



Graduate

Absorption Study



national film and video foundation
SOUTH AFRICA

an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture





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1. Executive Summary

The National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) conducted this Graduate Absorption Study to understand the current state of graduate absorption within the South African Film Industry. The report presents in-depth information on the experience of graduates within the film industry, understand their perception of opportunities available to them within the industry, challenges encountered in the labour market, and their experience on the extent to which film schools prepare students for the workplace. Based on the data collected, it was also possible to see level of employment, type of employment and types of training institution.

Key findings of the Graduate Absorption Study:

- While most South African graduates are finding it difficult to get employment, from the surveyed graduates it has been evident that some graduates are able to find employment with 69.2% of graduates absorbed by the film industry;
- Transformation has been regarded as a challenge in the local film industry; the survey confirms that it is taking place gradually amongst graduates as more blacks graduates are starting to be absorbed in the labour market. Out of the 52 respondents:
 - Employed – Black (21), Coloured (5), Whites (9)
 - Unemployed – Black (13), Coloured (2), Whites (1), Asian (1)
- It is clear from the survey that the majority of graduates are employed within the film and TV sector (83.3%) upon graduating; only 16.7% of respondents work in other non related fields;
- Graduates indicated that networking and connections opens up opportunities which they viewed as a disadvantage as it disregarded their skills and qualifications;
- Graduates prefer working on film sets as an ideal work environment, however they found that business is hard to penetrate and find that there are much more opportunities for them in the TV industry;
- Young South African filmmakers are faced with the challenge of exploitation in trying to make it into the film industry. Most graduates expressed their concerns with exploitation that they experienced on their first time jobs or internships;
- Graduates expressed concern that film schools prepared them for exploitation upon qualification i.e. they are told to expect to work for free upon graduation and companies use this to exploit them;

- Because of the nature of the business and the history of the country, the film industry is still white and male dominated. Graduates who did not fit this profile believe that they were discriminated against on the basis of race and gender. Other graduates felt discriminated against on the basis of their education, experience and age;
- With regard to Film Education in South Africa, most graduates raised the issue of theory versus practice. They were of opinion that institutions of higher learning who train in film should make practicals a priority, as it stands the majority of their training is theoretical.

2. List of Abbreviations

AFDA
South African School of Motion Picture and Live Performance
CPU
Cape Peninsula University
CV
City Varsity
DUT
Durban University of Technology
HESA
Higher Education of South Africa
ICT
Information and communication Technology
NFVF
National Film and video Foundation
SAQA
South African Qualifications Authority
TV
Television
UCT
University of Cape Town
Wits
University of Witwatersrand



3. Background and Introduction

The NFVF is mandated by section 4(1) (f) of the NFVF Act 73 of 1997 to make bursaries and loans available to students wanting to study film locally or overseas. The NFVF disburses about 60 bursaries to deserving students to study in different disciplines of film and television production across different institutions of higher learning across the country. The NFVF's bursary grants for local and international study programme seeks to increase the pool of qualified film practitioners and increase the employability of South African (SA) youth.

A similar was conducted in 2008 to assess the effectiveness of NFVF bursary fund. The study assessed the employment status of NFVF funded graduates, the relevancy of course studied in their career, challenges faced during their studies, and their first occupation upon graduation. The study surveyed graduates who were bursary recipients from 2001- 2008. The current study is a follow up to the previous study with greater detail.

4. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to investigate the absorption of the university graduates who were funded by the NFVF from 2009 - 2012 into the labour market. The study will also focus on areas that were not covered in the 2001-2008 survey as well as some that were included.

These include:

- The number of graduates funded by the NFVF;
- To assess graduates' absorption of previous NFVF bursary holders;
- Understand their perception of opportunities available to them within the industry;
- Employment/unemployment experiences;
- Challenges encountered in the labour market;
- Understand the extent to which film schools prepare students for the workplace.

5. Literature Review

There is a wide range of discussions in literature about graduate unemployment and employment experiences. Young South Africans have become better educated over the last decade as enrolment rates at tertiary educational institutions have increased dramatically. This has resulted in strong growth in the graduate labour force, and some of these young entrants struggle to find employment. Consequently, the graduate unemployment has become an important policy concern (Little, 2001, Moleke, 2006, University of Cape Town, 2006).

Graduate employment is a topic of much concern in South Africa, a country with an unemployment rate of approximately 25%, according to Statistics South Africa, employment increased by 100 000 between the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2013. Despite this, the increase in unemployment by 122 000 resulted in an increase of 0,4% of a percentage point in the unemployment rate from 25, 2% to 25,6% between the two quarters. Year-on-year employment rose by 274 000 while unemployment rose by 254 000 (StatsSA, 2013).

Education plays an important role in the labour market in several respects as graduates are more likely to be employed in the formal sector. Stats SA also reveals that, of the 4,7 million people that were unemployed in the 2nd quarter of 2013, one in every two had not completed matric. Having tertiary education – particularly a degree – increases one's chances of getting a job. The unemployment rate among graduates was 5, 2% and that of persons with other tertiary qualifications (diplomas or certificates) was 12, 6%. In contrast, the rate was 30, 3% among those without matric. (StatsSA, 2013)

According to Moleke (Moleke, 2006) learners begin their studies with the hope that educational qualification will enhance chances of getting employment. This hope is influenced by important changes in the occupational and industry structure and changes in the supply of higher education graduates. These factors do to a large extent influence the employment experiences of graduates. However, there are other factors such as race, gender, institution attended and field of study which also influence employability of graduates.

The following are identified as possible reasons behind graduate unemployment, (Morne Oosthuizen and Kalie & Carlene, 2006):

Types of qualification and fields of study-although there appears to be an over-supply of graduates in general, there are clear differences in employment prospects of graduates with different types of qualifications (degrees or diplomas) or graduates from different fields of study.

