

An outcome evaluation of the Work 4 Progress Programme for unemployed youths

By

Pamela Pophiwa

Degree of Master of Philosophy in Programme Evaluation

Faculty of Commerce

University of Cape Town





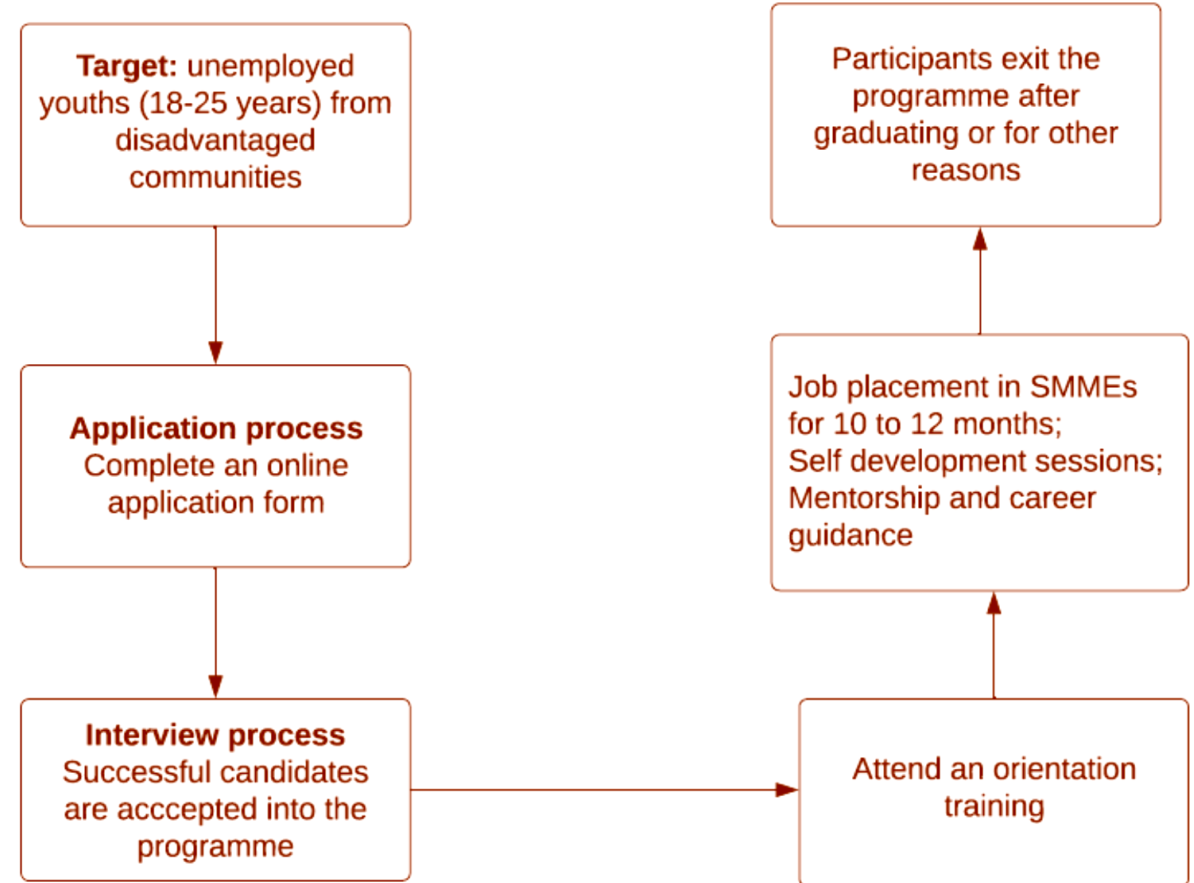
<https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/youth-day-youth-unemployment-unacceptable-1ec9115b-437c-42f5-803a-fb73db43916f>

