills could best be acquired by the university students for them to be employable (*cf.* Chapter, section 2.7.1).

Lastly, the study used the Screening Hypothesis as a lens to look at how the employers and other players in the labour industry perceived the qualifications obtained from any of the four social science degree programmes in terms of their value and relevance to them. Such perceptions had a bearing on what graduates of social science degree programmes were capable of accomplishing by looking at the acquired credentials and consequently their employability status (*cf*. Chapter 2, section 2.7.2). The three theoretical frameworks culminated in the conceptual framework that was used to understand the problem of university skills development and employability in social sciences as one of the ways of overcoming graduate unemployment in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 2, section 2.8.1).

7.3.2 Summary of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

The literature review provided the conceptual understanding of what scholarly literature says about university skills development and graduate employability (*cf*. Chapter 2). With the focus on social science degree programmes, the reviewed literature provided insight into the scholarly perspective about university skills development and graduate employability (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2). In the quest to provide a clear conceptual understanding of university skills development and graduate employability, literature was reviewed on the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skills needs of the labour market, the effectiveness of internships and work placements in promoting employability skills in social science degree programmes (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.4) and the benefits and challenges of universities partnering with the labour industries in promoting social science degree programmes' relevance to the skills needs of the labour market in Zambia (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.5).

To enhance our understanding of the effectiveness of social science degree programmes, the literature was reviewed from three perspectives, global, African and Zambian views. Concerning university skills development and graduate employability, the literature showed that skills development meant exposing university students to education and training processes that could help them acquire practical knowledge and employability skills and give them the capacity to be employable. It was also clear from the literature that universities, unlike the technical and vocational colleges, were better positioned to teach students to learn how to learn (*cf.* Chapter, section 3.2) and

not prepare them for job-specific skills. It is the teaching of students to learn how to learn that rendered the acquisition of employability skills indispensable in social science degree programmes because social sciences, unlike STEM programmes, do not equip students with technical, job-specific skills but rather equip them with soft, employability skills. As such the development of employability skills such as critical thinking skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, innovativeness, creativity, use of ICT and entrepreneurship to name but a few, were what was considered as skills that could help a university student, pursuing social science programme, to possess not only disciplinary knowledge but the power to look for a job, keep it or employ themselves (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1).

Scholarly literature also revealed that apart from the possession of employability skills, the employers' perception of the employability skills acquired, employer's perception of the graduate work readiness and identity, the importance of the field of study and university attended, had a bearing on the opportunities and capacities for university graduates to secure a job, keep it, look for another or employ themselves (cf. Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). More so, having social capital was also highlighted in the literature as one way that can help an individual navigate their way into the labour industry with or without difficulties.

The literature also verified that to promote graduate employability, the universities and the labour industry need to have a common conceptual understanding of what employability entails for university graduates. This came in the wake of the varying models of conceptualisations of what graduate employability was from the global, African, and Zambian literature. As a result of the different conceptualisations of employability, the study adopted a working definition of employability, as one's ability to use the acquired skills, knowledge, attitudes, individual agency, personal circumstances and the prevailing labour conditions, to successfully create or secure and maintain employment opportunities at a given time following graduation (Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.4).

The different case studies on university skills development and graduate employability from Canada, USA, Australia, UK, China, Taiwan, Egypt, Botswana, Iran, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Zambia to mention but a few, revealed varying conceptualisations of skills development and graduate employability. This revelation affirmed the thinking

that university skills development and employability were context-bound, and did not mean the same things in different countries. This understanding provided an opportunity to look at university skills development in social sciences in the Zambian context (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.4).

Concerning the relevance of social science degree programmes on skill demands in the labour market, the reviewed literature generally indicates that social sciences were important to the understanding of humanity and society (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.3). While the literature showed that social sciences were also important in terms of the skill needs of the labour industry, there were some varying views in the different case studies regarding the relevance of social sciences in the labour market, when compared to STEM qualifications.

Further, reviewed literature on the effectiveness of student internships and work placements in promoting graduate employability in social science degree programmes, showed that internships were important in terms of skill transfer in university education. For graduates to be employable, they needed to acquire employability skills and it was the employability skills that gave university graduates the capacity to apply their disciplinary knowledge in the work setting (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1). However, such skills could only be effectively acquired and developed through internship programmes. Besides, the effectiveness of internships meant universities partnering with the labour industry players to offer students the opportunity to engage in experiential learning through internships. As such employability skills could not be effectively developed by final year university students without labour industry involvement.

Lastly, regarding university-industry partnerships, the literature reviewed showed that in many countries, universities were partnering with the labour industry to enhance graduate relevance to the needs of the labour industry (*cf.* Chapter 3, section 3.5). University programmes' relevance was enhanced through industry involvement in areas such as joint research for skills transfer, and industry expert participation in university programme design, development review, and teaching to some extent. It was also clear that in different countries, universities and the labour industry organisations partnered in different aspects to promote graduate employability. The findings from the literature provided the researcher with the capacity to situate the

study on the effectiveness of the social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia to contribute to the discourse of graduate unemployment in the country. The literature thus illuminated a clear picture that regardless of the programme involved, graduate employability was a complex, multi-faceted, and context-bound phenomenon (*cf*. Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.4).

7.4 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The major empirical findings of the study focused on the themes that emerged during data analysis. The data was collected through interviews (*cf.* Chapter 4, section 4.7.2.1), the students, employer, and lecturer questionnaire surveys (*cf*. Chapter 4, section 4.7.2.2), and document analysis (*cf*. Chapter 4, section 4.7.2.3). Presented below is the summary of the findings of the study:

7.4.1 Social Science Degree Programmes' Relevance to Skill Needs of the Labour Market in Zambia

The following were the findings regarding the relevance of social science degree programmes on the skill needs of the labour market in Zambia.

7.4.1.1 Need and importance of social sciences to the labour industry

The study found that the social science degree programmes were relevant to the needs of the labour market in Zambia, but were considered secondary to the STEM fields (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.4.1).

7.4.1.2 Employer and student perception of employability skills in social science degree programmes

It was found that university students needed to be in possession of employability skills as they move towards graduation. However, students were not fully satisfied with their employability skills (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.4.2) and employers were almost neutral regarding their satisfaction with employability skills demonstrated by their new employees from social sciences (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.9).

7.4.1.3 Graduate work readiness from social sciences

The study established that most graduates from the social science degree programmes were described by employers as being not work-ready at the time of being employed (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.3).

7.4.1.4 Availability of job prospects for social science qualifications

It was found that there were variations in the existence of job opportunities for the four social science degree programmes. There were more job prospects for those in the Social Work programme, compared to Development Studies, Public Administration, and Education (social science) programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.4).

7.4.1.5 Demand for social science degree programmes by students

The study found that the number of students pursuing social science degree programmes had not been increasing. The student numbers enrolled in the four programmes averaged between 30 and 50. It was only the Bachelor of Social work that was found to have more demand compared to the other three programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.4.5).

7.4.2 Effectiveness of Student Internships and Work Placements in Promoting Graduate Employability

To assess the effectiveness of internships in promoting the development of employability skills among university students in social sciences, the following findings were revealed by the study.

7.4.2.1 Presence of student internships or work placement activities in social science degree programmes

Student Internships were found to be available in all four social science degree programmes on skills development programmes (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.1).

7.4.2.2 Importance of internships in social science degree programmes on employability skills development.

Students rated internships as "*absolutely essential*" and employers found them to be essential in helping students link practical work to theory (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.2.2).

7.4.2.3 Nature, organisation, and assessment of internship practices

In terms of timing, the length of internships varied in the four programmes, the study found that the length of internships in the social sciences on average took between 4 to 12 weeks. The structure and assessment of internships also varied between universities (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). moreover, in almost all the universities that participated in the study, students had secured placements except for social work at universities A#B and I#J.

7.4.2.4 Challenges associated with internships to students, lecturers, and the employers

Concerning the challenges associated with internship implementation, the following emerged from the study. First, most students admitted facing challenges during their internships. They did not receive much support from either their university departments or on-sight supervisors during the internships in the labour industry organisations (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4). Secondly, lecturers sighted the inflexibility and unwillingness by the labour industry organisations to take up university students on internships as one of the major challenges of implementing internships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4). Employers also expressed the lack of clearly defined rules of engagement between the universities and the labour industry as a challenge in implementing university-industry partnerships (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4).

7.4.3 University-Industry Partnerships in Social Science Degree Programmes

The findings regarding university-industry partnerships in social sciences were as presented below.

7.4.3.1 Availability and nature of partnerships in social science degree programmes

The study found that some partnerships between universities and the labour industry organisations existed but were weak and inadequate (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.1)

7.4.3.2 Benefits of university-industry partnerships in social sciences

Some of the outcomes were that partnerships helped students to attend internships without many challenges (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.2). Internships were also found to enhance public confidence in the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.2) and lastly, the partnerships worked as a feedback loop to universities from the labour industry on the quality of graduates entering the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.2)

7.4.3.3 Challenges of university-industry in social sciences

Partnerships were found to be weak and scant as some of the social science degree programmes were perceived as irrelevant to the immediate needs of some labour market organisations. (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.3). In addition, there was no specific law or policy to enforce university-industry partnerships. The partnerships that existed were out of institutional initiatives (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.3).