Quality of education-the quality of education in South Africa is a concern at all levels. Poor student performance at tertiary level can often be traced back to quality issues in primary and secondary schooling in SA. Employers are biased against employing from historically black institutions. Other firms bluntly do not approach historically black institutions campus recruitment drives due to concerns about quality of education at these institutions.

Continued discrimination- inter-racial variation in unemployment rates maybe a result of continued discrimination favouring whites in particular and to a lesser extent, Asian and Coloureds. There are signs that Africans are still disadvantaged in the labour market. (Moleke, 2006)

Lack of soft skills, work experience and workplace readiness-soft skills or social skills which include general communication skills, presentation skills, financial management skills time management skills or creative thinking skills play a very important role in the ability of young people to adapt to a professional working environment. Many graduates lack soft skills when they start their careers.

In agreement with Oosthuizen and Carlene, Moleke, 2006 further states that some fields of study (i.e., engineering) impart certain job-specific skills that are clearly understood in the labour market and hence provide some indication that these graduates possesses some capabilities to be productive at work. In more general fields, graduates qualification indicates to employers that they are people who posses character traits that are necessary for success on the job. Thus, for example for graduates with commerce qualifications can be expected to be better suited in business than graduates with humanities and the arts qualifications. Although the latter qualification imply certain skills, on the part of the graduates, employers may be less certain about their capabilities. Thus, employers indentify qualifications and characteristics, perceived or actual that they correlate with the performance on the job. This is why humanities and arts graduates have lower employment prospects and tend to take longer to settle in jobs (Moleke, 2006: 1). Hence the NFVF finds it essential to investigate graduate absorption since the institution offers bursaries to students in the arts.

Graduates with qualifications in arts – including film, music and social science are more likely to battle to find jobs due to lack of experience, which is one of the factors that have been identified as a challenge to finding employment. Graduates state a lack of job opportunities as the main obstacle to gaining experience. One other contributing factor to a lack of experience is the nature of employment within the industry for example; certain occupations in the film industry do not require extensive experience before you can be hired, whilst other occupations require experience i.e. directing. Thus the process towards being a key creative can be longer giving up on their career ambitions and taking the easy route that is not as lengthy and does not require extensive experience (NFVF, 2005)

(Griesel & Parker, 2009) also found that, there was a huge gap between what employers expected and what they got after hiring a graduate straight from tertiary stud-

ies. The study found that employers regarded competence in English, Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and an understanding of the world of work as the most important attributes. However, you find that most graduates are struggling with the basic competencies that they suppose to possess after years of schooling. In most countries an adequate foundation for these competencies will have been laid in the schooling system before students enter into higher education

They also indicated that the expectations of graduates, particularly university graduates are too high. Graduates expect their qualifications to open doors at middle management and are often unwilling or unhappy to start at entry level. Employers feel that the return to employing a graduate is low, given that graduates require substantial on-the-job training before they provide any returns to the firm (Morne Oosthuizen and Kalie & Carlene, 2006).

According to City Press (CityPress, September 2013) university degrees or diplomas no longer hold an assurance for a job for graduates as hundreds of them battle to find work. A growing number of unemployed graduates are now forced to either rely on their families to support them or find jobs as unskilled workers, such as waiters, clerks and office assistants. This means that students need to choose clearly courses they would like to pursue and ensure that it is something that is in demand and will be easier to find employment after completion.

When assessing graduate absorption, it is necessary to interrogate the extent to which they are employable thus also questioning tertiary education as it relates to the ever changing needs of the job market. Thus there has been an emergence of employability as a dimension of quality of graduates that are being produced. The requirement now is that graduates not only need to be able to do a set job now but also have the personal capabilities for dealing intelligently with change and the challenging situations, so that they can manage their relationship with work and with learning throughout all stages of their careers (Little, 2001)

However, theoretical knowledge alone acquired during years of study is not enough to get you a job. You need some training or practical experience within the industry which will at least increase your chances of being absorbed by the industry. Most of this can be acquired through exposure to the industry and/or practicality on the job knowledge which help prepare graduates for employment opportunities.

We are faced with ever changing industry in terms of skills needed and an increased supply of graduates each year making it difficult for all of them to find employment. Thus studies on graduate employment/unemployment have been undertaken to provide empirical evidence on graduate absorption. The purpose of this section is review relevant issues concerning the empirical studies on graduate absorption.

6. Methodology

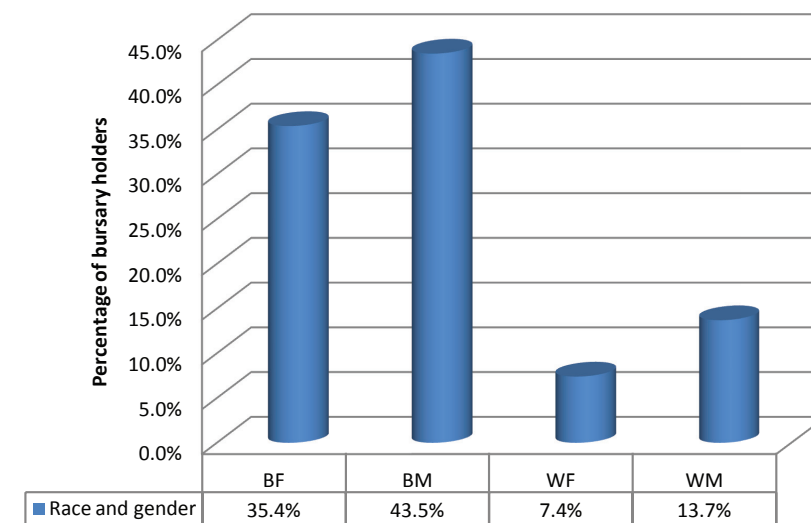
This study utilized a mixed method approach in the collection of data as well as the analysis thereof. The approach was divided into two stages, the first stage was quantitative and the second stage was qualitative. For the quantitative part of this study, the sample comprised of graduates that were funded by the NFVF. A questionnaire was sent out to the sample via e-mail. To increase responsiveness of the sample to the questionnaire, a prize was awarded to a few participants upon completion of the questionnaire.