Background: Youth unemployment in SA

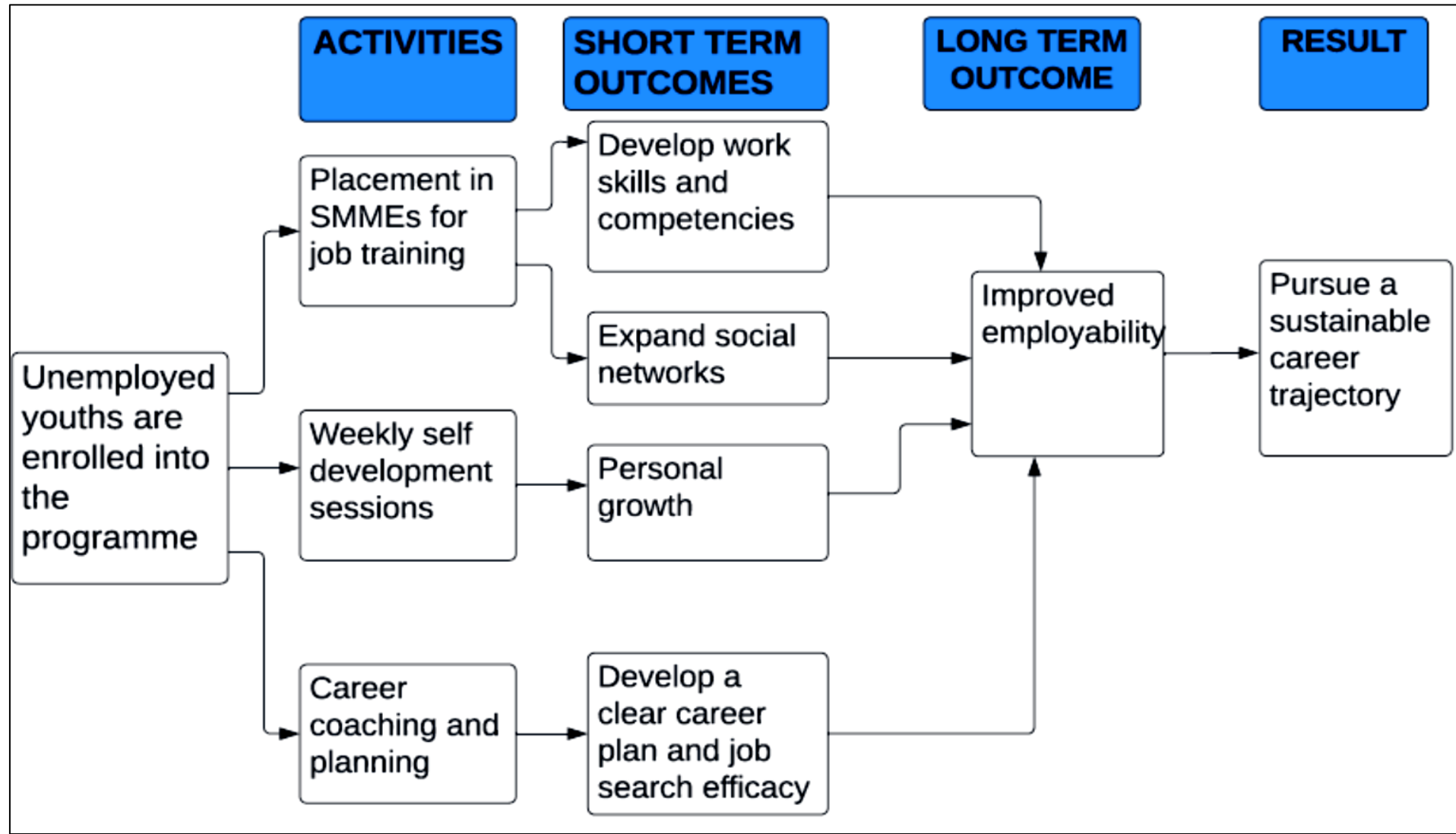
- SA youth (15 to 34 yrs) population is estimated at 20.6 million (30% of the population)
- 45% of youths are not employed (~72% of the total unemployed)
 - 30% of the unemployed youths have never been employed
 - 4 to 8% of have given up hope of finding employment
- Youth unemployment cause serious and long-lasting repercussions on the individual, the family, the broader community and the country
 - Perpetuates a cycle of social and economic exclusion which often leads to civil unrest and criminal activity
- Lack of work experience and skills mismatch in a highly competitive job market are the main causes of high youth unemployment
- Government initiatives have not been able to fully address the challenge of high youth unemployment.
 - Efforts to tackle youth unemployment require participation from a range of stakeholders (government, private sector and NGOs)
- Action Volunteers Africa aims to address youth unemployment by providing meaningful work opportunities