7.4.3.4 Possible areas of partnerships

The study found that the possible areas of partnerships included university-industry research collaboration for skill transfer; providing internships to university students in the labour industry (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4). it was also found that most industry organisations were less interested in partnering with some universities in social science degree curriculum review, design, and development (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.6.4).

7.4.4 Framework to Enhance the Relevance of the Social Science Degree Programme on the Skills Needs of the Labour Market.

The study revealed several measures that informed the model framework to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market needs in Zambia.

The study found the following as measures that could be used to come up with a model framework to promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The mechanisms included the following: The use of graduate placements surveys; use of labour market information from the labour market surveys; strengthened university-

industry partnerships; enhanced internal and external quality assurance on social science degree programmes' design, development and implementation by universities; enhanced structure, policy, and legislation to support student internships and university-industry partnerships; broaden the employability skills in the social science degree curricular; promote interdisciplinary approaches in social science degree programmes and finally, open up labour industry organisations for student internships (*cf.* Chapter 5, section 5.7).

The measures from the study informed the development of the model framework that could enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 6, Figure 6.1). The next section is a conclusion summary for the chapter

7.5 CONCLUSION SUMMARY

This section provides the conclusion of the study. This summary is provided in form of answers to the research questions that were set out in Chapter one (*cf*. Section 1.3.1) of the thesis. This is meant to demonstrate how the research questions were answered using the research findings and document analysis.

7.5.1 Research Sub-Questions and Answers

Below is the summary of the answers that were found to the five sub-research questions (*cf*. Chapter 1, section 1.3.1) of the study.

7.5.1.1 What does scholarly literature say regarding university skills development and graduate employability?

Through a thorough document review, it was established that university skills development encompasses the different educational processes that could help students acquire critical employability skills. It emerged that the employability skills were central to helping a graduate adapt and apply disciplinary knowledge or foundation knowledge and principles of their degree programme in any given work environment. Secondly, the literature revealed that certain contextual factors that may influence graduate employability had to be taken into account. Apart from having employability skills, employer perception of graduate work readiness and identity, university attended and programme pursued, may have a limiting effect on the

employability prospects of any graduate. It was also established that a graduate's social capital or capacity and lack of the universal conceptualisation and model of what constitutes employability could also affect how the question of graduate employability is perceived in different contexts (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.1).

7.5.1.2 To what extent are social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities relevant to the skills needs of the labour market in Zambia?

The study revealed that the concept of the relevance of the four social science degree programmes was multi-faceted and complex. It was probable therefore to answer that the relevance of the bachelor of social work, bachelor of development studies, Bachelor of Education-Social Science, and the Bachelor of Public Administration varied from one programme to the other based on various reasons (*cf*. Chapter 6).

Although the literature showed that all social sciences were important for our understanding of humans and society within the framework of this study, the Bachelor of Social Work seemed to be more relevant to the labour needs compared to the other programmes considered. The skills acquired by graduates from the social work programme were on-demand especially by the private sector due to the proliferation of NGOs, CBOs, and FBOs that were engaged in social empowerment programmes. As for the other programmes, their relevance was diminished due to a lack of immediate demand for the skills offered by graduates from such programmes on the labour market. It should also be stated that the relevance of each of the four social science degree programmes was dependent on the extent to which the acquired qualification made the prospective graduates relevant to the needs of the labour industry at the time, either through self-employment or employment security (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.2).

7.5.1.3 How effective are work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes of selected universities in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?

In answering this question, the study established that the internship programmes were not well structured in Zambia. Each learning institution had a different way of dealing

with internship programmes. In most cases, universities had no formal partnerships with organisations in the labour industry to enable students to easily access places for internship attachment. As such, it was the responsibility of the student to secure an internship placement. All universities did was to give a “To Whom It May Concern” letter. As if that were not enough, the assessment of internship programmes is also dependent on the institution offering the programme. There was no standardised way of assessing the internship activities of students (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.3).

In addition, there was no government legal framework to cater for how the internship programmes were supposed to be conducted, especially on the rules of engagement between students and employing organisations. Even the guidelines, which were developed by the government in line with the partnerships, did not cater for students who were still at university but for those who had already graduated. This is problematic because the acquisition of practical skills by university students is something that should be part and parcel of the programme curriculum. In short, the internship programmes were not very effective in promoting employability skills in students of social science degree programmes due to various factors that were found to constrain them (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.3).

7.5.1.4 What are the challenges and the benefits of universities in partnering with the labour industry to promote the market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia?

To begin with, in terms of the challenges, the study established that the partnerships, between the universities and the labour industry in promoting the relevance of social science degree programmes, were weak and in some instances non-existent. The weaker university-industry partnerships concerning social sciences were due to the lack of a legal policy and the guidelines to define and guide how, at the national level, the universities and the labour industry were going to interact in promoting market-driven social science degree programmes in terms of programme design, development, review and curricular to promote graduate employability. Concerning the benefits associated with the university-industry partnerships to promote market relevance, social science degree programmes were that such partnerships to some extent, promoted student internships for university students to acquire employability skills to make them relevant to the industry needs. The study established that

partnerships that are guided by a clear framework could promote graduate employability in social science degree programmes (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.4).

7.5.1.5 What framework could be employed by universities to enhance the relevance of social sciences degree programmes to skills needs on the job market in Zambia?

Based on the findings of the study (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.6), a framework (*cf*. Chapter 6, Figure 6.1) was proposed. The framework is meant to address the deliberate actions that must be taken by universities, the labour industry, and the government to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on the labour market (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.2.4.5). Provided below is an overview of the Model framework.

7.5.2 Overview of the Model Framework

The model framework (*cf*. Chapter 6, Figure 6.1) provides the action points that must be taken through a tripartite approach by government policymakers, the universities and the labour industry to enhance the relevance of graduates from social sciences to the skill needs of the labour industry in Zambia. The framework provides for strengthened partnerships and interactions between the universities that produce social science graduates, and the labour industry organizations that benefit from their labour input. However, the government must implement policies and laws for the partnerships to be enforceable. As for the universities themselves, the framework provides for continuous quality assurance measures to ensure that the social science degree programmes on offer lead to the production of graduates who are not only well equipped with employability skills but also relevant to the demands of the industry. As for the labour industry organisations, the framework proposes the need for them to be open for engagement with the universities, through the provision of internship placements for students and participation in university curriculum review and collaborative research for skills transfer. It is hoped that if the provisions of the framework are implemented by the three parties, the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market can be enhanced and graduate unemployment lessened (*cf*. Chapter 6, section 6.4.5.1).

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In answering the main research question of the study: *To what extent do social science degree programmes offered at universities promote skills development and graduate employability in Zambia?* The study established that the selected social science degree programmes were less effective in enhancing skills development and graduate employability. There were several reasons to justify this position. One of them stems from the finding that not all students were fully satisfied with the employability skills they had acquired from their social science degree programmes. Also, the employers were less satisfied with the demonstration of employability skills (interpersonal skills, communication skills, accountability, creativity, and innovativeness and critical thinking) by new employees in their organisations. Concerning the internships, the study found that some university students faced challenges such as lack of proper support from both their university departments and the labour industry organization where they attended the internships that were key in their skills development (*cf*. Chapter 5, section 5.5.4).

Further, the university departments offering the social science degree programmes had weak if any, partnerships with the labour industry, and may imply that the labour industry organisations had little or no input in the quality of graduates that were being produced by the universities. And lastly, there were no clear and specific national policies and laws to govern and enforce university-industry partnerships in the social sciences to promote industry participation. As a result of these findings, it could be deduced that universities were to some extent less effective in promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia (*cf*. Chapter 6). Subsequently, the following recommendations are made to the following stakeholders

7.6.1 Recommendations to the Government Policy Makers

The Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and Ministry of Trade and Commerce should consider the following to help enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour industry and reduce graduate unemployment:

i. Develop legislation that deliberately promotes partnerships between the universities and the labour industry. With input from both the universities and

the labour industry players, the policy should clearly outline the terms of engagements with which universities and the labour industry may want to partner with the labour industry.

ii. The Government should regularly conduct labour market surveys to determine the employment situation and labour market conditions to help universities evaluate the value of their social science degree programmes to the labour market, and where possible, make adjustments to the programmes on offer.

iii. The Government should conduct regular national indabas involving the universities and the labour industry on issues of skills development, labour industry productivity, and graduate unemployment in the country.

iv. The Government should turn the [Zambia] *2019 National Internship Guidelines* into a policy that should cater to both the university students and university graduates when it comes to accessing internships.

7.6.2 Recommendations to the Academia (Universities)

To promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skills needs of the labour industry, academia should do the following:

i. Universities offering social science degree programmes should take the initiative to reach out to the various sectors in the labour industry to market how graduates from their social science degree can benefit the labour industry's skill needs.
ii. Universities should take initiatives and vigorously engage in partnership with various labour industry organisations through the signing of a memorandum of understanding for students to easily access and attend internships in such organisations.
iii. Universities should build capacity in all academic members of staff involved in teaching the social science degree programmes on how best they can teach and assess students on (generic) employability skills development and avoid overemphasising disciplinary knowledge.

iv. Universities should consider inviting different sectors of the labour market so that the latter can contribute when the former develop study material. The aim thereof should be for universities to offer degrees that are relevant to the labour market.

v. Universities should deliberately make use of industry experts to teach on the social science degree programmes as guest lecturers to expose students to real industry experiences either in the field of social work, development studies, or public administration, and

vi. Universities should rethink how the interdisciplinary approach can be enhanced in social sciences to help graduates acquire practical skills.