For the qualitative part of this study, the participants were sourced from the completed questionnaires. Groups of six to eight participants were interviewed at a time and place that is convenient to them. The purpose of the interviews was to get an understanding of graduate experience in the South African Film industry. A questionnaire was sent to 80 graduates and 52 responded giving a response rate of 65%. Participants for this study were sourced from the NFVF bursary database.

7. Study Findings

The NFVF disbursed a total of 161 bursaries to student from 2008- 2012 to study for a film related qualification at a tertiary institution of their own choice. *Figure 1* below show a percentage break down of recipients based on race and gender.

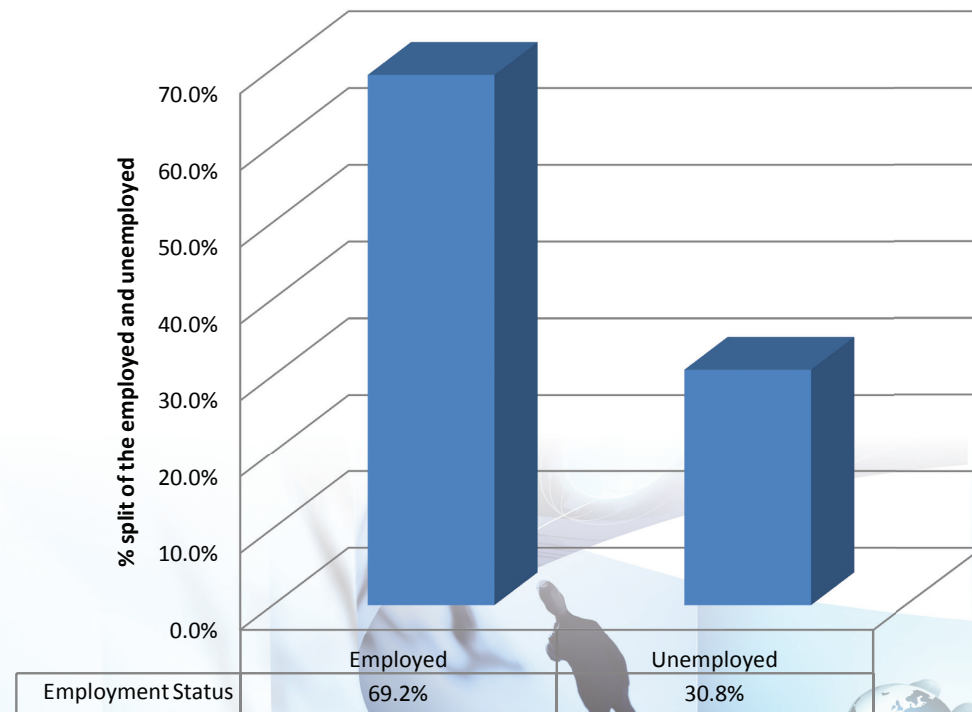
Figure 1: Total Number of students awarded bursaries from 2008-2012



Notes: BF= black female, BM=black male, WF=white female, WM=white male.

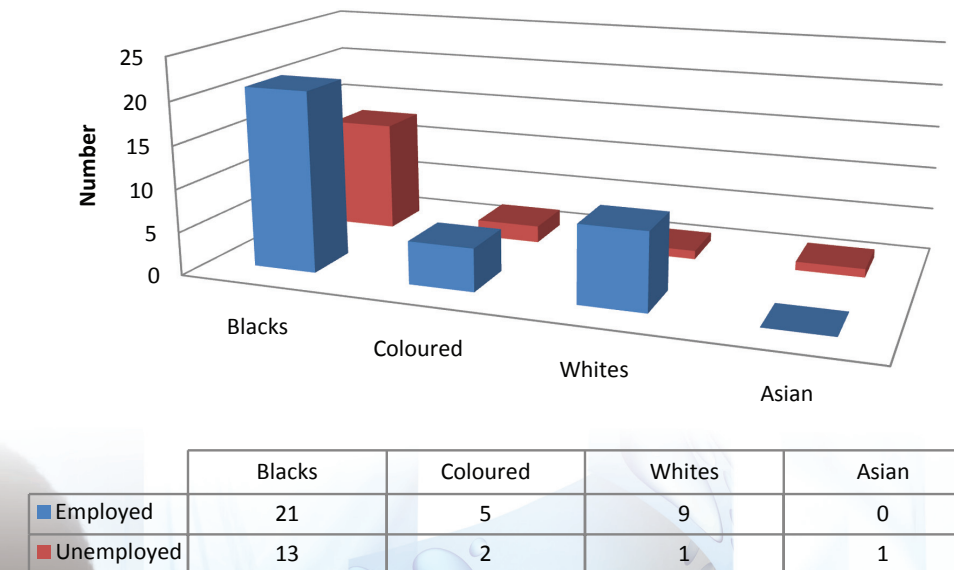
From the literature review it has become evident that graduate unemployment has become a source of concern for young South Africans as they undertake studies with a hope of finding employment. However the survey reveals that the film sector is able to absorb graduates with 69.2% of the surveyed graduates being able to find employment for the period under review as revealed in *figure 2* below.

Figure 2: Employment status of the respondents.



Race has been identified as having an impact on the employment of graduates with Whites and to a lesser extent Asian as well as coloureds favoured by the system (University of Cape Town, 2006), however the survey suggest that the film industry is absorbing more blacks into the system. While transformation has been regarded as a challenge in the local film industry, the survey confirms that it is taking place gradually with more blacks being absorbed in the labour market.

Figure 3: Employment and unemployment based on race.



Often when graduates don't find employment within the sectors they have qualified for, they will look for jobs in other sectors. From the survey it emerged that only a 16.7% of the respondents looked for employment in other sectors other than film and television while the rest 83.3% are employed in the film and television sector.