Description of the Work 4 Progress Programme

- The programme was piloted in 2017
- It is aimed at youths (18 and 25 years) who have not managed to find employment.
 - The youths typically reside in different disadvantaged areas in Cape Town
 - Unemployed youths from all academic levels including those without a Matric qualification are recruited into the programme (20-30 participants each year)
- Apply through an online application system and selected through a stringent interview process.
- W4P provides participants with training, skills development, work experience and social networks needed to progress in life and achieve their full potential.
- >90% of the participants have progressed (employment, studying, or completing learnership programmes)



Simplified programme theory



Presumed causal pathways leading to intended outcomes

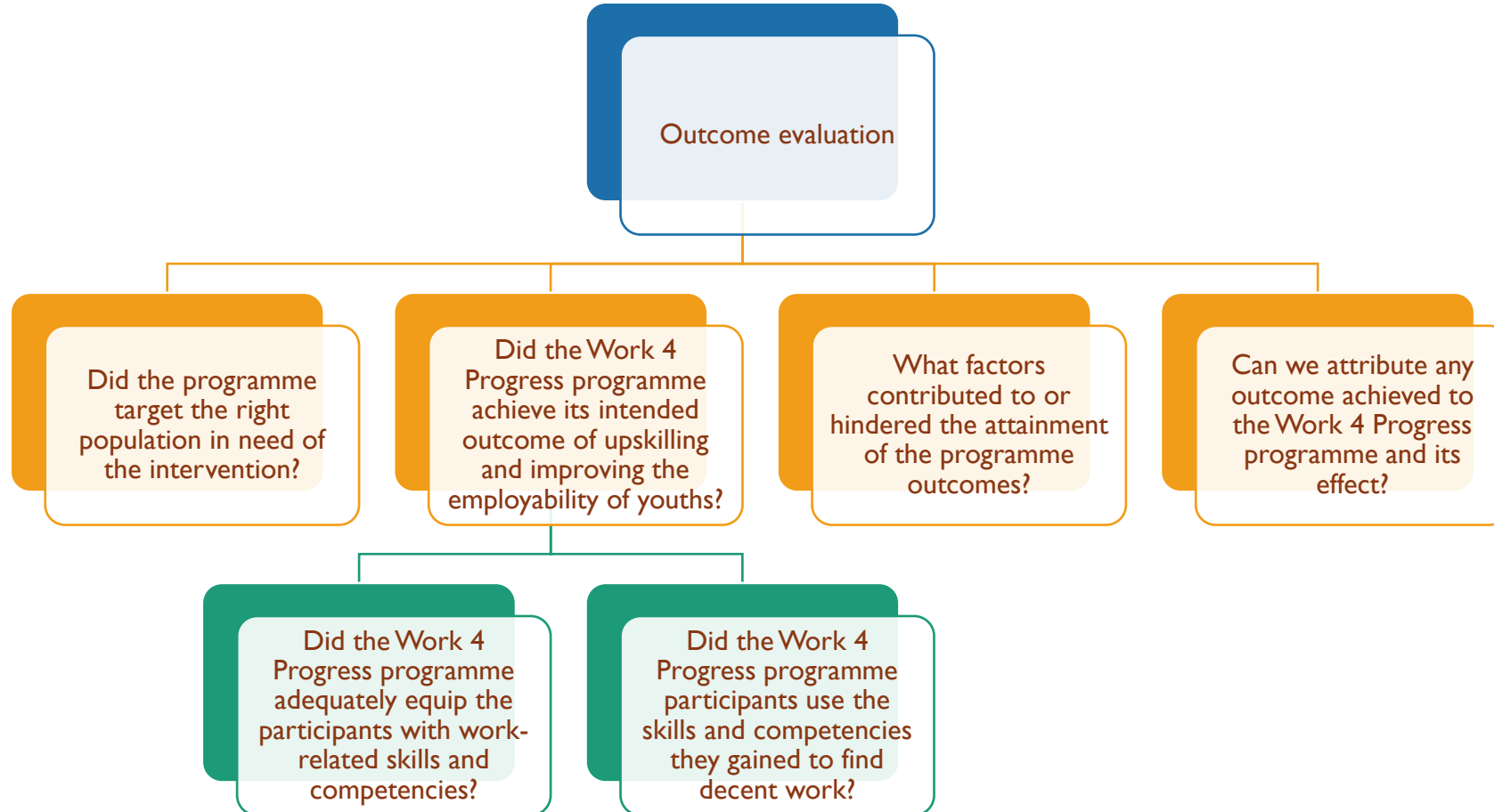
1. Exposure to work will improve employment outcomes of the youths

