International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Rethinking Graduate Work Readiness in South Africa: Implications for Criminal Justice and Public Sector Employability

Authors:

James Ojochenemi David (davidjo@unisa.ac.za)
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa
ORCiD: 0000-0002-0338-7568

Abstract:

This article critically re-examines graduate work readiness in South Africa, with particular attention to its implications for employability in the criminal justice and broader public sector. Despite rising levels of higher education attainment, graduates, especially those from Humanities disciplines, are frequently perceived as underprepared for employment. Drawing on a qualitative desktop analysis of academic literature, policy frameworks, and labour market data, the study is informed by Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Tomlinson's Graduate Capital model. The findings indicate that perceptions of graduate un[der]preparedness cannot be reduced to individual deficits or curricular shortcomings alone. Rather, they are shaped by systemic constraints, including unequal access to work-integrated learning opportunities, socio-economic disparities, bureaucratic recruitment processes, and limited public sector absorption capacity. The analysis further identifies a misalignment between graduate skills and organisational demands, particularly in areas such as investigative reasoning, ethical decision-making, and digital and cybercrime competencies. These challenges are compounded by rapid technological advancements reshaping the nature of work in the criminal justice sector. Hence, the study argues for a reconceptualisation of employability as a relational and structural process requiring coordinated action across higher education institutions, government, and industry. It recommends the integration of applied and technology-oriented learning, the expansion of work-integrated learning partnerships, and the reform of recruitment and equity frameworks to enhance alignment between graduate capabilities and evolving public sector needs.

Keywords:

Graduate Employability, Criminal Justice, Skills Mismatch, Structural Constraints, Work-integrated Learning.

Submitted: 2026-06-04. Revised: 2026-06-20. Accepted: 2026-07-21.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Introduction

Across the world, criminal justice institutions are increasingly confronted with complex and evolving challenges, including transnational crime, cybercrime, community safety concerns, and growing expectations for professional accountability (UNODC, 2004). These developments have heightened the demand for a highly skilled workforce capable of navigating the multifaceted operational, ethical, and analytical dimensions of modern justice systems. Consequently, higher education institutions have become critical sites for preparing graduates to enter criminal justice professions. Universities, including in South Africa, are now expected not only to produce graduates with disciplinary knowledge but also to cultivate the competencies required for effective professional practice within justice-sector institutions (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

Within this context, the issue of graduate work readiness has emerged as a significant concern (Cheong et al., 2016; Mseleku, 2022). Public discussions often portray university graduates as ill-prepared for the realities of professional work, including roles within the criminal justice sector. This idea of the "unprepared graduate" has become a dominant theme in debates about employability, where difficulties in securing employment are commonly linked to perceived gaps in skills, workplace readiness, and the effectiveness of higher education curricula (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Tomlinson, 2012, 2017; Yorke & Knight, 2006).

The concept of graduate employability is commonly understood as the set of achievements—including knowledge, skills, and personal attributes—that enhance graduates' likelihood of securing and sustaining employment. Indeed, employability extends beyond academic attainment to encompass a broader range of transferable competencies that enable individuals to succeed in professional environments (Yorke & Knight, 2006). However, scholars have increasingly cautioned against reducing employability to individual skill possession alone. For instance, Holmes (2013) argues that employability should instead be understood as a socially situated process shaped by institutional structures, labour market conditions, and broader socio-economic dynamics.

This perspective suggests that graduate employment outcomes cannot be explained solely through the lens of individual preparedness. Hence, from a student perspective, employability is "a broad concept which includes subject-specific, methodological, social and individual competences which enable graduates to successfully take up and pursue a profession/employment and empower their lifelong learning. Employability is also about making graduates more likely to gain employment in their chosen field(s), being able to create/start new businesses, and being able to develop and succeed in their occupations" (Vuksanovic et al., 2014, p. 15). This holistic, student-centred definition aligns with the broader purposes of higher education and offers a useful counterbalance to narrow, employer-driven interpretations prevalent in South African policy discourse.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

These debates take on particular significance in the South African context. Despite substantial expansion in access to higher education since the democratic transition, graduate unemployment remains a persistent socio-economic challenge (StatsSA, 2024). Labour market statistics from Statistics South Africa consistently indicate high levels of youth unemployment, reflecting structural constraints that affect the transition from education to employment. While graduates generally experience better employment prospects than individuals with lower levels of education, many still face difficulties securing stable employment in a labour market characterised by slow economic growth and limited job creation (Mseleku, 2025; StatsSA, 2024).

For criminal justice institutions such as the South African Police Service and the Department of Correctional Services, the question of graduate preparedness is particularly important. These organisations increasingly require personnel capable of critical thinking, ethical decision-making, effective communication, and analytical problem-solving. Contemporary policing and corrections work demand competencies that extend beyond traditional vocational training, including the ability to analyse complex information, engage effectively with diverse communities, exercise ethical judgement, and operate within increasingly technology-driven environments (Bayley, 1994, 2001; Brogden & Shearing, 2005; Neyroud, 2011; Wood & Shearing, 2007). As a result, universities offering programmes in criminology, policing, and criminal justice are increasingly expected to prepare graduates not only with disciplinary knowledge but also with the professional, analytical, and interpersonal competencies required for effective practice within contemporary justice institutions (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Yorke & Knight, 2006).

Simultaneously, the perception that graduates are “unprepared” may oversimplify the challenges associated with workforce development in the criminal justice sector. The relationship between higher education and employment outcomes is shaped not only by curriculum design and skill acquisition but also by broader structural factors, including labour market conditions, institutional recruitment systems, and unequal access to professional networks, among other factors (Clarke, 2018). Scholars examining such markets have argued that the expansion of higher education has intensified competition for professional employment opportunities, creating what Phillip Brown and Anthony Hesketh describe as increasingly competitive graduate labour markets (Brown et al., 2010; Hesketh, 2004). In such contexts, the difficulties graduates encounter in securing employment may reflect systemic constraints rather than deficiencies in individual preparedness (Clarke, 2018).