Figure 4: Total number of graduates employed in the sectors.

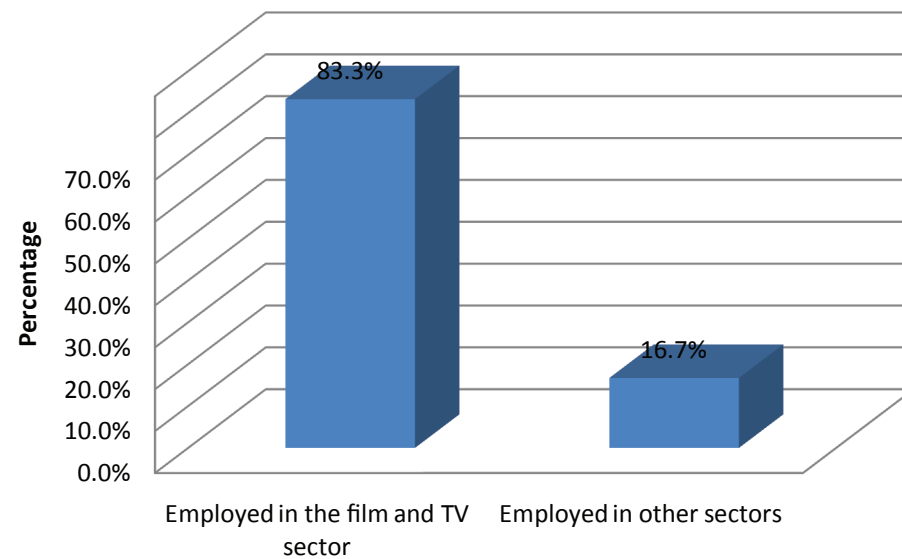
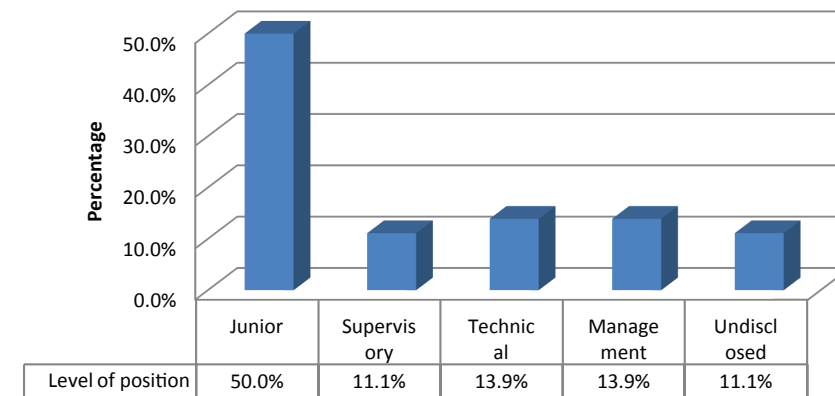


Figure 5 across shows that the majority of graduates are employed at junior level positions which give them an opportunity to hone and develop their skills. The figure further reveals a balance between those who entered the labour market at management level and technical level. Part of the reason why they are employed as juniors could be attributed to the following two factors;

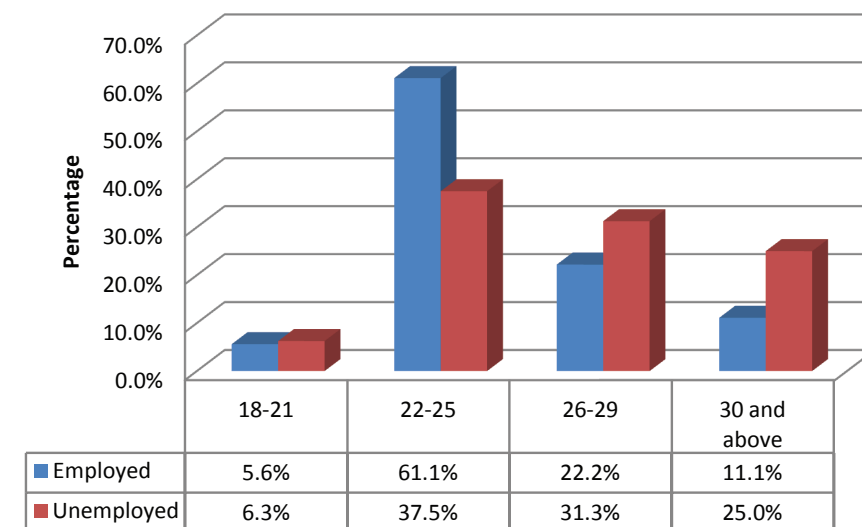
- they are recent graduates
- they are inexperienced.

Figure 5: Level of employment.



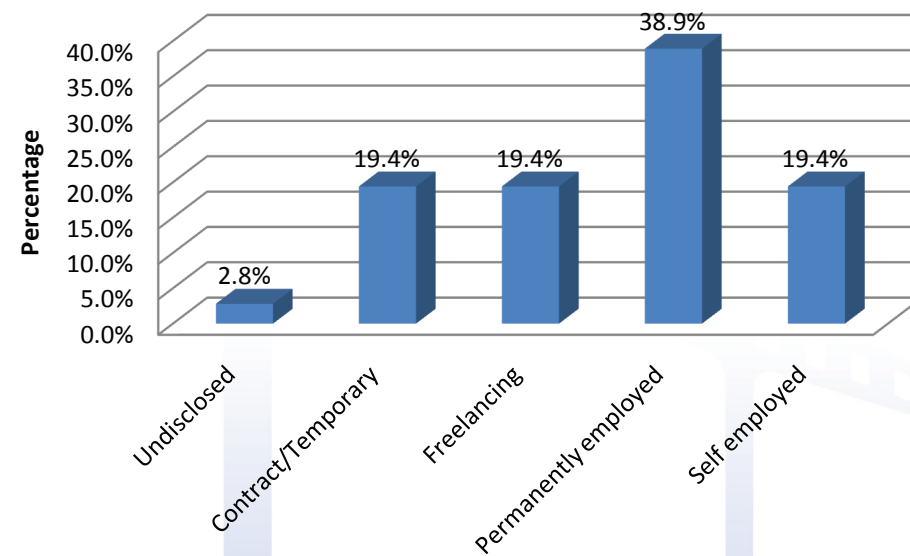
The youth is the mostly affected by unemployment as depicted in figure 6 below; however, the gap is gradually closing with the majority of the respondents finding employment being the youth. While the respondents are within the youth category as defined in the South African context, a highest percent (61.1%) of those who found employment are in the 22-25 age group which could also mean that they mostly found jobs immediately after graduating.