7.6.3 Recommendations to the Labour Industry Organisations

To help promote the relevance of graduates from social science degree programmes to the needs of the labour industry, the labour industry organisations such a business and corporate entities, the labour movement, and others in both the public and private sector must consider the following:

i. The labour industry should have an open-door policy to allow a certain number of university students from the social science fields to attend internships and be assessed in their organisations to develop employability skills.

ii. The labour industry should be willing to engage in collaborative research to promote knowledge and skills development knowledge and skills transfer that will ultimately influence the kind of graduates that are produced for social science degree programmes.

iii. The labour industry experts must show a willingness to participate in social science degree programmes' curricular review, development, and implementation whenever invited by the universities

7.7 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

There are three contributions that this study has brought to the scholarly body of knowledge on skills development and graduate employability in the field of social sciences:

i. It is a unique study to empirically investigate the effectiveness of selected social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in the Zambian context. Previous studies have cast a blind eye on the subject of employability skills in the field of social sciences. Their focus has been on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields as the only way of promoting graduate employability and enhanced industry productivity. But this study departed from the norm and demonstrated that if graduates from social science degree programmes were well equipped with employability skills, their employability could be enhanced, contribute greatly to the productivity of the labour industry, and ultimately reduce graduate unemployment.

ii. This study developed the student and employer questionnaires that can be used in future studies to assess the level of satisfaction by both the graduating students and employers on skills development and graduate work readiness that are demanded by the labour sector. Using the Likert item questions, the student and employer questionnaires were found to have the Alpha Cronbach's Factor of .899 and .899 respectively in terms of reliability. This is a major contribution to scholarly methodology (*cf.* Chapter 4, section 4.9).

iii. The study has proposed a model framework that can be used by the universities, the labour industry, and policymakers in the government to promote partnerships that can enhance skills development and graduate employability in social science degree programmes offered by universities to produce graduates who are relevant to the needs of the labour industry in Zambia.

7.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To gain more insight into how social science degree programmes could be repositioned to produce graduates who are relevant to the demands of the 21st-century labour market, the following research topics are proposed for future investigating:

i. Rethinking teaching pedagogy and assessment for employability (generic) skills in social science degree programmes in Zambia.

ii. Re-engineering practical and effective strategies for embedding stem and business-related subjects in social sciences degree programmes for skills development: towards a viable interdisciplinary approach for graduate employability in social sciences.

iii. Rethinking the role and capacities of the labour industry organisations in promoting skills development and employability of university students in social sciences in Zambia, and

iv. Effects of linking higher education to the labour market policies on graduate unemployment in Zambia: an explanatory study.

7.9 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Several factors that are discussed hereunder contributed to the limitations of the study (*cf*. Section 4.11 of Chapter 4).

Though the researcher had hoped to use a larger study sample, only 162 respondents were available to participate in the study (*cf*. Chapter 4, section 4.6.2). This was necessitated by several factors that were beyond the researcher's capacity to overcome. For instance, the Ministry of Higher Education delayed in granting permission for its staff to participate in the study. Some university managers delayed in granting permission to undertake the study in their institutions while others declined to participate. Besides, the spread of COVID-19 in Zambia limited people's movement and data gathering from some respondents (lecturers and students) in universities. Some potential participants from universities, labour market, and government agencies cancelled their participation due to that. This limitation affected questionnaire retention from employers, university students and lecturers. The use of unplanned alternative arrangements to gather data such as using cell phones, emails, WhatsApp, and other online platforms was also not helpful to yield the desired results on time.

Despite the above limitations, the researcher ensured that the qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed rigorously in line with the prescribed scientific procedures to ensure validity, reliability, and quality of the findings (*cf*. Chapter 4, section 4.9). On the premise of the above limitations, the application of the recommendations of the study should be done with caution as some findings may not be expressly generalised to all social science degree programmes on offer in other universities in Zambia.

7.10 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

This chapter provided the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study on the effectiveness of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. This chapter highlighted the summary of the reviewed literature, empirical findings of the study, and an overview of the proposed framework to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes on skills needs on the labour market in Zambia. The chapter also highlighted the recommendations of the study, and suggestions for future research on skills development and graduate employability in social sciences. The chapter also highlighted the study limitations and their implications on the generalisability of the findings.

The aim of this empirical study was to explore the extent to which social science degree programmes offered at selected universities promoted skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. This was achieved by answering the main research questions and sub-research questions of the study through the seven chapters of this thesis. After orienting the study on skills development and graduate employability in chapter one, the conceptual understanding of what the study was all about was provided in chapters two and three. The characteristics of the Human Capability Approach, Human Capital Theory, and the Screening Hypothesis, provided the lens through which the findings of the study were interpreted. Using a mixed-methods approach, empirical data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis as outlined in chapter 4. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS and qualitative data using Atlas.ti. Version 8.0.

The empirical findings of the study presented in chapter 5 and discussed in chapter 6, revealed that there were variations in the manner the four social science degree programmes promoted skills development and graduate employability in Zambia. The relevance of each of the four social science degree programmes was dependent on the employer's perception of the immediate usefulness of skills obtained by the graduates to the labour industry skill needs in Zambia. From the selected social science degree programmes, Social Work, Development Studies, Public Administration, and Education (Social Science), the bachelors of Social Work were found to be more relevant to the immediate skill needs of the labour market in Zambia compared to the other programmes. This was due to higher job prospects in social work compared to others. For social sciences degree programmes, the study found that graduate employability entailed the possession of employability skills and not job-specific or technical skills. The employability skills entailed developing critical thinking, communication skills, interpersonal skills, entrepreneurship skills, innovativeness, and others. That the possession of these skills was key in helping graduates learn how to learn and thus acquire the capabilities and freedoms to be employable. It was also clear from the study that to promote the development of employability skills in university students in social science degree programmes, the universities needed to partner with the labour industry in Zambia.

Finally, it can be deduced from the findings of the empirical study that the desire and strategic focus on developing a cadre of graduates in STEM-related fields at university and college levels in Zambia had to some extent overshadowed the relevance of social science degree programmes and how they can be made useful to contribute to the skill needs of the labour industry in the country. This study, therefore, is amongst the few that attempted to explore the relevance of social science degree programmes on skills development and graduate employability to reduce graduate unemployment in Zambia. Therefore, careful consideration of the recommendations of the study and the proposed model framework may help universities in Zambia to provide social science degree programmes that empower graduates with employability skills relevant to the immediate needs of the labour market.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/05/15

Ref: **2019/05/15/64027848/18/MC**
Name: Mr K Mwelwa
Student: 64027848

Dear Mr Mwelwa

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2019/05/15 to 2024/05/15

Researcher(s): Name: Mr K Mwelwa
E-mail address: 64027848@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +26 097 808 3286

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof LDM Lebeloane
E-mail address: lebelldm@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27 12 429 4433

Title of research:

Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

Qualification: D. Ed in Educational Leadership and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/05/15 to 2024/05/15.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/05/15 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/05/17**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2019/05/15/64027848/18/MC** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof PM Sebate
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
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Appendix B: Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Request for Permission to Conduct Research at the Ministry of Higher Education entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

11th November, 2019

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Higher Education
P.O Box 50464, Lusaka,
Zambia Tel: +260 211 252411/251269.
Fax. +260211252951

Dear Madam,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are enhancing skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities

Your Ministry has been selected because **it is entrusted with the responsibility of providing policy direction to the higher education sector in Zambia which includes all universities in the country.** The study will entail **one of the members of staff from your Ministry to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the knowledgeable key informants on the topic at hand**. The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by policy makers in your ministry and other stakeholders to shape how universities and the labour industry can work together to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for taking part in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be made available to the Ministry of Higher Education through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa
Researcher
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm and Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

11th November, 2019

The Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and Social Security,
New Government Complex, Independence Avenue,
P.O. Box 32186, Lusaka, Zambia.
Tel: +260-211-221432, Fax: +260-211-225169, E-Mail: info@MLSS.gov.zm

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia.**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities.