This study, therefore, examines the discourse surrounding graduate work readiness within the context of South Africa’s criminal justice sector. Adopting a qualitative desktop research approach, the study synthesises existing academic literature, policy documents, and labour market reports to explore how graduate employability should be conceptualised and how structural and educational factors interact to shape workforce preparedness. In doing so, the article aims to contribute to ongoing discussions

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

regarding the professionalisation of criminal justice occupations and the role of higher education in preparing graduates for careers within justice-sector institutions.

By situating the debate on graduate work readiness within the broader context of criminal justice workforce development, the study seeks to move beyond simplified narratives of graduate inadequacy. Instead, it highlights the complex interplay between educational preparation, labour market structures, and institutional demands that shape the transition from university education to professional practice in the criminal justice field. The study further examines how the discourse of the "unprepared graduate" intersects with the professionalisation and workforce needs of the criminal justice sector in South Africa. Thus, following this introduction, the manuscript is organised as follows. It begins by critically engaging the concept of employability and reviewing the relevant literature, before outlining the theoretical framework and methodology. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the key determinants shaping graduate work readiness, along with a discussion of the implications for higher education. The paper then explores emerging opportunities and challenges and reflects on how to balance institutional purpose with labour market expectations. It concludes with a set of policy-oriented recommendations.

Literature Review

Conceptualising 'Work-Readiness' or Employability

The definition of graduates' employability or "work-readiness" has yet to attain a consensus among scholars, given the many nuances involved (Sin & Neave, 2016). Disagreements still abound regarding what essentially constitutes employability, especially when considering the broad purpose of higher education. This results in the concept becoming a "floating signifier" since various agendas and perspectives, depending on a particular stakeholder, tend to shape such a definition according to Sin and Neave (2016, p. 1448). The authors argue that "In the policy domain, a floating signifier accompanies conflicting discourses, each of which seeks to impose its particular meaning and interpretation onto a specific term", as is the case with employability (Sin & Neave, 2016, p. 1448). Accordingly, the concept of work readiness or employability is subjective and varies based on employer expectations, specific job requirements, and the context in which the assessment is made (Cheng et al., 2022). For employers, work-readiness has to do with "possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organisational objectives soon after commencing employment" (Mason et al., 2009, p. 1). Here, emphasis is particularly placed on "capabilities" rather than "subject knowledge", which tends to be the focus of higher education at times. Other stakeholders may also emphasise other factors such as interpersonal skills, personal ethics, values and commitments, all of which underscore the subjectivity of the concept.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Amid the divergence of views, Cheng et al. (2022) identified two perspectives, namely, the skills-based perspective and the holistic perspective. While a skill-based definition focuses on the specific job-related skills and competencies required for a graduate to perform a role, a holistic definition integrates personal development and lifelong learning (Cheng et al., 2022). Unlike the skill-based, a holistic definition does not only focus on job-specific skills but also broader attributes such as adaptability, continuous learning, and personal growth, viewing employability as a combination of skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that enable individuals to navigate their careers successfully over time (Asoba et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2022).

Considering especially that the purpose of higher education includes but is not limited to producing work-ready graduates, the holistic definition rightly reflects something deeper than the acquisition of only skills deemed useful by an employer. Such a perspective is also reflected in a report by the European Students' Union, wherein employability is defined as the skills that allow graduates to pursue a profession successfully and engage in lifelong learning, including the ability to start new businesses and succeed in various occupations (Vuksanovic et al., 2014, p. 15). This approach reflects a holistic, socially-focused view of employability that goes beyond merely having a job (Cheng et al., 2022, p. 22). Indeed, not paying enough attention to the bigger, holistic picture may end up reinforcing the widespread belief about whether graduates are work-ready, whether that belief is accurate or not.

Against the backdrop, the literature on graduate employability in South Africa reveals a complex and contested terrain, given the gap between higher education outputs and youth employment levels in South Africa. Graduates of the criminal Justice field, which broadly falls within the Humanities in the higher education system, are by no means immune to the rising youth unemployment challenges in South Africa. Globally and locally, the discourse centres on the “unprepared graduate” narrative, which attributes employment difficulties primarily to individual or curricular deficiencies (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Mobarak, 2019; Yorke & Knight, 2006). However, a growing body of scholarship challenges this individual-deficit model, emphasising employability as a socially situated, relational process shaped by structural, institutional, and labour market factors (Holmes, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017).

Within the criminal justice sector, there is an emphasis on professionalisation in response to increasingly complex forms of crime, such as cybercrime and transnational organised networks, as well as heightened expectations for accountable and community-centred justice systems. Early work by Bayley (1994) argues for a shift towards evidence-based policing, emphasising the importance of proactive and informed responses to evolving crime patterns. Building on this, Neyroud (2011) highlights the importance of strong professional standards, effective leadership, and a commitment to continuous learning within police institutions. At the same time, Shearing’s concept of plural policing draws attention to the reality that crime prevention and security are no longer the sole responsibility of the police, but involve multiple actors operating within increasingly networked and collaborative environments (Bayley,

2001). This places additional demands on justice professionals to work across institutional boundaries and adapt to more complex governance structures.

In the South African context, post-apartheid reforms have aimed to transform key criminal justice institutions—including the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)—in line with democratic values and constitutional principles. Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, particularly in relation to skills development, institutional capacity, accountability, and entrenched organisational cultures, which continue to shape the effectiveness of these reforms (Marks & Fleming, 2004). In this regard, the National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (NSG-RA, 2022) represents a landmark policy response. It applies directly to police, correctional services, and justice institutions, establishing five pillars of professionalisation: pre-entry recruitment and selection, induction and onboarding, planning and performance management, continuing learning and professional development, and career progression. Central to the Framework are tightened pre-entry requirements, including the extension of the Nyukela programme, mandatory integrity tests, occupation-based competency assessments, and higher NQF qualifications for senior roles — alongside a shift toward merit-based recruitment to reduce political interference and cadre deployment. These provisions raise entry standards while creating clearer competency-based pathways, particularly valuing interpretive, ethical reasoning, and social analysis skills relevant to community policing, offender rehabilitation, restorative justice, victim support, and policy work (NSG-RA, 2022).

Although often seen as non-technical, the Humanities—particularly criminal justice—are fundamentally important to effective justice practice and add significant value to society in many areas. Disciplines such as criminology, sociology, and legal studies play a key role in cultivating ethical awareness, cultural sensitivity, empathy, and strong critical thinking skills—competencies that are essential for navigating the complex social realities within which contemporary justice systems operate (Garland, 2001; Loader & Sparks, 2010). Rather than focusing solely on technical or procedural expertise, these fields encourage a deeper understanding of crime, justice, and social dynamics.