Figure 6: Age breakdown of employed and unemployed graduates.



Because of its project based nature, the film industry mostly uses freelancers, the survey recorded more graduates being employed on a permanent basis (38.9%) and it could therefore signal a stimulation in job creation and a stable income for them, while 19.4% of the respondents became self employed and thus creating jobs for others as well.

Figure 7: Type of employment.



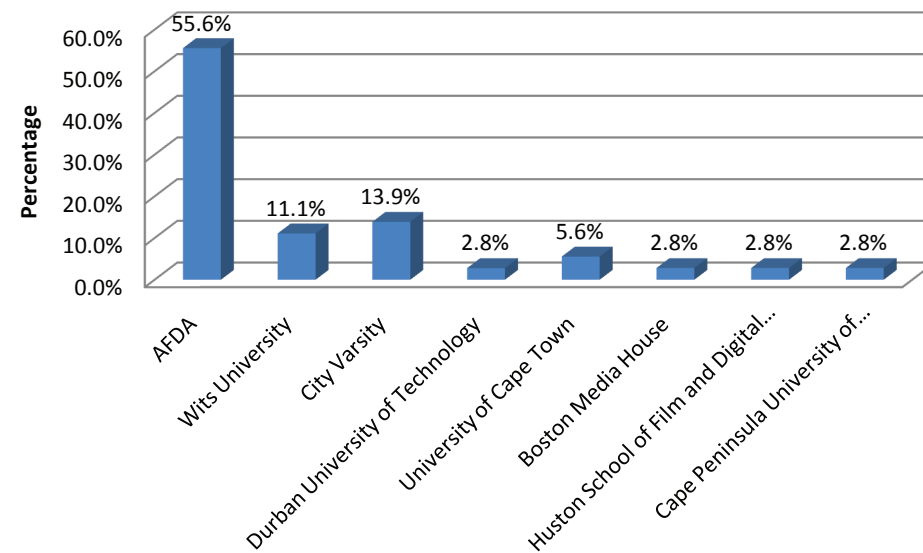
The majority of respondents who reported to have found employment are graduates from private institutions with AFDA (55.6%) being the most preferred institution, which can be attributed to the fact that it specialises mainly film studies. The graduates from private institutions made a combined total of 72.3%. Part of the reason why the majority of the respondents are from private institution could be the link the institution has with the industry.

Some institutions helped their students find work after graduating and below are some of the ways in which students were assisted by their institutions. These are quotes from open-ended questionnaire.

- Worked for Wits while studying
- City Varsity would put students in contact with production companies seeking Personal Assistants (Pa's) and cheap labour. I assisted at the Collective dream Studios with rigging.
- Durban University of Technology (DUT) always puts job advertisement to their students.
- We were given resources to help us find employment.
- They introduced us to various production companies by inviting them as guest lecturers or as member of panels who judged our films. One of the companies I met through those interactions offered me an internship and later employment.
- During post graduate studies they assigned us to different companies for internships in order to prepare us for the industry.
- They connected with companies to do internships
- AFDA organised internships which turned into a job
- I was placed on an internship which led to a permanent job

They built good relations with production companies around Cape Town to assist us find internships where we would get experience.

Figure 8: Institutions where graduates studied.



There are a number of challenges experienced by graduates when seeking employment and most of the time experience is often regarded as a major challenge. Some of the challenges that were encountered by students included lack of connection and knowing the right people in the industry and the fact that the film industry does not advertise positions but will use word of mouth to attract employees. Lack of experience often come as a major challenge and the survey confirmed it as a challenge with 55.6% of graduates experiencing it, while some recorded finance as a challenge.