2. Exposure to work will help unemployed youths expand the social networks that will connect them to work opportunities

3. Programme participation contributes to personal growth that will help youths cope with life challenges

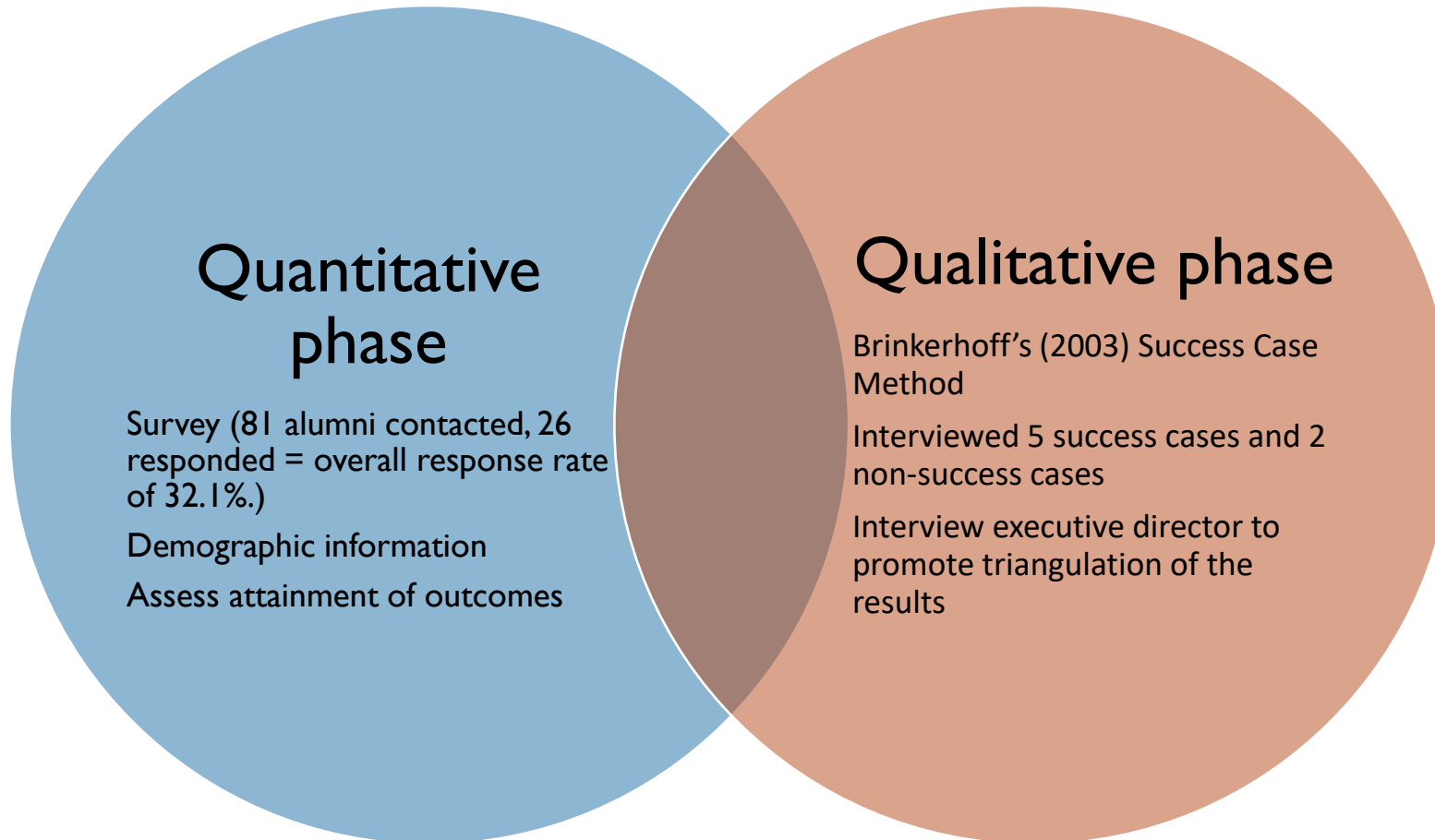
4. Career guidance will help unemployed youths develop a clear career plan which contributes to career readiness