Furthermore, scholarship on professionalisation within policing and justice administration increasingly points to the importance of advanced academic training. For instance, postgraduate and doctoral qualifications are seen as critical for strengthening research capacity, supporting policy development, and embedding evidence-based approaches within institutions such as the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the broader justice sector (Faull, 2017; Marks & Fleming, 2004; Neyroud, 2011). This reflects a growing recognition that complex crime challenges require not only practical skills but also analytical and research-driven expertise.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

However, the ongoing undervaluation, underemployment, and underutilisation of Humanities graduates remain significant concerns (Niman & Chagnon, 2023). This situation may contribute to hidden—or "latent"—capacity gaps within key areas of the justice system, particularly those that depend on strong relational and interpretive skills. These include human-centred investigations, diversion programmes, restorative justice initiatives, and community engagement processes, where communication, empathy, and contextual understanding are critical (Crawford, 2011; Wood & Shearing, 2007). As a result, the marginalisation of these graduates may inadvertently weaken the system's ability to respond effectively to the social dimensions of crime and justice

Overall, the literature moves beyond simplistic skills-mismatch explanations toward systemic analyses. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) provides a supply-side lens, while Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and Tomlinson's Graduate Capital model (2017) emphasise relational, cultural, identity, and psychological dimensions. These frameworks align with findings that employability outcomes result from the interplay of educational preparation, institutional quality, labour market structures, and professionalisation policies. This review thus sets the stage for examining how these dynamics manifest in South Africa's criminal justice context.

Theoretical Framework

Building on existing research that points not only to skills mismatches but also to deep structural inequalities shaping graduate employability, this study adopts a broad and integrative perspective on what it means to be "work-ready" and the implication therefore for South Africa's criminal justice graduates. Rather than reducing employability to a simple question of whether graduates lack skills, the framework recognises that entering the workforce in the relevant institutions, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD), is shaped by a complex interplay of personal effort, social connections, and systemic constraints. Hence, appreciating this complexity, the study draws on three complementary theoretical lenses: Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Tomlinson's (2017) Graduate Capital model.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) provides a useful starting point by focusing on the value of education and training. It views learning as an investment that equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and competencies that enhance their productivity and market appeal. In the criminal justice sector, this helps explain the increasing expectation that graduates, especially those from criminology, policing studies, sociology, and related Humanities disciplines, should be able to think critically, act ethically, write clearly, and analyse complex information. As institutions like SAPS grapple with evolving challenges such as cybercrime, data-driven policing, and community engagement, they are placing greater emphasis on university-level education. This shift is reinforced by policy initiatives such as the

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (NSG-RA, 2022), which raises qualification requirements and introduces competency assessments and programmes like Nyukela to strengthen leadership capacity.

However, while Human Capital Theory highlights the importance of education, it tells only part of the story, especially in a society as unequal as South Africa. Having a degree does not guarantee employment. Structural realities such as limited job creation, slow and complex recruitment systems, credential inflation, and the restricted capacity of public institutions to absorb graduates often stand in the way (Mseleku, 2022). In this context, even well-qualified individuals may find themselves excluded, not because they lack ability, but because opportunities are scarce or unevenly distributed.

This is where Social Capital Theory becomes critical, as it shifts attention from what individuals know to who they know, and how those relationships shape access to opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). For instance, in the criminal justice sector, pathways into employment are frequently influenced by networks, mentorship, referrals, and insider knowledge, such that many graduates, especially those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, often lack these connections. Without access to professional networks or guidance on navigating recruitment processes, they may struggle to enter institutions like SAPS, DCS, or DoJ&CD. This “who you know” dynamic reinforces existing inequalities and can be particularly challenging for Humanities graduates, who may already contend with perceptions that their qualifications are less directly aligned with labour market needs (Mseleku, 2025).

Tomlinson’s (2017) Graduate Capital model brings these ideas together into a more holistic understanding of employability. Rather than focusing narrowly on skills or networks, it conceptualises employability as a combination of five interconnected forms of capital. These include human capital (knowledge and technical skills), social capital (networks and relationships), cultural capital (the ability to “fit” within organisational norms and values), identity capital (how individuals present and position themselves professionally), and psychological capital (resilience, confidence, and adaptability). This model is especially useful for understanding careers in criminal justice, where success depends on a range of factors, including what graduates know, how they present themselves, how well they handle pressure, and how closely their values and professional identity match those expected in the field (Holmes, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017). For example, Humanities graduates must not only demonstrate analytical and ethical competence but also be able to position themselves as credible professionals—whether as ethical investigators, community-focused practitioners, or rehabilitation specialists. By implication, employability is construed as an ongoing, evolving process that involves developing a strong sense of identity, building confidence, adapting to different situations, presenting oneself effectively, and gaining recognition from employers and professional communities.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Taken together, these three perspectives provide a rich and layered framework for understanding graduate employability. Human Capital Theory explains why education and professionalisation policies, such as those promoted by the NSG (2022), place such strong emphasis on qualifications and competencies. However, Social Capital Theory and the Graduate Capital model reveal that these individual investments are not enough on their own. Structural inequalities, differences between universities, and unequal access to networks and opportunities continue to shape who can translate their education into meaningful employment.

By integrating these perspectives, this framework challenges the simplistic idea that unemployment is merely the result of "unprepared" graduates. Instead, it reframes employability as a socially embedded and systemic process, one that reflects broader patterns of inequality and access. Ultimately, it highlights the need for more comprehensive interventions that go beyond improving educational outcomes to also address the structural barriers limiting graduate entry into the criminal justice sector. Only through such a balanced approach can South Africa build a professional, capable, and inclusive justice workforce.

Method and Materials

This study takes a conceptual, qualitative approach to explore graduate work readiness in South Africa's criminal justice sector. Instead of collecting new data, it draws on existing research, policy documents, and reports to build a clear picture of the factors shaping employability. While the focus is on interpretation and understanding, selected statistics are included to highlight key labour market trends.