Your Ministry has been selected because it is mandated to administer, regulate and develop the labour market system to ensure employment creation, rights at work, social dialogue and productivity in the country. Your Ministry may thus influence the higher education outcomes in terms of the quality and relevance of university graduates to the labour market in Zambia. Hence the need for your department to take part in this study. The study will entail **one of the members of staff from one of your departments to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the knowledgeable key informants on the topic at hand**. The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by policy makers in your ministry and other stakeholders to influence how universities and the labour market can work together to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for taking part in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be made available to the Ministry of Higher Education through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm and Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at the Higher Education Authority entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

11th November, 2019

The Director-General
Higher Education Authority
P.O Box 50795,
Mukuba Pension House,
Dedan Kimathi Road,
Lusaka, Zambia

Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore ways and extent to which social science degree programs on offer are being oriented towards skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with focus on selected universities. Your institution has been selected to participate in the study because it is mandated by the government to coordinate, regulate, supervise and monitor standards of higher education in Zambia including universities. The study will entail **one of the members of staff from your institution to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by policy makers in your ministry and other stakeholders to shape how universities and the labour industry can work together to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Key findings of the study will be shared with the Higher Education Authority through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa
Researcher
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm and Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at Zambia Federation of Employers entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

11th November, 2019

Executive Director,
Zambia Federation of Employers,
Plot No. 6662, Mberere Road, Olympia Extension, Lusaka.
Phone/FAX: +260 211 295781; Mobile: +260 977 810281
Email:zfe@zamnet.zm;

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia.**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programmes on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Your institution has been selected because it represents employers in the country who give employment opportunities to potential employees such as university graduates. It is thus envisaged that your organisation is in a position to provide insight from the employers' perspective on how universities can work with the labour industry to promote skills development and graduate employability in the country. The study will entail **one of the officials from your organisation to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the keys and knowledgeable informants to the topic at hand**. In addition, some employers or their representatives who are members of your organisation will also be required to directly take part in the study by means of a questionnaire.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be invaluable to employers in the labour sector on how best they can work with universities to promote skills development and reduce graduate unemployment problem in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for taking part in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Findings of the study will be shared with your organisation through a summary report of the key findings after the successful completion of the study.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm and Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at Zambia Congress of Trade Unions entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

11th November, 2019

The General Secretary,
Zambia Congress of Trade Unions
National Centre, Solidarity House Pl. 9026,
Buluwe RD. Lusaka, Zambia
Phone: + +260 211 26001
Email: zctu@microlink.zm

Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities.

Your institution has been selected because it represents the interests of workers in the country by advocating for the creation of decent work and employment opportunities for all Zambians who include university graduates. It is therefore considered that your institution is in a position to provide insight from the employees' perspective on how universities can work with the labour industry to promote skills development and graduate employability in the country by taking part in this study. The study will entail **one of the officials from your organisation to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the keys and knowledgeable informants to the topic at hand**.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be invaluable to employers in the labour sector on how best they can work with universities to promote skills development and reduce graduate unemployment problem in the country. There are no foreseeable risks for taking part in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Findings of the study will be shared with your organisation through a summary report of the key findings after the successful completion of the study.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa **(Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm or Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at Your institution (A#B) Entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

8th October, 2019

The Register,

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Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities.

Your university has been selected because **it is one of the providers of university education in the country and that it offers degree programmes in humanities and social sciences at undergraduate level which are the focus of this study.** The study will entail **one university administrator, either Dean of a School or Head of Department within a School to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**. In addition, some academic members of staff teaching in the study programme to be considered by this research together with students in their final year of study taking such a programme at your institution, will be required to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by universities working together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the labour Industry on how best degree programmes in the field of social sciences could be offered to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks of participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared with the university administrative leadership and academia through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa
Researcher

Request for permission to conduct research at your institution (E#F) entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

14th October, 2019

The Register,

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Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Your university has been selected because **it is one of the providers of university education in the country and that it offers degree programmes in humanities and social sciences at undergraduate level which are the focus of this study.** The study will entail **one university administrator, either Dean of a School or Head of Department within a School to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**. In addition, some **academic members of staff teaching** in the study programme to be considered by this research together with **students in their final year** of study taking such a programme at your institution, will be required to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by universities working together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the labour Industry on how best degree programmes in the field of social sciences could be offered to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared with the university administrative leadership and academia through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm or Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at your insitutition (C#D) entitled Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

8th June, 2020

The Registrar,
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Your university has been selected because **it is one of the providers of university education in the country and that it offers degree programmes in humanities and social sciences at undergraduate level which are the focus of this study.** The study will entail **one university administrator, either Dean of a School or Head of Department within a School to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**. In addition, **some academic members of staff teaching** in the study programme to be considered by this research together with **students** in their final year of study taking such a programme at your institution will be required to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by universities working together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the labour Industry on how best degree programmes in the field of social sciences could be offered to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared with the university administrative leadership and academia through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**

Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm or Cell: 0978083286

UNISA | college of education

Request for permission to conduct research at your institution (I#J) entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

20th February 2020

The Registrar,

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Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Your university has been selected because **it is one of the providers of university education in the country and that it offers degree programmes in humanities and social sciences at undergraduate level which are the focus of this study.** The study will entail **one university administrator, either Dean of a School or Head of Department within a School to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**. In addition, some **academic members** of staff teaching in the study programme to be considered by this research together with **students in their final year** of study taking such a programme at your institution, will be required to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by universities working together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the labour Industry on how best degree programmes in the field of social sciences could be offered to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared with the university administrative leadership and academia through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm or Cell: 0978083286

Request for permission to conduct research at your institution (G#H) entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

15th May, 2020

The Registrar,
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Dear Sir,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **PhD** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Your university has been selected because **it is one of the providers of university education in the country and that it offers degree programmes in humanities and social sciences at undergraduate level which are the focus of this study.** The study will entail **one university administrator, either Dean of a School or Head of Department within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences to participate in the study by means of a face to face interview as one of the key informants**. In addition, some academic members of staff teaching in the study programme to be considered by this research together with students in their final year of study taking such a programme at your institution, will be required to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire.

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There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared with the university administrative leadership and academia through a summary report on the study after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm or Cell: 0978083286

Appendix C: Introductory Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DEAN-EDUCATION

Telephone 291777/291381
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370
253952

P.O. Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Fax: +260-1-

8th October 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INTRODUCTORY LETTER: KAPAMBWE MWELWA

The above captioned matter refers.

The above named person is a bonafide academic member of staff at the University of Zambia in the Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies in the School of Education.

He is currently pursuing his doctoral studies at the University of South Africa. He is carrying out a research entitled: *Exploring the Social Science Degree programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia.*

He has reached the data collection stage in his research work and therefore any support rendered to him by your institution will be highly appreciated.

Ilubala Ziwa (PhD)
ACTING DEAN – SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DEAN'S OFFICE
09 OCT 2019
P.O. BOX 32379,
LUSAKA

Appendix D: Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree with the recording of the **interview**

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print**)**

……..……..

…… **……**
Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) **Kapambwe Mwelwa**

…… **……**
Researcher's signature Date

Appendix E: Interview Schedule Dean of School

- **The relevance of social science degree programme on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) What are the likely job prospects for graduates from this programme (programme to be identified)?

2) On average, how many graduates do you produce per academic year from this programme?

3) Considering the number of graduates produced per year, do you think there is still demand by the labour sector for graduates in this social science degree programme? Give reason (s) for your answer.

4) Does your institution carry out any graduate placement surveys or tracking to find out the number of graduates who get employed each year after graduating? If yes what has been the trend from the time this programme has been on offer?

- **Effectiveness of work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia**

5) Give reason (s) why student work placements or internship programmes are an important component of social science degree programmes like the one on offer?

6) Briefly explain how student work placements and internships for students pursuing social degree programmes are designed and assessed to help students acquire some practical skills and work experience before graduating?

- **Challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia**

7) Are there ways is your institution working with other organisations and companies in the labour sector to supplement your efforts in promoting labour market-relevant social science programmes in this university? If so, what ways are these? If not, why?

8) What challenges do you face or continue to encounter in your quest for partnership with organisations or companies from the labour sector?

9) In what ways are your school and university benefiting from interacting with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

10) What measures do you think a learning institution like yours should put in place to ensure that social science degree programmes on offer and those to be developed are relevant to the skill needs on the labour market in Zambia?

11) What strategies or practices have you put in place to ensure that at the completion of this programme, graduating students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills necessary for employability on the labour industry?

END OF INTERVIEW GUIDE

Appendix F: Interview Schedule Ministry of Higher Education

- **The relevance of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) What is the Ministry of Higher Education's Position regarding the increase in the number of universities offering social science degree programmes compared to Natural Sciences in the country?

2) To what extent does the Ministry of Higher Education consider Social Science Degree programmes offered in Zambian universities relevant to the skill needs of the labour industry in the country compared to STEM programmes?

- **Challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia**

3) What measures have or should the Ministry of Higher Education put in place to ensure that universities in Zambia create strong partnerships with the labour industry to provide market-relevant social science degree programmes to enhance graduate employability in the country?

   What are the possible challenges and benefits associated with university-industry partnerships in promoting relevant social science degree programmes to the Zambian labour market?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

4) Are there any policy measures that the Ministry of Higher Education has put in place to ensure that the proliferation of universities offering degree programmes in the fields of social sciences does not lead to an increase in the number of unemployed graduates in the country? If so, what are these measures?

Appendix G: Interview Schedule for Labour Official

- **The relevance of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) What transferable skills and attributes do you think are important for a graduate in the field of social sciences to possess to get employed in Zambia's labour market today?

- **Effectiveness of work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?**

2) What measures has the Ministry of Labour and Social Security put in place to ensure that employing organisations and companies in the labour market easily provide effective work placements and internship opportunities for university students to acquire practical skills and work experience while studying?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

3) Are there ways in which the Ministry of Labour influences universities to ensure that social science degree programmes on offer are in line with the demands of the labour market to promote graduate employability? If so, what are they?

Appendix H: Interview Schedule Zambia Congress of Trade Unions Official

- **The relevance of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) To what extent would you say social science degree programmes from Zambian Universities are relevant to the skill needs on the labour market today? Give reasons for your answer.