Evaluation questions




Methods

Mixed method exploratory sequential design



Results

Evaluation question 1

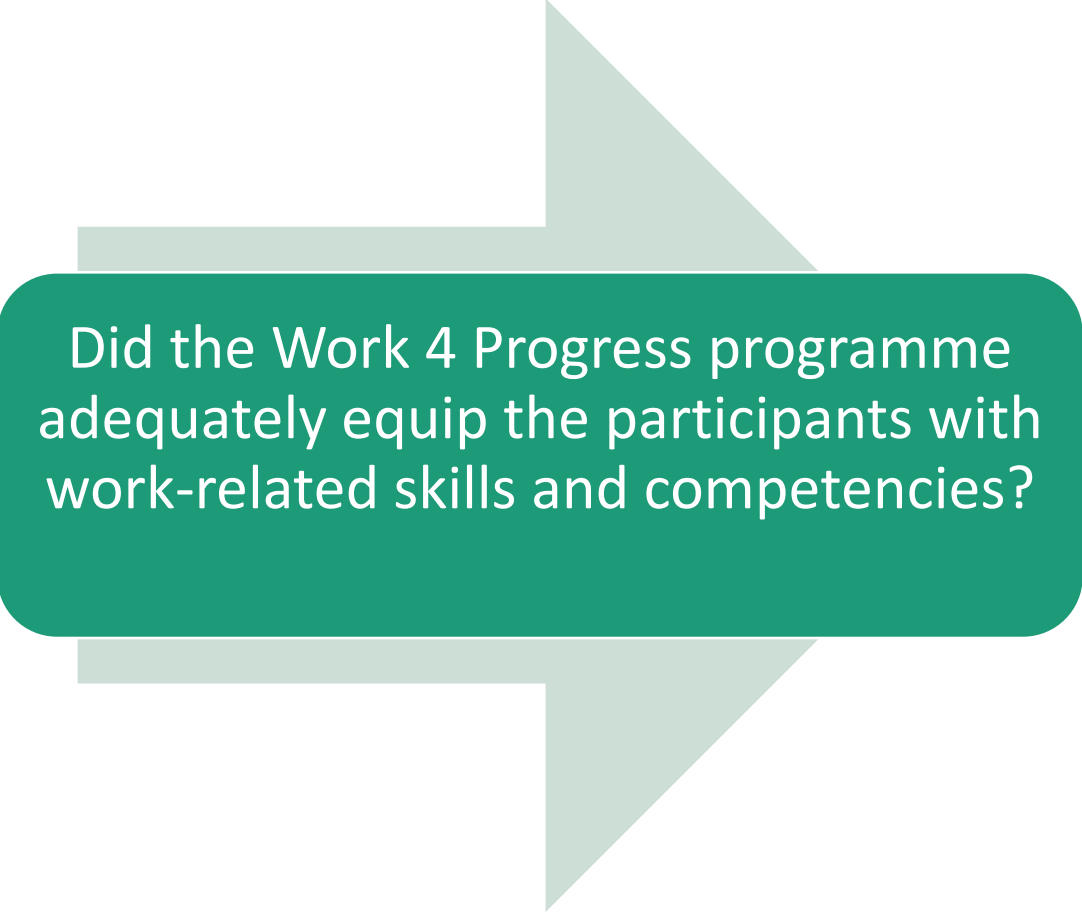


Did the programme target the right population in need of the intervention?

Demographic Item	Sample Statistics (n = 26)	SA trends on NEET youths (de Lannoy & Mudiriza, 2019)
Gender	85% women 15% men	young women
Age	Range of 18 to 25 yrs (M = 21.69 years; SD = 2.45)	between the ages of 18 to 24 years
Education	77% matric qualification 19% college certificate 4% no matric qualification	youths with basic education