A qualitative, desktop-based approach is well-suited to this topic, as employability is a complex issue shaped by individual experiences, institutional practices, and broader social and economic conditions (Cresswel & Poth, 2018). This approach is well-suited to examining a complex and layered topic influenced by educational structures, institutional frameworks, socio-economic conditions, and labour market dynamics (Cresswel & Poth, 2018; Johnston, 2014)

Sources were selected using a purposive sampling strategy aligned with the study's objectives and conceptual focus (Patton, 2015; Suri, 2011). This involved targeted searches across key academic databases such as Google Scholar, as well as government repositories (e.g., Statistics South Africa, National School of Government) and institutional websites, including SAPS, DCS, and DHET. Materials were chosen based on their relevance to issues such as graduate employability, workforce development in the criminal justice sector, public sector professionalisation, skills alignment, and structural barriers—particularly within South Africa or comparable contexts. Priority was given to credible and relatively recent publications (mainly from 2010 to 2026) that provided theoretical, empirical, or policy-related insights relevant to the study.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

Rather than aiming for an exhaustive systematic review, this approach focused on selecting sources that offered depth and strong alignment with the research aims, resulting in a core set of approximately 60 sources. These were analysed using thematic synthesis (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Thomas & Harden, 2008). The process involved repeated reading, identifying and coding recurring themes—such as skills gaps, structural challenges, work-integrated learning, and professionalisation—and integrating these insights within the study's theoretical framework, which draws on Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Tomlinson's Graduate Capital model. All sources were also critically assessed for credibility, potential bias, and relevance to the research context (Cresswel & Poth, 2018).

While this purposive, desktop-based approach allows for a focused and contextually rich analysis, it does have limitations. It relies on publicly available secondary data and involves an element of subjectivity in source selection, which means some less prominent materials may have been excluded (Johnston, 2014). Despite these limitations, the approach provides a strong foundation for rethinking graduate work readiness and contributing to policy development in the criminal justice sector.

The study applies thematic synthesis to organise and analyse the data. This involves identifying recurring ideas in the literature, grouping them into key themes, such as skills gaps, professionalisation, and structural barriers, and then developing deeper insights into how these factors influence graduate readiness and employment outcomes, and their relevance for the criminal justice sector.

Sources were carefully selected based on relevance and credibility, with an emphasis on material published from 2010 onwards to reflect recent developments in higher education, criminal justice reform, and labour market conditions. These include academic research, government policies (such as the National Development Plan 2030), and other relevant institutional reports (SAPS, DCS, and the Department of Justice), as well as labour statistics from Statistics South Africa.

The analysis is guided by Human Capital Theory and Social Capital Theory, which together help explain how both individual skills and broader networks or opportunities shape employability. All sources were critically reviewed to ensure reliability and to account for possible bias.

While this approach provides a broad and integrated, though not exhaustive, understanding of the topic, it is limited by reliance on existing data, which may not fully capture emerging trends or informal employment pathways. Even so, it not only offers a strong foundation for understanding graduate work readiness but also informs education and workforce planning in the criminal justice sector, while also providing direction for more empirical study.

Results and Discussion

The importance of graduate work readiness is underscored by South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which positions education, skills development, and employment as central to socio-

economic progress and inclusive growth (South African Government, 2012). The NDP recognises that the country continues to face significant labour market challenges, including a weak skills base, barriers to entry, and mismatches between the skills graduates offer and those employers need.

In response, it calls for stronger skills development, better alignment between education and the labour market, expanded vocational and professional training, and a greater emphasis on lifelong learning and career progression. These priorities are particularly significant for the criminal justice sector, where increasingly complex forms of crime and growing demands for accountability require a workforce that is not only skilled but also adaptable and professionally competent. This analysis, therefore, situates the debate on graduate unemployability within broader issues of skills mismatch, structural change, and the evolving nature of professional competence in the modern labour market. In doing so, it highlights the implications of these shifts for the criminal justice sector.

Rethinking the "Unprepared Graduate" Narrative

It is important to distinguish between employability and employment clearly. A person can be employable—possessing the right skills and attributes—yet remain unemployed. Conversely, being employable does not guarantee securing a job. Employability is therefore not synonymous with getting hired; rather, it is about empowering graduates to become critical, lifelong learners who can adapt to and help transform organisations. This is consistent with the growing emphasis on soft skills and attitudes, such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, that reflect the evolving demands of the modern workplace (Niman & Chagnon, 2023, p. 68) . That said, any serious discussion of graduate unemployment in South Africa must still confront the issue of work readiness, as the two are deeply connected.

Graduate employment outcomes are shaped by more than just a student's field of study. Institutional and socio-economic factors also play a crucial role in determining access to the labour market. For instance, studies on NSFAS-funded graduates reveal that the type of university attended continues to significantly influence employment prospects, regardless of race, gender, or area of study. This highlights the lasting impact of institutional reputation, available resources, and the broader inequalities embedded within the higher education system (Wildschut et al., 2020)

In addition, students' confidence in their employability is not uniform across disciplines. It is often influenced by their faculty or field of study, with students from different academic backgrounds expressing varying levels of optimism about their career opportunities and readiness for the labour market (Goodman & Tredway, 2016). For instance, professional fields such as medicine offer clearer pathways into employment due to their direct alignment with specific careers, whereas generic disciplines like the Humanities generally lack such structured routes (Harvey, 2001, p. 97). Hence, humanities graduates face scrutiny in employability debates, considering how employers often place

greater value on transferable competencies and graduate attributes than on disciplinary knowledge alone (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

Graduate employability challenges linked to the field of study are not unique to South Africa; similar patterns exist in the US. Research shows that non-professional majors, such as liberal arts, are less effectively marketed to employers and often perceived as purely academic, with their workplace value underemphasised (Niman & Chagnon, 2023). Scholars argue that this disconnect leads both employers and students to overlook their relevance. As a result, there is a growing call for education to integrate practical, hands-on learning and align more closely with labour market needs (Niman & Chagnon, 2023). While no definitive national ranking consistently places the Humanities below STEM or commerce fields in terms of employment statistics, their outcomes are embedded in intersecting factors, including race, class, gender, institutional quality, and curriculum-employer alignment (Harry et al., 2018; Mseleku, 2022).