2) Are there any social science degree programmes that you can say are no longer necessary to the needs of the labour market today? If so which ones are those?

- **Effectiveness of work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia?**

3) To what extent do you think employing organisations and companies on the labour market are providing effective work placements and internship opportunities to university students to help them acquire practical skills and work experience while studying? Explain?

- **Challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia**

5) What challenges do you face or continue to encounter in your quest for partnership with organisations or companies from the labour sector?

6) In what ways are your school and university benefiting from interacting with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

7) In what ways do you think the labour industry (employers) should engage universities to deliver social science degree programmes which are capable of equipping graduates with the skills demanded by the labour market?

8) What measures do you think the universities, working with the labour industry, should put in place to improve skills development and graduate employability in Zambia especially for those in the field of social sciences?

Appendix I: Interview Schedule for Zambia Federation of Employers' Official

- **The relevance of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) To what extent would you say social science degree programmes from Zambian Universities are relevant to the needs of the labour market today? Give reasons for your answer.

2) From the experiences of your members (employers) to what extent would you say the degree qualifications obtained from Zambian universities are a true proxy of the employability skills and competencies possessed by graduates at their first employment? Are they able to deliver? Perform?

- **Effectiveness of work placements and internship practices in social science degree programmes in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia**

3) To what extent do you think employing organisations and companies on the labour market are providing effective work placements and internship opportunities to university students to help them acquire practical skills and work experience while studying? Explain?

4) To what extent are employing organisations and companies in the labour market willing to provide work placements and internship opportunities to university students to support them to acquire practical skills and work experience while studying? Could you say they are doing enough? Explain?

- **Challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia**

5) Do you think the labour industry should be involved in the development and delivery of university programmes in Zambian universities? Why do you think so?

6) What challenges do you think are associated with the partnerships between universities and the labour industry (employers) in promoting skills development and employment opportunities for graduates in Zambia?

7) In what ways are your school and university benefiting from interacting with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

9) In what ways do you think the labour industry (employers) should engage universities to deliver social science degree programmes which are capable of equipping graduates with the skills demanded by the labour market?

10) What measures do you think the universities, working with the labour industry, should put in place to improve skills development and graduate employability in Zambia especially for those in the field of social sciences?

Appendix J: Interview Schedule Higher Education Authority Official

- **The relevance of social science degree programmes on offer in selected universities to the skill needs on the job market in Zambia**

1) What is the role of the Higher Education Authority in Zambia's tertiary Education sector?

2) In what ways is the regulatory authority working with universities in Zambia to ensure that degree programmes on offer are of relevance to the skill needs on the labour market in the country?

3) How does the authority ensure that the qualifications obtained by graduates from universities reflect the competencies and attributes possessed by the graduates themselves?

4) How is the authority ensuring that the establishment of new universities and the development of new social sciences degree programmes in the higher education sector is in line with the needs of the labour market?

- **Mechanisms to enhance the relevance of social science degree programmes to skills needs on the labour market in Zambia**

5) What mechanisms have been put in place by the authority to promote the quality and relevance of graduates produced by universities from social science degree programmes to the labour market?

6) To what extent can you say the measures put in place by the authority are helping universities to provide degree programmes that are of relevance to the skill needs of graduates and the labour industry?

Appendix K: Invitation to Participate in Research

Invitation to participate in the study entitled: Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia

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Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Kapambwe Mwelwa, am doing research under the supervision of **LDM Lebeloane**, a Professor in the Department of Education Studies towards a **Ph.D** at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **Exploring Social Science Degree Programmes' Effectiveness on Skills Development and Graduate Employability in Zambia**

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which social science degree programs on offer are promoting skills development and graduate employability in Zambia with a focus on selected universities. Through you, your organisation has been purposively selected participate in the study by answering the enclosed questionnaire. This is because the organisation you present is one of the key stakeholders in the labour industry which provides employment opportunities to graduates from universities and colleges in Zambia.

The benefits of this study are that the findings may be used by universities working together with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Labour Industry (to which your organisation belongs) on how best degree programmes in the field of social sciences could be designed and offered to enhance skills development and graduate employability in the country.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in the study. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Key findings of the study will be shared through a summary report after its successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Kapambwe Mwelwa (**Researcher)**
Email: kmwelwa@unza.zm **or Cell: 0978083286**

Appendix L: Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

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

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print**)** **……..**

…….. **……**

Participant Signature Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) **Kapambwe Mwelwa**

29th October, 2019

…… **……**

Researcher's signature Date

Appendix M: Student Questionnaire

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Insert a tick [✓] or indicate your responses in the appropriate spaces (…) provided

	Section A: Background Information
1	Indicate your gender **1 [ ]** Male **2 [ ]** Female
2	Age **1 [ ]** 15 -19 years **2 [ ]** 20 -24 years **3 [ ]** 25 -29 years **4 [ ]** 30 years and above
3	Marital Status **1 [ ]** Single **2 [ ]** Married **3 [ ]** Divorced **4 [ ]** Widowed
4	Nationality **1 [ ]** Zambian **2 [ ]** Non-Zambian
5	Name of the university where you are a student? **…….....**
6	State whether you are at a private or public university? **1 [ ]** Public University 2 **[ ]** Private University
7	Name the school where you are admitted? 1 [ ] School of Humanities and Social Sciences 2 [ ]School of Education
8	What is the name of your programme of study? 1 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies 2 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Sociology 3 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration 4 [ ] Bachelor of Education 5 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Political Science 6 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Economics 7 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Population Studies 8 [ ] Any other specify**……..**
9	In which department is your programme housed? 1 [ ] Development Studies 2 [ ] Sociology and Social Work 3 [ ] Public Administration 4 [ ] Education Studies 5 [ ] Political Studies 6 [ ] Economics 7 [ ] Population Studies 8 [ ] Any other specify**……**
10	Which study area is your major? 1 [ ] Development Studies 2 [ ] Sociology 3 [ ] Public Administration 4 [ ] Education

	5 [ ] Political Science 6 [ ] Economics 7 [ ] Demography 8 [ ] Any other specify .....
11	In which year of study are you? 1 [ ] First Year 2 [ ] Second Year 3 [ ] Third Year 4 [ ] Fourth Year 5 [ ] Fifth Year
	Section B: Relevance of Social Science Degree Programme to the skill needs on the Job Market in Zambia
12	Which of the following is (are) the possible employment opportunity (ties) for pursuing your degree programme? 1 [ ] Development Specialist 2 [ ] Social and community worker 3 [ ] Public Administrator 4 [ ] Educationist 5 [ ] Political Scientist 6 [ ] Economist 7 [ ] Demographer 8 [ ] Entrepreneur 9 [ ] Any other specify .....
13	What is your main goal after the completion of this programme? **1 [ ]** To seek employment **2 [ ]** To venture in self-employment **3 [ ]** To pursue further education
14	By taking this programme up to your final year, how confident are you of being work-ready? **1 [ ]** Very Confident **2 [ ]** Slightly Confident **3 [ ]** Unsure **4 [ ]** Less confident **5 [ ]** Not Confident at all

15. Rate your **level of satisfaction** with how this programme of study has helped you acquire any of the following competencies and attributes for work readiness. **Complete this part by *circling* a number corresponding with your level of satisfaction on the scale of 1-5 (Where 1 = Very Satisfied; 2 = Satisfied; 3 = Neither; 4 = Dissatisfied, and 5 = Very Dissatisfied) on all 35 items listed in the table below.**

No.	Item Rating	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
	PROFESSIONALISM					
1	Ability to manage time effectively	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can work with minimal supervision	1	2	3	4	5
3	I can work efficiently to produce desired results or accomplish tasks	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am able to multi-task	1	2	3	4	5

5	I am more capable of managing my time well.	1	2	3	4	5
	ABILITY TO PERFORM TASKS IN DEFINED WORK SETTINGS					
6	I have the Basic knowledge from my programme of study to engage in professional practice in my field	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have the ability to apply my theoretical knowledge competently and effectively to a given task in my field	1	2	3	4	5
	CRITICAL THINKING					
8	I am able to synthesize and analyse information	1	2	3	4	5
9	I am able to think more critically	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am able to evaluate situations and circumstances effectively	1	2	3	4	5
11	I have the ability to apply concepts and principles in different contexts	1	2	3	4	5
	PROBLEM - SOLVING					
12	Ability to make rational decisions	1	2	3	4	5
13	Basic Computing Skills	1	2	3	4	5
14	Ability to critically analyse information to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
15	I have Numerical skills	1	2	3	4	5
	INTERPERSONAL SKILLS					
16	Ability to speak in my official language proficiently	1	2	3	4	5
17	Ability to work with others (Team work)	1	2	3	4	5
18	Ability to communicate effectively	1	2	3	4	5
19	Report writing and presentation skills	1	2	3	4	5
20	I am able to work with other people in groups	1	2	3	4	5
21	Ability to engage in constructive debate	1	2	3	4	5
	ACCOUNTABILITY					
22	Ability to stick to personal and work ethics	1	2	3	4	5
23	Have learned to be transparent and honest in work and dealings with other people	1	2	3	4	5
24	Ability to take responsibility for my decisions and actions	1	2	3	4	5
	CREATIVITY AND INITIATIVE SKILLS					
25	Ability to think independently	1	2	3	4	5
26	I have been equipped with Entrepreneurial skills	1	2	3	4	5