Employment status	100% NEET	

Results

Evaluation question 2a



Did the Work 4 Progress programme adequately equip the participants with work-related skills and competencies?

Reported skills

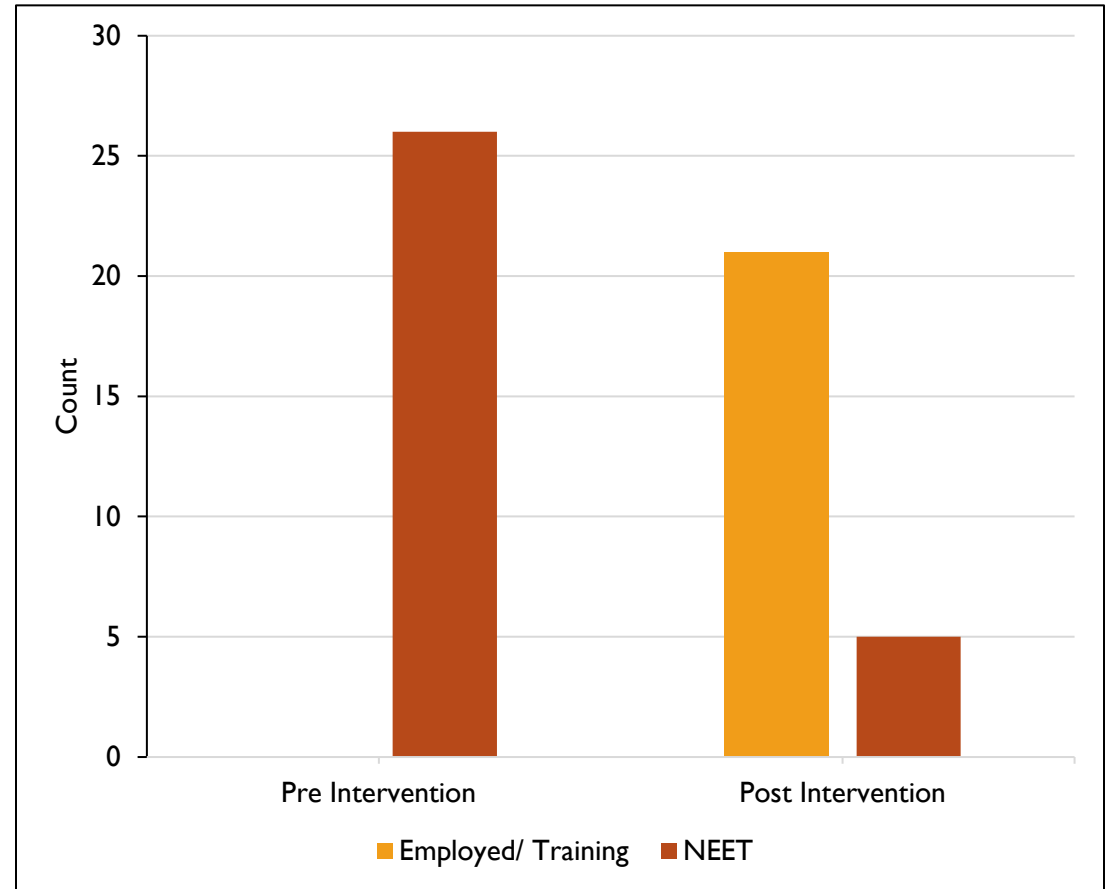
- basic ICT
- proactiveness
- administration
- data capturing
- job-specific skills
- managing finances
- Interpersonal
- communication
- self-confidence
- public speaking
- problem-solving
- time management
- networking