Ultimately, a significant student anxiety about school-to-work transitions in this high-unemployment context, as employers frequently report gaps in generic and work-relevant competencies such as communication, critical thinking, data literacy, and practical application, concerns that affect Humanities graduates when institutional preparedness varies (Asoba et al., 2022; Pitan & Muller, 2023). Within the evolving professional landscape, the idea of the "unprepared graduate" has become a dominant explanation for employment challenges, particularly for Humanities graduates, which include the criminal justice fields (Griesel & Parker, 2009; Mobarak, 2019).

However, this narrative of "unprepared graduates" often overlooks the deeper structural realities shaping graduate outcomes. For instance, the criminal justice institutions in South Africa navigate evolving threats amid one of the world's most challenging labour markets. Youth (15–34) unemployment rose from 36.9% in Q1 2015 to 46.1% in Q1 2025, with the 15–24 cohort reaching 62.4% (StatsSA, 2025). While concerns about gaps in practical skills, digital literacy, and technical competence are valid (Ngcece et al., 2026), it places disproportionate responsibility on individuals while overlooking structural constraints. Reddy et al. (2016) confirm structural mismatch: the economy demands high skills, but the labour force is predominantly low-skilled. Over the past decade, youth prospects have steadily declined, with 58.7% of unemployed young people having no prior work experience. This lack of opportunity leaves many graduates trapped in cycles of discouragement, reflected in the 1.9 million discouraged work-seekers recorded in the first quarter of 2025 (StatsSA, 2025). Although graduates tend to fare better than their peers, unemployment remains high at 23.9%, compared to 47.6% among those with matric and 51.6% among those without it (StatsSA, 2025). Even among graduates, outcomes remain challenging. In Q1 2026, the unemployment rate for graduates was 12.2%, significantly below the national average but still indicative of absorption difficulties, while individuals without matric faced a 37.6% rate (StatsSA, 2026). These patterns align with earlier findings that university type, socio-

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

economic background, and field-specific pathways (e.g., Humanities) influence outcomes more than discipline alone (Wildschut et al., 2020).

As Phathwa (2026) notes for law graduates, for instance, oversupply and poor alignment persist. In such a climate, constrained by limited capacity to absorb new entrants, the valuable strengths of Humanities graduates, especially in ethical reasoning, critical thinking, research and analysis skills, and community engagement, will likely remain largely underutilised. As Figure 1 below demonstrates, between Q1 2015 and Q1 2025, unemployment in South Africa has remained persistently high, especially among young people. Youth unemployment (ages 15–34) rose sharply from 36.9% to 46.1%, while rates for adults (35–64) increased more gradually from 17.0% to 23.3% (StatsSA, 2024, 2025).

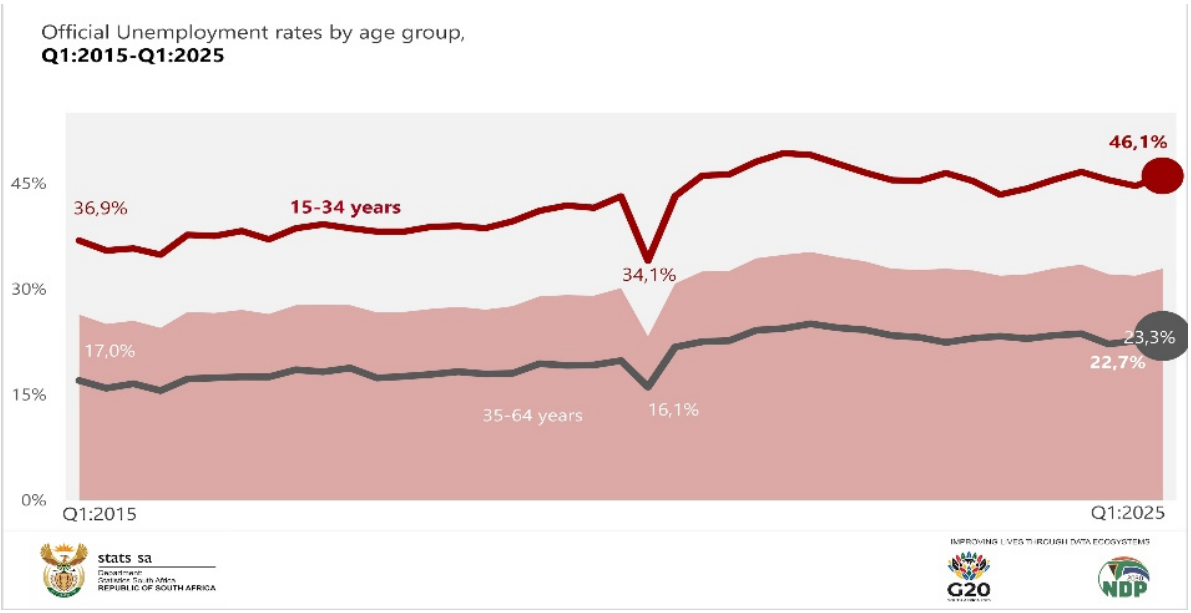

Figure 1: Official unemployment rate by age group between Q1 2015-2025
Source: StatsSA (2025)

This growing gap shows how difficult it is for young people to move from education into work, even as they attain more qualifications. It points to deeper issues in the labour market, including limited job creation, skills mismatches, and heavy competition. Accordingly, graduate readiness is better understood as socially and structurally shaped.

The Human Capital Theory explains why higher education is expected to provide relevant knowledge and skills (Becker, 1964). However, in South Africa's context of slow economic growth, credential inflation, and constrained labour markets, educational attainment does not guarantee employment (Khumalo, 2024). For instance, like many other sectors in this constrained economic landscape, entry into criminal justice institutions is restricted by bureaucratic recruitment processes, security vetting, and limited vacancies (Khumalo, 2024; Phathwa, 2026).

WOHLLEBE & ROSS
Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Social Capital Theory further explains unequal outcomes among similarly qualified graduates. Access to networks, mentorship, internships, and insider knowledge often determines who successfully transitions into the workforce (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). In South Africa's unequal society, these resources are unevenly distributed, disadvantaging graduates from historically marginalised backgrounds (Harry et al., 2018; Mseleku, 2025). As a result, employability is not only about what graduates know, but also about the social structures within which they operate.