27	I can generate new ideas	1	2	3	4	5
28	I am flexible in handling my work	1	2	3	4	5
29	I can manage change	1	2	3	4	5
30	Can adapt and work in new environments	1	2	3	4	5
	SELF MANAGEMENT					
31	I can demonstrate self-control	1	2	3	4	5
32	I have the self-confidence to accomplish tasks on my own	1	2	3	4	5
33	I am now self-motivated	1	2	3	4	5
34	I can manage personal stress	1	2	3	4	5
35	I can lead others	1	2	3	4	5

16	Has this programme equipped you with entrepreneurial skills that can help you to engage in self-employment activities? **1 [ ]** YES **2 [ ]** NO
17	If you had an opportunity, would you change from this programme of study to another? **1 [ ]** YES **2 [ ]** NO
18	If your answer is YES in question 18 above, which of the following reasons can you give? If your answer is NO skip to question 1 [ ] Lack of self-confidence to secure employment with the acquired skills from my programme 2 [ ] Lack of a clearly defined career path for graduates in my programme 3 [ ] Limited job opportunities on the labour market 4. [ ] Lack of capacity to engage in self-employment activities with the acquired skills and knowledge
	Section C: Effectiveness of Work Placements and Internship Practices in the Social Science Degree Programme in promoting employability Skills
	Definition: Work placements or internships practices are programmes or activities put in place by a university to expose students to work experiences in the labour market while pursuing their degree programmes to help them acquire practical knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep a job after graduation.
19	In your programme of study, is it a requirement to be engaged in some form of work placement or internship before one could graduate? **1 [ ]** YES **2 [ ]** NO
20	If your answer is YES in question 21, have you been engaged in some form of work placement or attachment in your pursuit of this programme of study? **1 [ ]** YES **2 [ ]** NO
21	If your answer is YES in question 22, how would you categorise the organisation/company you were attached to 1. [ ] Health Industry 2. **[ ]** Banking Industry 3. **[ ]** Telecommunication Industry 4. **[ ]** Business Industry 5. **[ ]** Manufacturing Industry 6. **[ ]** Hospitality Industry 7. **[ ]** Mining industry 8. **[ ]** Service Industry

	9. **[ ]** any other, Specify **…….....**
22	How long did the work placement or internship take? 1 [ ] 4 weeks 2 [ ] 8 weeks 3 [ ] 12 weeks 4 [ ] 16 weeks 5 [ ] 20 Weeks 6 [ ] 24 weeks 7 [ ] Any other Specify**…….**
23	Which of the following aspects were required of you during your work placement or internship? (can choose more than one) 1 [ ] Carry out established and assigned tasks and activities 2 [ ] Carry out additional responsibilities given by the supervisor 3 [ ] Meet deadlines of the given commitments 4 [ ] Conduct oneself professionally and responsibly at all times
24	How satisfied are you with the skills you acquired during an internship in your study programme? **1 [ ]** Very Satisfied **2 [ ]** Satisfied **3 [ ]** Neutral **4 [ ]** Dissatisfied **5 [ ]** Very dissatisfied
25	What reason(s) can you give to justify that student work placements or internship programmes are an important component of a degree programme like the one you are pursuing at this university? **1** [ ] Helps students link practical and theoretical knowledge 2 [ ] Promote Experiential Learning 3 [ ] Promotes graduate identity 4 [ ] Makes school to work transition easier 5 [ ] Any other specify ……
26	Do you strongly think work placements and internships should be part of your study programme? **1 [ ]** Yes **2 [ ]** NO
27	Did you face any challenges during your work placement or internship programme? **1 [ ]** YES **2 [ ]** NO
28	If your answer is YES in question 30 what challenges did you face? (you can choose more than one) 1 [ ] Difficulties associated with securing a place for internship in social sciences degree programmes 2 [ ] The duration for the internship is short and thereby limiting what one can learn from the labour industry 3 [ ] Lack of proper support and mentorship from some supervisors during the internship 4 [ ] Mismatches between content covered in class and the experiences exposed to during internship
29	Based on your work experience during the attachment, how would you rate the relevance of work placement or internship practices as a component of your programme of study? **1 [ ]** Absolutely essential **2 [ ]** Very important **3 [ ]** Of average importance **4 [ ]** Of little importance **5 [ ]** Not important at all
	Do you think some improvements should be made concerning the way the workplace or internship component of your programme is designed and conducted at your university?

	1 [ ] YES **2 [ ]** NO
30	**Section D: Mechanism of Enhancing the Relevance of the Social Science Degree Programme to skill needs on the labour market in Zambia**
31	Give suggestions on how universities can better enhance the acquisition of employable skills by graduates from social science degree programmes like yours 1 [ ] Embed Entrepreneurship skills in the social science degree programme 2 [ ] Maintain a strong university-industry partnership in programme implementation 3 [ ] Periodically review the relevance of the social science degree programme on the market 4 [ ] Strengthen internal and external quality assurance processes to enhance the relevance of the social science degree programme on the labour market 5 [ ] Integrate some science and technology courses in the social science degree programme

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix N: Lecturer Questionnaire

LECTURER QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Insert a tick [✓] or indicate your responses in the appropriate spaces (…) provided

	Section A: Background Information
1	Indicate your gender 1 [ ] Male 2 [ ] Female
2	Age **1 [ ]** 20 - 24 years **2 [ ]** 25 - 29 years **3 [ ]** 30 - 34 years **4 [ ]** 35- 39 years **5 [ ]** 40 – 44 years **6 [ ]** 45 – 49 years **7 [ ]** 50 and above
3	What is the name of the university you work for ……
4	In which school are you employed? 1 [ ] School Humanities and Social Sciences 2 [ ] School of Education 3 [ ] Any other specify.....
5	In which department are you a member? 1 [ ] Development Studies 2 [ ] Sociology and Social Work 3 [ ] Public Administration 4 [ ] Education Studies 5 [ ] Political Studies 6 [ ] Economics 7 [ ] Population Studies 8 [ ] Any other specify……..
6	Select one undergraduate social science degree programme you are teaching on 1 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies 2 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Sociology 3 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration 4 [ ] Bachelor of Education 5 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Political Science 6 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Economics 7 [ ] Bachelor of Arts in Population Studies 8 [ ] Any other specify……..
7	Are you a part-time or full-time lecturer at this university? **1 [ ] Full-time 2 [ ] Part-time**
8	What is your academic position in this department 1 [ ] Lecturer 2 [ ] Senior Lecturer 3 [ ] Associate Professor 4 [ ] Full Professor
9	For how long have you been employed in this university in your capacity as a Lecturer? 1 [ ] less than 1 year

	2 [ ] Less than 5 years 3 [ ] Between 5 and 10 years 4 [ ] More than 10 years
10	What is your highest level of academic qualification? 1 [ ] Master's Degree 2 [ ] Doctoral Degree 3 [ ] Post-Doctoral Degree
11	In which field of specialisation are you? 1 [ ] Development Studies 2 [ ] Sociology 3 [ ] Public Administration 4 [ ] Education 5 [ ] Political Science 6 [ ] Economics 7 [ ] Demography 8 [ ] Any other specify .....
12	Have you worked elsewhere before joining this university? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
	Section B: Relevance of the Social Science Degree Programme on offer to the Skill Needs on the Job Market in Zambia
13	For how long as this programme been on offer? 1 [ ] Less than 5 years 2 [ ] Between 5 and 10 years 3 [ ] Between 10 and 15 years 4 [ ] Over 15 years
14	What is the main motivation for the department to offer this programme? 1 [ ] Student demand for the programme 2 [ ] Employer demand for graduates from the programme 3 [ ] To promote scholarship and research expertise in the field 4 [ ] To enhance human resources in the field
15	In which sector of the labour industry are most graduates from this programme likely to get employed? 1 [ ] Informal Sector 2 [ ] Public Sector
16	How confident are you that every student pursuing this programme will easily get employed after graduation? 1 [ ] Very Confident 2 [ ] Slightly Confident 3 [ ] Unsure 4 [ ] Less Confident 5 [ ] Not Confident at all
17	Does this programme equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
18	Which of the following skills can you confidently say your graduating students are equipped with at the end of this social science degree programme? (You can select more than one) 1 [ ] Ability to take initiative