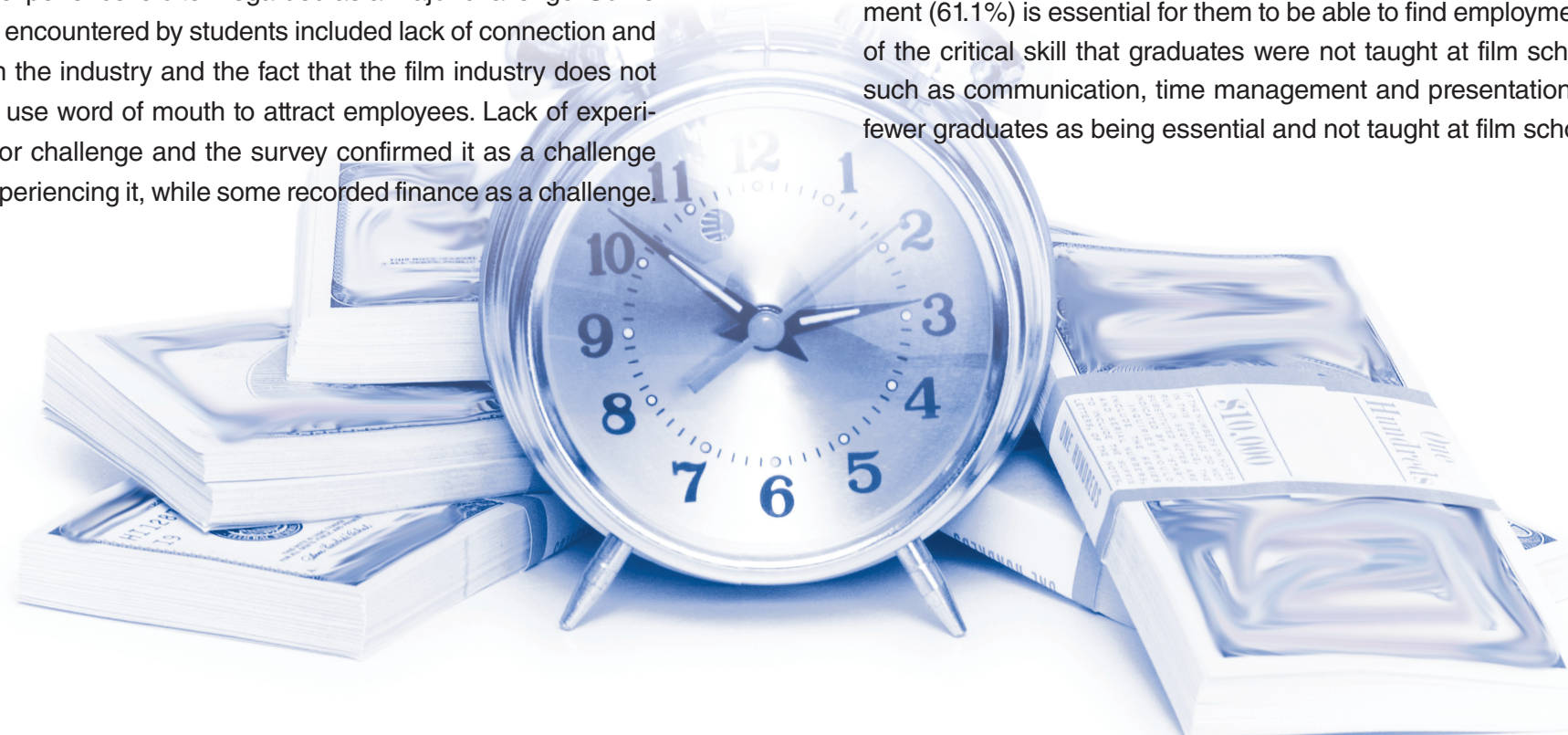
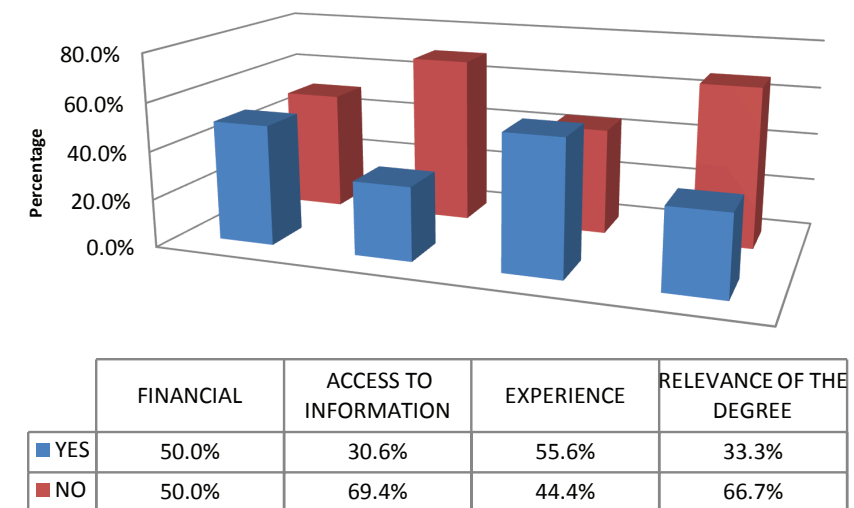


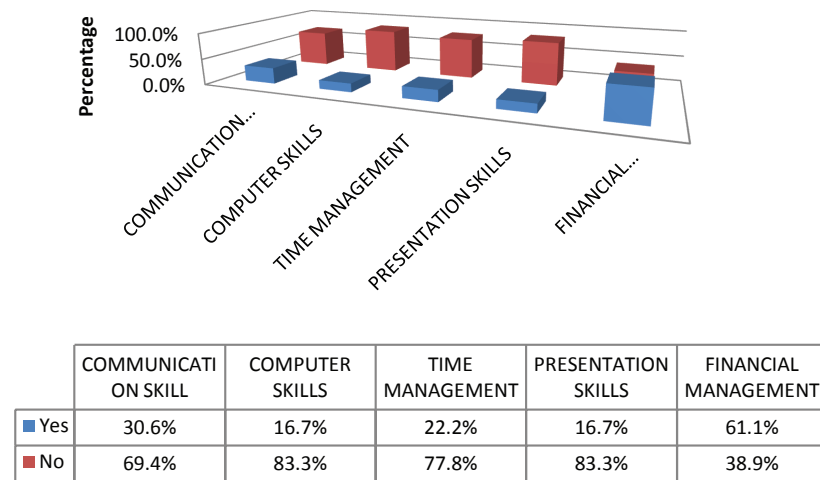
Figure 9: Challenges experienced by graduates.



Notes: Yes= means those who have experienced challenges and NO means those who have not experienced challenges.

Many graduates lack soft skills and are not ready for the workplace when they start their careers in the labour market. According to the respondents financial management (61.1%) is essential for them to be able to find employment, however this is one of the critical skill that graduates were not taught at film schools. While other skills such as communication, time management and presentation skills were listed by a fewer graduates as being essential and not taught at film schools.