Tomlinson's (2017) The Graduate Capital model provides an integrative lens for understanding these dynamics. It highlights that employability depends not only on human capital, but also on social, cultural, identity, and psychological capital. Humanities graduates possess valuable attributes—such as critical thinking, ethical awareness, and social understanding—that are highly relevant to criminal justice work, including community policing, rehabilitation, and policy analysis (Tomlinson, 2017). However, without sufficient opportunities to translate these attributes into demonstrable professional experience, underemployment persists.

The National Framework (NSG-RA, 2022) adds nuance to this discussion. Institutionalising merit-based recruitment and competency-based entry requirements, the framework raises standards while also creating clearer pathways into the profession. This has some implications for the employability debate within the criminal justice sector in South Africa, given its apartheid history and the ongoing efforts to address negative legacies. The professionalisation of criminal justice in South Africa is part of a broader post-apartheid shift away from authoritarian and militarised policing towards more democratic, rights-based, and community-focused approaches. These changes place greater emphasis on accountability, legitimacy, and building public trust (Marks & Fleming, 2004; Muntingh et al., 2022; Schärf, 2001).

The transformation is further influenced by the changing nature of crime, including the growth of transnational organised crime and cybercrime, which demands more advanced analytical, ethical, and technological capabilities (Akinbowale et al., 2024). Modern criminal justice roles demand a far broader and integrated skill set. Analytical decision-making enables practitioners to interpret crime patterns and digital evidence effectively, while ethical accountability, grounded in constitutional principles, is essential for maintaining public trust (Neyroud, 2011). Community engagement has also become central, shifting the focus from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention through partnerships with communities and stakeholders (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Wood & Shearing, 2007). At the same time, technological competence is increasingly indispensable for graduates in this field. Tools such as the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) and crime analytics platforms improve efficiency but require specialised training and critical awareness, particularly regarding potential biases in AI-driven systems (Akinbowale et al., 2024). Humanities graduates often have the people-focused, ethical, and analytical skills needed in areas like community policing, restorative justice, and policy work. However, they still

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

struggle to enter these fields due to barriers such as limited hands-on experience opportunities, weaker professional networks, and complex hiring systems

These developments are strongly reinforced by the National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (NSG-RA, 2022). By institutionalising merit-based recruitment, pre-entry certification (including the Nyukela programme), competency assessments, and integrity testing, the Framework raises entry standards while creating clearer and more transparent pathways into the profession. This reflects broader international scholarship, which emphasises that professionalisation enhances accountability, legitimacy, and effectiveness in policing and justice institutions (Bayley, 2001; Cordner, 2019). This policy shift challenges simplistic “unprepared graduate” narratives by shifting the focus from presumed individual deficits toward the need for better alignment between educational preparation and professional expectations. Ultimately, it underscores that graduate work readiness is a relational and structural process requiring coordinated efforts across higher education, justice institutions, and policy frameworks.

Implications for Criminal Justice Education and Workforce Development

Given that improving graduate work readiness requires coordinated, system-wide interventions (Pitan & Muller, 2023), higher education institutions need to focus on closing the gap between theory and real-world practice. One effective way to do this is through work-integrated learning (WIL), such as internships, simulations, placements, and service-learning. These approaches help students build practical skills, develop a sense of professional identity, and form valuable workplace connections (Fleming & Hay, 2021; Hummer & Byrne, 2021). In criminal justice programmes, WIL is especially important because it connects classroom learning to real policing, corrections, and justice settings, helping graduates become more prepared for the demands of the field (Jackson & Dean, 2023; Mtawa et al., 2021). Indeed, hands-on learning and strong partnerships between universities and industry improve the extent to which graduates meet labour market expectations.

At the same time, criminal justice curricula need to keep up with changes in the field. This includes adding skills like digital literacy, cybercrime awareness, data-driven policing, and ethical decision-making, alongside broader skills such as communication, empathy, cultural awareness, and critical thinking (Bayley, 2001; Neyroud, 2011). Additionally, there is a need to create clearer and more accessible pathways into employment. This includes expanding structured graduate programmes, strengthening internship pipelines, and improving recruitment processes to prioritise merit and experiential learning (NSG-RA, 2022). Stronger collaboration with universities can further enhance alignment between education and practice, especially through co-designed curricula, practitioner input, and joint training initiatives. In this regard, bodies such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and SASSETA have a critical role to play in fostering collaboration and accountability.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management (ISSN: 2700-8983)
Volume: 07 Issue: 10 Year: 2026
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijarbm.834

Incentivising WIL initiatives, monitoring graduate outcomes, and supporting targeted interventions for disadvantaged students can help address systemic inequalities (Mseleku, 2025; Pitan & Muller, 2023).

The discussion points to a necessary shift in perspective. Graduate work readiness should not be viewed as a problem of individual deficiency, but as a systemic challenge shaped by the interaction between education systems, labour markets, institutional practices, and broader socio-economic conditions. Addressing this challenge requires shared responsibility and coordinated reform. Such an approach would not only improve graduate outcomes but also contribute to building a more professional, equitable, and effective criminal justice system capable of responding to South Africa's complex safety and justice needs.

Furthermore, the foregoing highlights the need for individual graduates to respond constructively to these structural realities without compromising their long-term prospects. Borrowing from Phathwa (2026), success should not be narrowly defined in terms of courtroom practice or admission as an attorney, as in the case of law graduates. Rather, a legal qualification should be understood as a versatile foundation encompassing competencies in research, regulatory compliance, public policy, governance, and ethical reasoning. Accordingly, graduates are encouraged to broaden their career perspectives by engaging with alternative pathways, including government internship programmes (such as those offered by the Department of Employment and Labour), as well as initiatives facilitated by organisations like Graduates24, Harambee, the Youth Employment Service (YES), and the National Youth Development Agency (Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020; Phathwa, 2026). They must also pay attention to the critical importance of professional networking, participation in industry events, and structured volunteering as valuable avenues for opportunity generation. Ultimately, graduates of criminal justice programmes need to strategically broaden their professional outlook—while staying committed to meaningful career development—because the challenge isn't that their qualifications lack value, but rather a complex interplay of systemic factors affecting the entire sector

Conclusion

This study set out to critically examine how graduate work readiness is understood, with reference to its importance for South Africa's criminal justice sector, particularly challenging the enduring narrative of the "unprepared graduate." Drawing on a qualitative desktop analysis of academic literature, policy frameworks, workforce reports, and labour statistics, the research unpacked the complex ways in which educational, structural, and systemic forces shape graduates' pathways into policing, corrections, and justice administration.