	2 [ ] Ability to communicate effectively 3 [ ] Ability to solve problems 4 [ ] Ability to apply theoretical ideas to real-life situations 5 [ ] Ability to apply knowledge appropriately in their field of study 6 [ ] Ability to use Information and Communication Technology 7 [ ] Ability to lead others effectively ……..
19	How would you rate the demand for skills and competencies acquired by graduates from this programme on the labour market in Zambia? 1 [ ] Very High 2 [ ] High 3 [ ] Average 4 [ ] Low 5 [ ] Very Low
	Section C: Effectiveness of Work Placements and Internship Practices in Social Science Degree Programmes in Promoting Employability Skills amongst Graduating Students in Zambia
	Definition: Work Placements or Internship Practices are programmes or activities put in place by a university to expose students to work experiences while pursuing their degree programmes to help them acquire practical knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep a job after graduation.
20	Are there learning activities in this degree programme which link classroom learning to workplace practice? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
21	Which of the practices below can you say are present in your programme? 1 [ ] Study tours 2 [ ] Case studies 3 [ ] Field Visits 4 [ ] Student Internships or work placements 5 [ ] Simulations 6 [ ] Any other Specify ……
22	What reason(s) can you give to justify that student work placements or internship programmes are an important component of a degree programme like this one you are offering at this institution? **1** [ ] Helps students link practical and theoretical knowledge 2 [ ] Promote experiential Learning 3 [ ] Promotes graduate identity 4 [ ] Makes school to work transition easier 5 [ ] Any other specify ……
24	How best do you think the performance of students in internship programmes should be assessed and by whom? 1 [ ] By students writing a report of their activities which should be marked by supervisors 2 [ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through a single observation by both their supervisor and lecturer 3 [ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through several observations by Lecturers only

	4 [ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through several observations by both Lecturers and their supervisors
25	Which one of the following challenges does your department or school mostly encounter in implementing student work placement or internship programmes? 1 [ ] Inflexibility by organisations in the labour industry to accommodate students on internship 2 [ ] Limited time allocated to student internship programmes 3 [ ] Limited number of organisations willing to admit students for internship attachments 4 [ ] Industrial experts may not be objective as required in assessing students
26	How would you rate organisations and companies willingness to take up students in this programme for work placements or internship? 1 [ ] Very Good 2 [ ] Good 3 [ ] Fair 4 [ ] Poor 5 [ ] Very Poor
	Section D: Challenges and Benefits of Universities Partnering with the Labour Industry to Promote Market-Driven Social Science Degree Programmes in Zambia
27	Is the labour industry involved in the design and development of programmes and courses at this university? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
28	Do you receive any form of support from the prospective employers of your graduates in implementing this programme of study? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
29	Would you say the labour industry is doing enough in supporting universities to promote market-driven degree programmes in Zambia? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
30	What can you say are the ways through which your school and university are benefiting from collaborating with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes? 1[ ] Help university students apply theoretical knowledge in the real world through placements 2[ ] Enhances the relevance of the degree programme to the needs of labour market 3[ ] Allows industry experts to participate in the design and implementation of the degree programmes 4[ ] Enhance public confidence in the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour industry
31	On average, how many students graduate from this degree programme at the end of each academic year? **1** [ ] less than 50 **2** [ ] Between 50 and 100 **3** [ ] above 100
32	Who were the majority of the graduates from this programme during the last academic year? 1 [ ] In-service students 2 [ ] Pre-service students?
33	In what areas is your department or school engaged with industry in promoting skills acquisition by graduates from this programme? (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Industry experts participating in university teaching

	2 [ ] Industry experts participating in curriculum design and reviews 3 [ ] Industry-university research collaboration in skills transfer 4 [ ] Technology and knowledge transfer from industry to university
34	Does your school or department use labour market information to design and review study programmes? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
35	Which reason(s) can you give to justify the importance of labour market information in the design and review of degree programmes in social sciences in universities? (**You can choose more than one**) 1 [ ] A basis for evaluating the relevance of the degree programme on the labour market 2 [ ] A basis upon which the programme can be realigned to the skill needs of the labour industry 3 [ ] A basis for enhancing the skills and knowledge of Lecturers in the degree programme 4 [ ] A basis for discontinuing a degree programme with no relevance to the labour industry
36	What can you say have been the challenges for your institutions' partnership with the labour industry in promoting the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour market**? (you can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Weak partnerships between the industry and our university 2 [ ] Consideration of some degree programmes as irrelevant to the needs of industry 3 [ ] Lack of a tracer system to establish the industries in which graduates are working 4 [ ] Lack of trust between lecturers and industry experts
	Section E: Mechanisms to Enhance the Relevance of Social Science Degree Programmes to Skill Needs on the Labour Market in Zambia
37	How best do you think the employing organisations and companies in the labour sector can support university programmes in the field of social sciences to promote skills development and employment opportunities for graduates (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Participation in programme design and review 2 [ ] Organisations in the labour industry to financially sponsor students in these programmes 3 [ ] Open up their institutions for student work placements and internships 4 [ ] Offer employment opportunities to some university graduates
38	What other mechanisms do you think universities and other stakeholders should put in place to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs of the labour market in Zambia? **(You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Embed Entrepreneurship skills in the social science degree programmes 2 [ ] Maintain a strong university-industry partnership in programme implementation 3 [ ] Periodically review the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the market 4 [ ] Strengthen internal and external quality assurance processes to enhance the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the labour market 5 [ ] Integrate some science and technology courses in social science degree programmes

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix O: Employer Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYER OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVE

Instructions: Insert a tick [✓] or indicate your responses in the appropriate spaces (…) provided

	Section A: Background Information
1	Indicate your gender **1 [ ]** Male **2 [ ]** Female
2	Age **1 [ ]** 20 - 24 years **2 [ ]** 25 - 29 years **3 [ ]** 30 - 34 years **4 [ ]** 35 - 39 years **5 [ ]** 40 – 44 years **6 [ ]** 45 – 49 years **7 [ ]** 50 years and above
3	Name of the Organisation or Company you work for: **……**
4	How can you describe your position in this organisation/company? 1 [ ] Employer 2 [ ] Representative of the employer
5	In which sector does your organisation fall? **1 [ ]** Health Industry **2. [ ]** Banking Industry **3. [ ]** Telecommunication Industry **4. [ ]** Business Industry **5. [ ]** Manufacturing Industry **6. [ ]** Hospitality Industry **7. [ ]** Mining industry **8. [ ]** Service Industry **9. [ ]** any other, Specify **…….....**
6	Specify organisation type **1 [ ]** private entity **2 [ ]** public entity **3 [ ]** quasi-public entity **4 [ ]** any other, specify **……**
7	Is your institution a local or international organisation or company? **1 [ ]** Local **2 [ ]** International
8	Does your organisation employ university degree holders? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
9	If your answer is YES in question 8 above how many degree holders are currently employed at your institution? If your answer is NO in question 8 Skip to question 11 1 [ ] None 2 [ ] Less than 5 3 [ ] Between 5 and 9 4 [ ] Between 10 and 15 5 [ ] More than 15

	Section B: Relevance of Social Science Degree Programmes to the skill needs on the Job Market in Zambia
10	Of the employed graduates, how many can you say have a qualification in the field of social sciences? 1 [ ] None 2 [ ] Less than 5 3 [ ] Between 5 and 9 4 [ ] Between 10 and 15 5 [ ] More than 15
11	What do you think are the specific skills which a graduate in this field of social science is supposed to possess for them to stand a better chance of being employed? (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Ability to take initiative 2 [ ] Ability to communicate effectively 3 [ ] Ability to solve problems 4 [ ] Ability to apply theoretical ideas to real-life situations 5 [ ] Ability to apply knowledge appropriately in their field of study 6 [ ] Ability to use Information and Communication Technology 7 [ ] Ability to lead others effectively
12	How would you rate the work readiness of graduate employees at the time of joining your organisation? 1 [ ] Very good 2 [ ] Good 3 [ ] Fair 4 [ ] Poor 5 [ ] Very poor
13	On average, how would you rate the importance of employees with degree qualifications in the field of social sciences compared to those in natural sciences to the productivity of your institution as an employer 1 [ ] Absolutely essential 2 [ ] Very important 3 [ ] Of average importance 4 [ ] Of little importance 5 [ ] Not important at all

14. Rate each of the following skills by ranking them according to their order of importance for a graduate in the field of social sciences to stand a chance of getting employed in your organisation. Rank each of the **20** listed skills items between 0 and 4 (Where: **0** = **Not important at all**; **1** = **Of Little Importance**; **2** = **Of Average Importance**; **3** = **Very Important**; and **4** = **Absolutely Essential**) by **circling** a number corresponding to their level of importance.