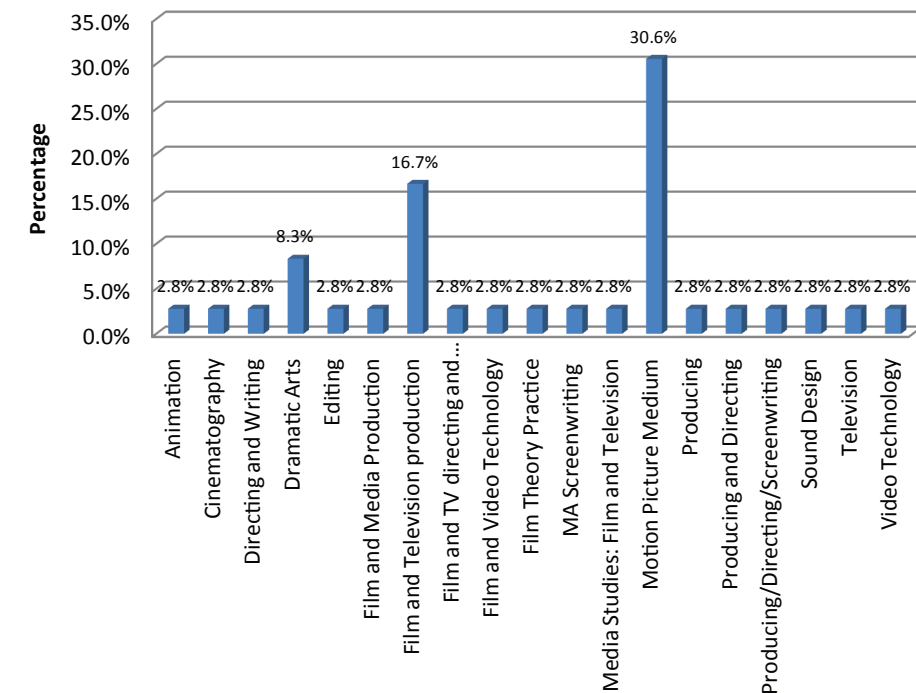
Figure 10: Critical skills not taught in film schools.



Notes: Yes, means the respondent view it as a critical skill; No, means the respondent does not view it as a critical skill

The study surveyed graduates in the film and television industry, however students majored in different areas of film and television production and a majority of them were in the field of motion picture medium production. While animation is growing in the SA film industry, they were only 2.8% of respondents who have graduated in the area and that could pose a challenge of skills shortage in the future with the sector.

Figure 11: Field of study



From the analysis above it is clear that amid all the challenges that graduates face they are able to overcome them and find jobs. The fact that 69.2.% of the NFVF funded were able to find jobs shows that the sector is viable and able to absorb its graduates. The survey further reveals that institutions of higher learning are also playing a role in ensuring that the graduates get employed in the industry and they are not lost to other sectors of the economy.

7.2 Introduction

Part of data collection method used qualitative analysis through focus group interviews with NFVF bursary beneficiaries which was conducted during July and August 2013 in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Five themes were identified through the focus group interviews. The five themes comprised of Opportunities, Exploitation, Discrimination, Film Education in South Africa and NFVF Role.

7.2.1 Opportunities

Opportunity was the theme that was identified with three sub-themes which were Experience, Connections and TV vs. Film.

(i) Experience

South Africa has a wealth of TV production and post-production talent available which the industry can take advantage of to build and create a sustainable film industry but young filmmakers do not share the same sentiment. Most graduates new to filmmaking have found it hard to break-through the film industry. One of the reasons common to all was lack of experience. Below are the quotes from the participants:

You know they always say we are looking for experience and if they do not give you the experience how are you going to get the experience you know... I think my challenge is not having experience... (Thabo)

...and also with experience it is very hard because they will normally say like do you have three years of experience and then if you do not have that it is like an issue.... (Lindi)

As a result of this there are a number of unemployed graduates who are inexperienced and unable to penetrate the workforce in the South African film industry as it requires experience that they do not possess. Thus a lack of work experience is another significant drawback (CityPress, 2013).

(ii) Connections

Graduates put across that networking and connections opens up opportunities which they viewed as a disadvantage as it disregarded their skills and qualifications. For graduates who were not exposed to the film industry while studying; they found it difficult to break through into the labour market of which being connected provides better chances of employability.

I am going to apply for a job now, there is someone out there who knows someone else and he gets in just like that off the side you know, and you cannot help things like that though because like you cannot tell people who they can hire and who they cannot...(Clint)

A lot of the times our lecturers and you know people who have graduated before us always tell us it is not what you know it is who you know sometimes and especially for writers and directors even, it is a lot more difficult to get in there, I found the technical people, the visual effects artists....(Thando)

I think it is about who you know and how well you socialise and there is this one animator who was telling me that to get his job in his last year at Varsity he would just go and chill out at the animation studio in the kitchen and he would just drink their coffee all the time and he is like by the time he finished they like why you always here so we might as well hire you so.....(Kim)

Part-time work while still studying also creates better chances of finding a job for students upon graduation because they already have made connections and gained the experience required.

I think it is easier because I have built a relationship with ... now so, they can still like call me to do freelance work now and then because they know me from first year and you know I have built that relationship so I think it is better if you just start off as early as possible building relationships with people and companies....(Khulekani)

Although graduates have expressed concern regarding connections as being detrimental to their career their exposure is limited and differs according to background. However the nature of the business as articulated above requires some of connectivity in order to prosper in this field of work.

(iii) TV vs. Film

Ideally graduates prefer working on Film sets; however they find that this business is hard to penetrate and there are much more opportunities for them in the TV industry;

I think I have more of a future in television than I have in film... I find there are more opportunities in television and in television you able to get a, like an entry level position easier than on a film set....(Lindi)

The thing is now it is like I have ran to Television production because I have noticed that getting jobs in film is hard so, it is like TV took over....(Thabo)

Experience and connections create opportunities for graduates to find employment. Another tool that students use to create opportunities for themselves upon graduating is part-time work as well as networking. Graduates also found that TV has more opportunities for them than film.