At its core, the study moves beyond the narrow view that graduate unemployment is primarily the result of individual shortcomings or gaps in university training. Instead, it shows that becoming "work-ready" is

not a simple or linear process. It is deeply embedded in broader social and institutional dynamics. The findings highlight several key realities.

First, contemporary criminal justice work requires far more than basic vocational preparation. Graduates are expected to demonstrate a sophisticated mix of analytical thinking, ethical judgement, interpersonal sensitivity, technological competence, and a strong orientation toward community service. These expectations reflect the evolving nature of justice work in a context marked by complex crime patterns and growing demands for accountability and professionalism.

Second, there remains a clear disconnect between university training and the practical realities of the workplace. While many programmes are rich in theory, graduates often enter institutions such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) without sufficient exposure to applied skills, especially in areas like digital investigation, cybercrime, and real-world case management.

At the same time, the study underscores that even well-prepared graduates face significant structural obstacles. Limited job opportunities, slow and bureaucratic recruitment systems, rising qualification thresholds, and persistently high youth unemployment all act as barriers to entry. In this environment, a degree alone is no longer a reliable pathway into employment.

Equally important is the role of social capital. Access to networks, mentorship, and work-integrated learning opportunities often determines who can transition successfully into the sector. These opportunities are not distributed equally, and graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are frequently excluded due to a lack of connections or insider knowledge. As a result, existing inequalities are reproduced, even among those who are academically qualified.

Looking ahead, rapid technological change is adding further complexity. The rise of cybercrime, artificial intelligence, which drives threats, and digital investigative tools, is transforming the skills landscape. Without proactive adaptation in curricula and training, the gap between what graduates learn and what the sector requires is likely to widen even further.

From a theoretical perspective, the study demonstrates the value of integrating Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Tomlinson's Graduate Capital model. Together, these frameworks show that employability cannot be reduced to skills alone. It is also shaped by relationships, cultural understanding, professional identity, and psychological resilience. This more holistic view challenges deficit-based explanations and highlights the need to address the broader conditions that shape graduate outcomes.

The implications are both practical and urgent. Improving graduate work readiness requires a shared and coordinated effort. Universities must go beyond traditional teaching by embedding work-integrated learning, strengthening practical and digital training, and expanding equitable access to experiential

opportunities. Justice-sector institutions need to create clearer and more accessible pathways into employment through structured internships, more efficient recruitment processes, and stronger partnerships with higher education. Policymakers, in turn, have a critical role to play in incentivising collaboration, monitoring graduate outcomes, and expanding the sector's capacity to absorb new talent.

Ultimately, graduate work readiness in the criminal justice sector is not simply an issue of individual preparedness; rather, it is a systemic challenge. It reflects the alignment (or misalignment) between education systems, labour market structures, institutional practices, and broader socio-economic realities. Reframing the issue in this way opens the door to more meaningful and inclusive solutions. With deliberate, coordinated reforms, South Africa can better equip its graduates to meet the demands of modern justice work—while strengthening the effectiveness, integrity, and inclusivity of its policing, corrections, and justice institutions.

References

Akinbowale, O. E., Klingelhöfer, H. E., & Zerihun, M. F. (2024). Investigating the level of effectiveness of the anti-fraud technologies employed by the South African banking industry for cyberfraud mitigation. Journal of Financial Crime, 31(1), 201–225.

Asoba, S. N., Mefi, N. P., & Fanyana, N. (2022). The Skills Factor As A Predictor Of Graduate Employability In The South African Context. International Journal of Sciences and Research(78), 34–46. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7265936

Barnett-Page, E., & Thomas, J. (2009). Methods for the synthesis of qualitative research: a critical review. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 9(1), 59. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-9-59

Bayley, D. H. (1994). Police for the Future. Oxford University Press.

Bayley, D. H. (2001). The new structure of policing: description, conceptualization and research agenda. U.S. Department of Justice.

Becker, G. S. (1964). Human capital. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Bezuidenhout, C. (2011). A Southern African perspective on fundamental criminology. Heinemann/Pearson Education South Africa.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Brogden, M., & Shearing, C. D. (2005). Policing for a new South Africa. Routledge.

Brown, P., Lauder, H., & Ashton, D. (2010). The global auction: The broken promises of education, jobs, and incomes. Oxford University Press.

Cheng, M., Adekola, O., Albia, J., & Cai, S. (2022). Employability in higher education: a review of key stakeholders' perspectives. Higher Education Evaluation and Development, 16(1), 16–31. https://doi.org/10.1108/heed-03-2021-0025

Cheong, K.-C., Hill, C., Fernandez-Chung, R., & Leong, Y.-C. (2016). Employing the 'unemployable': employer perceptions of Malaysian graduates. Studies in higher education, 41(12), 2253–2270. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1034260

Clarke, M. (2018). Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context. Studies in higher education, 43(11), 1923–1937. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. American journal of sociology, 94, S95–S120. https://doi.org/10.1086/228943

Cordner, G. (2019). Police professionalism and education. In D. Weisburd & A. A. Braga (Eds.), Police innovation: Contrasting perspectives. Cambridge University Press.

Crawford, A. (2011). International and comparative criminal justice and urban governance: Convergence and divergence in global, national and local settings. Cambridge University Press.

Cresswel, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Sage.

Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities. (2020). National Youth Policy 2020–2030. Pretoria: Government Printer Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202007/nypdraft-2030-28-july-2020.pdf

Faull, A. (2017). Police work and identity: A South African ethnography. Routledge.

Fleming, J., & Hay, K. (2021). Understanding the Risks in Work-Integrated Learning. International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 22(2), 167–181.

Garland, D. (2001). The culture of control: Crime and social order in contemporary society. Oxford university press.

Goodman, S., & Tredway, G. (2016). Antecedents of perceived graduate employability: A study of student volunteers in a community-based organisation. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 42(1), 1–10.