No.	Item Rating	Not Important at all	Of Little Importance	Of Average Importance	Very Important	Absolutely Essential
1	Ability to synthesize and analyse information	0	1	2	3	4
2	Ability to Solve problems	0	1	2	3	4
3	Ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice	0	1	2	3	4
4	Basic knowledge of the profession in practice	0	1	2	3	4

5	Ability to apply different concepts and principles in various contexts	0	1	2	3	4
6	Ability to generate new ideas (Creativity)	0	1	2	3	4
7	Entrepreneurial skills	0	1	2	3	4
8	Ability to adapt and work in new environments	0	1	2	3	4
9	Ability to make decisions	0	1	2	3	4
10	Ability to work with others (Team work)	0	1	2	3	4
11	Basic Computing Skills	0	1	2	3	4
12	Language Proficiency	0	1	2	3	4
13	Report writing and presentation skills	0	1	2	3	4
14	Numerical skills	0	1	2	3	4
15	Ability to work with minimum supervision	0	1	2	3	4
16	Accountability	0	1	2	3	4
17	Time management	0	1	2	3	4
18	Ability to communicate effectively	0	1	2	3	4
19	Ability to think independently (Initiative)	0	1	2	3	4
20	Ability to lead others	0	1	2	3	4

	Section C: Effectiveness of Work Placements and Internship Practices in Social Science degree programmes in promoting employability skills amongst graduating students in Zambia
	Definition: Work Placements or Internships practices are programmes or activities put in place by a university to expose students to work experiences while pursuing their degree programmes to help them acquire practical knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep a job after graduation.
15	Does your organisation offer work placements or internships to university students pursuing degree programmes in the field of social sciences? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
16	Why do you think it is important for organisations or companies like the one you represent to afford university students' work placement or internship opportunities? (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Internships help students acquire skills to link practical and theoretical knowledge 2 [ ] Internships promote experiential Learning 3 [ ] Internship promotes graduate identity 4 [ ] Internships make school-to-work transition for graduating students easier 5 [ ] It is one way through which the industry can contribute to the provision of relevant social degree programmes by universities 6 [**]** Any other specify ……
17	If your organisation does offer student attachments, how long does the internship programme take for a university student at your organisation? 1 [ ] One Month

	2 [ ] Two Months 3 [ ] Three Months 4 [ ] Four Months 5 [ ] Five Months 6 [ ] Six Months 7 [ ] Other, Specify ……
18	What supportive activities do you offer university students during their work placement or internship at this organisation/company? (**You can choose more than one**) 1 [ ] Student exposure to practical experience 2 [ ] Student exposure to workplace experience 3 [ ] Student exposure to knowledge of the labour Industry 4 [ ] Student support for self-management
19	How best do you think the performance of students on internship programmes should be assessed and by whom? (**choose one best answer**) 1[ ] By students writing a report of their activities which should be marked by supervisors 2[ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through a single observation by both their supervisor and lecturer 3[ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through several observations by Lecturers only 4[ ] By evaluating their activities during an internship through several observations by both Lecturers and their supervisors
20	Briefly, itemize the challenges you face in implementing student work placement or internship programmes in your organisation (**you can choose more than one**) 1 [ ] Time spent by supervisors to guide and mentor student interns negatively affects organisational productivity 2 [ ] Lack of clear and systematic guidelines between the industry and universities on what student interns should be exposed to during internship 3 [ ] The period given for students to attend internship is short hence it is difficult to expose them to all they are supposed to learn 4 [ ] Some social science degree programmes are not in line with the objectives and activities of our organisation
21	Do you think your organisation is doing enough to support university students on work placement or internships to acquire practical skills and work experience? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
	Section D: Challenges and benefits of universities partnering with the labour industry to promote market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia
22	Do you think as potential employers of university graduates you have a role to play in their skills development? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] No**
23	Has your organisation been in any form of partnership with a university? **1 [ ] YES 2 [ ] NO**
24	In what ways is your organisation supporting or has supported any university in the country to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs on the labour market? (**choose those which apply to your organisation**) 1 [ ] Industry experts participation in university teaching 2 [ ] Industry experts participating in curriculum design and reviews 3 [ ] Industry-university research collaboration in skills transfer 4 [ ] Technology and knowledge transfer from industry to university 5 [ ] Industry participation in offering university students internship positions

25	What do you think are some of the benefits associated with universities entering into partnerships with employing business organisations like yours in the labour market to promote labour market-driven social science degree programmes? (**You can choose more than one)** 1[ ] Help university students apply theoretical knowledge in the real world through placements 2[ ] Enhances the relevance of the degree programme to the needs of labour market 3[ ] Allows industry experts to participate in the design and implementation of the degree programmes 4[ ] Enhance public confidence in the relevance of social science degree programmes to the labour industry
26	What challenges are there in the partnerships between the labour industry and universities to promote labour market-driven social science degree programmes in Zambia? (**You can choose more than one area**) 1 [ ] Weak partnerships between the industry and our universities 2 [ ] Some degree programmes are irrelevant to the needs of industry and thus cannot attract partnership 3 [ ] Lack of a strong national legal and policy framework to guide university-industry collaborations 4 [ ] Lack of trust between lecturers and industry experts
	Section E: Mechanism of Enhancing the Relevance of Social Science Degree Programmes to skill needs on the labour market in Zambia
27	To what extent do would you agree that business organisations and companies in the labour sector are doing enough in supporting universities to promote labour market-relevant programmes? 1 [ ] Strongly agree 2 [ ] Agree 3 [ ] Neutral 4 [ ] Disagree 5 [ ] Strongly Disagree
28	In what ways do you think employing organisations and companies in the job market can partner with universities to promote skills development and employment opportunities for graduates in the fields of social sciences in Zambia? (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Participation in programme design and review 2 [ ] Organisations in the labour industry to financially sponsor students in these programmes 3 [ ] Open up their institutions for student work placements and internships 4 [ ] Offer employment opportunities to some university graduates
29	What other mechanisms do you think universities should put in place to promote the relevance of social science degree programmes to the skill needs on the labour market in Zambia? (**You can choose more than one)** 1 [ ] Embed Entrepreneurship skills in the social science degree programmes 2 [ ] Maintain a strong university-industry partnership in programme implementation 3 [ ] Periodically review the relevance of the social science degree programmes on the market 4 [ ] Strengthen internal and external quality assurance processes to enhance the relevance of the social science degree programme on the labour market 5 [ ] Integrate some science and technology courses in social science degree programmes

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix P: Proof of Editing

EDITING SERVICES

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading was done for:

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Cilla Dowse
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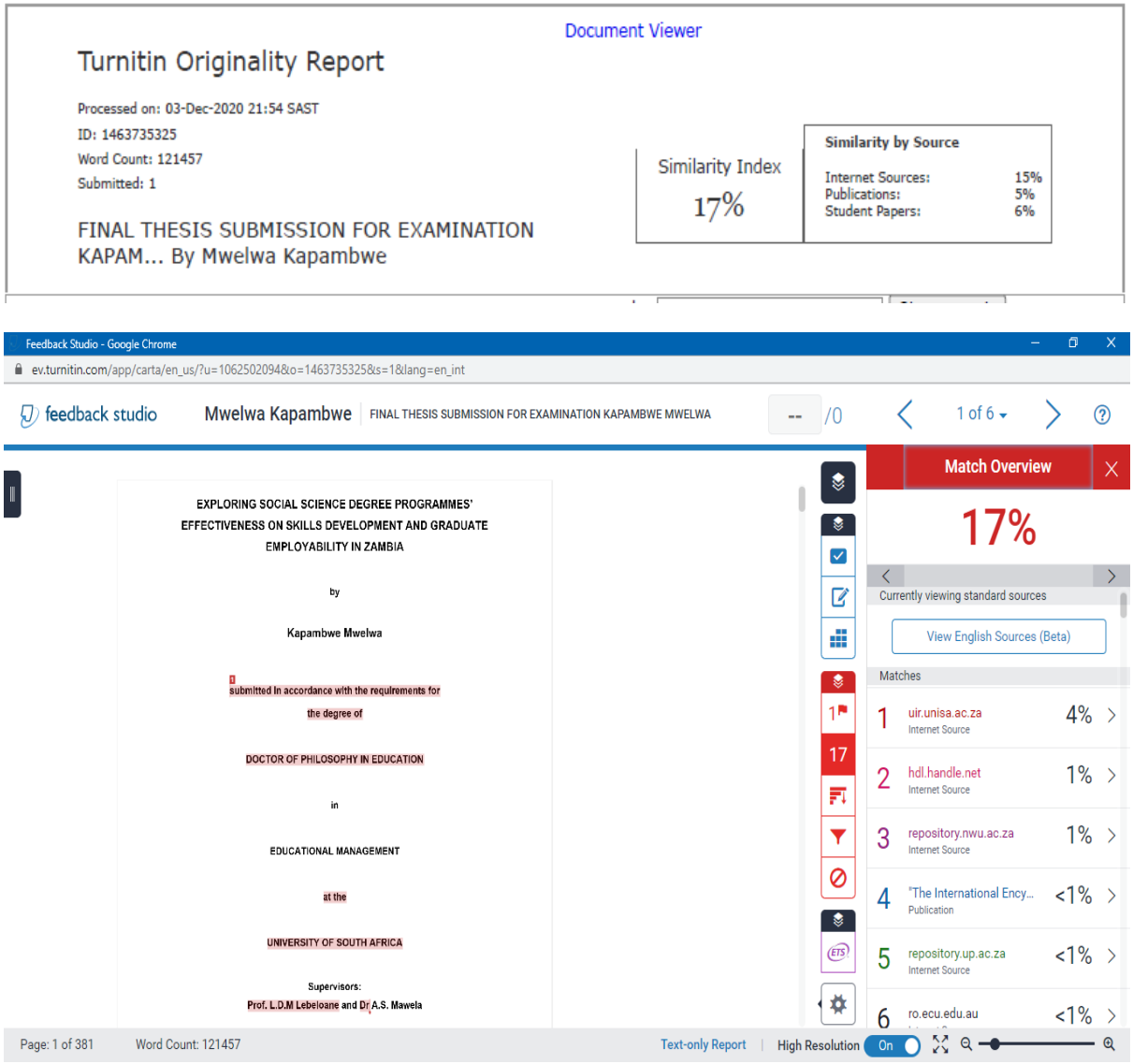

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EXPLORING SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES' EFFECTIVENESS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN ZAMBIA

by

Kapambwe Mwelwa

submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisors:
Prof. L.D.M Lebeloane and Dr A.S. Mawela

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