Results

Evaluation question 2a

Did the Work 4 Progress programme participants use the skills and competencies they gained to find decent work?

Employment status of the survey respondents pre- and post-participation in the W4P programme



Results

Evaluation question 3

What factors contributed to or hindered the attainment of the programme outcomes?

Factors contributing to attainment of programme outcomes

- ❖ Stipend
- ❖ Quality of programme activities
- ❖ Quality of relationships between programme staff and the youths

Factors hindering attainment of programme outcomes

- ❖ Mismatch of job placement with participant's career needs and goals

Results

Evaluation question 4

Can we attribute any outcome achieved to the Work 4 Progress programme and its effect?

- ❖ Due to the absence of a control group, we cannot fully attribute any outcome achieved to the WFP programme and its effect
 - ❖ The participants perceived that the programme produced significant social changes in their lives and contributed to breaking the unemployment cycle
- ❖ Therefore we can presumably attribute the outcome achieved to the Work 4 Progress programme and its effect

Recommendations

- ❖ Job placements should be matched with the individual's capabilities and their career needs and goals
- ❖ Provide psychological support to all programme participants (even those who may not exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress)
- ❖ Team leaders may need to intervene and resolve serious workplace conflict so that the workplace is youth-friendly, and it produces positive learning outcomes
- ❖ The programme could consider making a deliberate effort to target men to ensure gender balance
- ❖ Include older youths with lower education levels who equally need to get into mainstream employment
- ❖ Collect monitoring data and conduct mid-term evaluations to ensure that the programme is being implemented as intended



Limitations

- ❖ **Plausibility assessment was based mostly on international studies which may not be applicable to the SA context**
- ❖ **Lack of a control group against which the social change can be compared**
 - limited scope in attributing the outcomes to the intervention
- ❖ **Short time frame limited data collection and sample size**
 - Many have changed contact numbers, which impacted access to the alumni.
 - Scope of data collection included all four cohorts (2017-2020), such that we captured the perceptions of youths who participated in the programme over the four years.
- ❖ **Covid-19 pandemic and this affected the evaluator's access to more information**
- ❖ **The evaluation used self-reported data from alumni who had graduated from the programme**
 - It would have been interesting to get insights from those who did not complete the programme

Conclusion

Overall W4P programme benefitted youths in many of the ways it intended to

- ❖ Gained job readiness skills including job-specific skills and soft skills
- ❖ Greatly improved social skills which allow them to interact with the outside world
- ❖ Skills and knowledge gained during the programme were useful in finding and maintaining decent employment
- ❖ Many are focusing on enrolling in university for a degree

Thank you