Griesel, H., & Parker, B. (2009). Graduate attributes: A baseline study on South African graduates from the perspective of employers. Higher Education South Africa Pretoria.

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

Harry, T., Chinyamurindi, W. T., & Mjoli, T. (2018). Perceptions of factors that affect employability amongst a sample of final-year students at a rural South African university. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 44(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v44i0.1510

Harvey, L. (2001). Defining and Measuring Employability. Quality in Higher Education, 7(2), 97–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320120059990

Hesketh, A. (2004). The Mismanagement of Talent: Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy. OUP Oxford.

Holmes, L. (2013). Competing perspectives on graduate employability: Possession, position or process? Studies in higher education, 38, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.587140

Hummer, D., & Byrne, J. (2021). Rethinking Criminal Justice Education: Applying Experience Credits towards CJ Degree Completion–Generates Dollars, but Does It Make Sense? Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 32(4), 415–445. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2021.1931386

Jackson, D., & Dean, B. A. (2023). The contribution of different types of work-integrated learning to graduate employability. Higher Education Research & Development, 42(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2048638

Johnston, M. P. (2014). Secondary data analysis: A method of which the time has come. Qualitative and quantitative methods in libraries, 3(3), 619–626.

Khumalo, B. C. (2024). The Higher Education Sector's Articulation of Graduate Unemployment in South Africa Is Still Underdeveloped. https://ddp.org.za/blog/2024/01/29/the-higher-education-sectors-articulation-of-graduate-unemployment-in-south-africa-is-still-underdeveloped/#:~:text=A%20further%20difficulty,and%20Training%2C%202022

Loader, I., & Sparks, R. (2010). What is to be done with public criminology? Criminology & Pub. Pol'y, 9, 771. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2010.00669.x

Marks, M., & Fleming, J. (2004). 'As unremarkable as the air they breathe'? Reforming police management in South Africa. Current Sociology, 52(5), 784–808. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392104045370

Mason, G., Williams, G., & Cranmer, S. (2009). Employability skills initiatives in higher education: what effects do they have on graduate labour market outcomes? Education economics, 17(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290802028315

Mobarak, K. (2019). Reflections of employed graduates on the suitability of their skills and knowledge for workplace-readiness. South African Journal of Higher Education, 33(4), 186–202. https://doi.org/10.20853/33-4-3337

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

Mseleku, Z. (2022). Youth high unemployment/unemployability in South Africa: the unemployed graduates' perspectives. Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, 12(4), 775–790. https://doi.org/10.1108/heswbl-06-2021-0114

Mseleku, Z. (2025). No connections, no employment: Social capital and youth graduate unemployment in South Africa. E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 6(8), 1533–1546. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20256820

Mtawa, N., Fongwa, S., & Wilson-Strydom, M. (2021). Enhancing graduate employability attributes and capabilities formation: a service-learning approach. Teaching in higher education, 26(5), 679–695. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1672150

Muntingh, L., Faull, A., Redpath, J., & Petersen, K. (2022). Democratic policing: a conceptual framework. Law, Democracy & Development, 25(1), 121–155. https://doi.org/10.17159/2077-4907/2021/ldd.v25.5

Neyroud, P. (2011). Review of police leadership and training. London: Home Office, 196.

Ngcece, S., Mkhize, S., & Majola, K. B. (2026). Exploring Responses to Cybercrime in South Africa: The South African Police Services (SAPS) Perspectives. Journal of Cyberspace Studies, 10(1), 159–179.

Niman, N. B., & Chagnon, J. R. (2023). The work-ready graduate. Springer.

NSG-RA. (2022). National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector Retrieved from https://www.thensg.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/NATIONAL-FRAMEWORK-BOOKLET.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research & evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Phathwa, Z. (2026). The Reality of Unemployment for Law Graduates in South Africa: Beyond the Degree. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/reality-unemployment-law-graduates-south-africa-beyond-phathwa-1hpjf/

Pitan, O. S., & Muller, C. (2023). Assessment of strategies for preparing graduates for the disruptive workplace: Evidence from Nigeria and South Africa. Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 14(1), 15–30. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2023vol14no1art1576

Reddy, V., Bhorat, H., Powell, M., Visser, M., & Arends, F. (2016). Skills Demand and Supply in South Africa. LMIP Publication, Human Sciences Research Council.

Schärf, W. (2001). Community Justice and Community Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa. IDS bulletin, 32(1), 74–82. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2001.mp32001009.x

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org

Sin, C., & Neave, G. (2016). Employability deconstructed: perceptions of Bologna stakeholders. Studies in higher education, 41(8), 1447–1462. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.977859

South African Government. (2012). The National Development Plan: A vision for 2030.

StatsSA. (2024). Unemployment in South Africa: A Youth Perspective. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=17266#:~:text=South%20Africa,%20like%20many%20countries%20globally,%20grapples%20with%20the%20challenge

StatsSA. (2025). South Africa's Youth in the Labour Market: A Decade in Review. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=18398

StatsSA. (2026). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q1: 2026. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2026.pdf

Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful Sampling in Qualitative Research Synthesis. Qualitative Research Journal, 11(2), 63–75. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ1102063

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 8(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

Tomlinson, M. (2012). Graduate Employability: A Review of Conceptual and Empirical Themes. Higher Education Policy, 25(4), 407–431. https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2011.26

Tomlinson, M. (2017). Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability. Education+ Training, 59(4), 338–352. https://doi.org/10.1108/Et-05-2016-0090

UNODC. (2004). United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols Retrieved 27 May 2026 from https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html

Vuksanovic, N., Santa, R., Moisander, T., Taskila, V., & Leen, E. (2014). Student advancement of graduates employability: employability with students' eyes. Retrieved from https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Sage-EWSB-online-FINAL.pdf

Wildschut, A., Rogan, M., & Mncwango, B. (2020). Transformation, stratification and higher education: Exploring the absorption into employment of public financial aid beneficiaries across the South African higher education system. Higher Education, 79(6), 961–979. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00450-z

Wood, J., & Shearing, C. (2007). Imagining security. Willan Publishing.

Yorke, M., & Knight, P. (2006). Employability in Higher Education: What it is–What is its not. Learning and Employability Series. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203465271

WOHLLEBE & ROSS

Discover publication opportunities:
www.wr-publishing.org