7.2.2 Exploitation

Young South African filmmakers are faced with the challenge of exploitation in trying to make it into the film industry. Most graduates expressed their concerns with exploitation on their first time jobs or internships. The role of film schools and labour regulations are the sub-themes that informed exploitation.

(i) The Role of Film schools

Graduates expressed concern that film schools prepared them for exploitation upon qualification i.e. they are told to expect to work for free upon graduation and companies use this to exploit them, the quotes below expresses this:

....where people are told at film school you are not going to be a creative provider because we have been told that, we are going to be a service provider and if we are going to keep being service providers we are nothing more than slaves, we are never going to shoot our own stuff, we are never going to have Michael Bayes or Darrel Roots or proper filmmakers, we are just going to be the people who is working for someone else, I would like to see that change....(Clint)

it is also this sort of mentality in my school that cannot win, like the three years that I have been there they kind of raised us in a way to expect to be the coffee boy at the end and there is also like, I think like for the NFVF because my school has a big connection with NFVF, AFDA and the NFVF and I think if they wanted to improve us, especially the schools and not just the NFVF students, I think the NFVF could actually come in and help the schools understand that this is not the way that we should raise these youngsters or teach them.....(Tumi)

(ii) Labour Regulation

The participants of this study highlighted a lack of labour regulation in the South African film industry (treated on set and the

expectation from their employer), unpaid work and lack of opportunity to work in their field of speciality as a challenge.

And then they give you long hours like 24 hour shift for like two days straight and then you get one day off and then they just call you in on your day off, come in today we need to sort this out and then you come in and then you not getting paid but you need to earn it so now they trying to milk it off you so then in a way I feel like there are certain things that can be helped starting from the school level where they can stop that sort of training you to be a slave when you leave and then trying to earn it with the older people.....(Micheal)

And also I feel like there should be more labour regulated because sometimes the stuff that you just go through an interview are like really unnecessary because I went to this interview from ...they told me that I do not have a choice....(Natalie)

....I have been through it, I have been exploited a lot, made the coffee, carried water, never had work for months, I know what he is talking about but at the same time I do think the NFVF has the power to actually create better opportunity and not just talk politics about it.....(Paul)

...basically what I noticed about the basis of it all, you do not lead, you don't get to be hands on with anything really in terms of learning you just basically sit around cleaning camera lenses.....(Lebo)

Although the majority of the participants in this study expresses exploitation as a major problem in the South African film industry, there were a few participants who found mentors and support in their careers as illustrated below;

I do think that there is a few people like from my experience when you working on sets that will not abuse you but take advantage of you, they know you trying to make an impression and they say okay go and make me five cups of coffee and they do not drink a single one so you do get those kind of people but most of the time the people that you do encounter are generally very helpful and very supportive and you know strong leaders I think.....(Eugene)

But I mean there are really great people who are willing to help us and you know like he says there are really evil people in the industry who will take advantage of you

and burn you down and then there are others who will like treat you like you know they will guide you, they will be like your Angel and ja it is like there is also like what I kind of feel like with my studies now.....(Musa)

Some participants of this study were ambivalent about exploitation as they eventually proved themselves and renegotiate the terms of their employment.

Ja, I have been exploited a couple of times the thing is you have to give in in order to get the work you know, because when I started with them they offered me like a certain amount that I was not worth, then I just decided to accept it. I do not have that much experience but I know I am good at what I do So, eventually I was able to tell them what I am worth and they saw what I could do so they eventually renegotiated on the salary, so you start off by being humble.....(Zuko)

Exploitation remains a challenge for young filmmakers in South Africa and requires intervention from higher structures of governance to ensure that working conditions are ideal for everyone.

7.2.3 Discrimination

Because of the nature of the business and the history of the country, the film industry is still white and male dominated, graduates who did not fit this profile believed that they were discriminated against on the basis of race and gender. Other graduates felt discriminated against on the basis of their education, experience and age. Below are the quotes that explain their experience on discrimination:

when you have a degree it is like you are a threat to companies for the people who came there without qualifications.....(Musa)

I am a black female but I would think they would hire me with confidence and I do not think people hire me for higher positions or something credible you know it is always okay let us have her in the crew but we know so and so will do the job that we would not want them to do, you know what I mean, it is like you are in the crew but you are a lesser person.....(Cindi)

... they told me that that I do not have a choice but I have got to like accept whatever they offer me because I am black and black people are not easily absorbed in the film industry....(Thabo)

...what I have discovered is like a new kind of discrimination of ages, where people are looking at my age and looking at my experience and they think I am little bit too experienced. I applied for a job and went for an interview... when he discovered that I have got this list of experience...he said to me look I think you are a little too experienced for the job, try me next time or try someone else.....(Micheal)

Discrimination is still a serious issue in the labour market and needs to be addressed in order to help the upcoming youth not to face the same obstacles that generation before them experienced due to discriminatory policies.

7.2.4 Film Education in South Africa

Film education is affected by a number of factors which contribute to graduate employment or unemployment. The Practicality vs. Theory emphasis of curriculum and the relevance of degree to market are the sub-themes that were identified as factors that affect film education in SA.

(i) Practicality vs. Theory

In relation to film education in South Africa, most graduates raised the issue of theory versus practice. They were of opinion that institution of higher learning who train in film should make practicals a priority, as the majority of the respondents training is more theoretical. Participants of this study believed that they would benefit more from training and be better prepared for the market if training occurred on film-sets.

A lot of the experience comes from actually getting out there and working on sets, and working in post production because it is very different environment from tertiary institution to a working environment....(Tshepo)

If you want to be a filmmaker, the only place you will learn to be a filmmaker is on set, that why if there is great mentorship programmes there is big difference..... (Thabo)

...I mean all my favourite directors, international directors almost none of them went to school, they all worked under their favourite directors and they learnt being on set. I mean I have been in the industry for what, like 4 years now, and have learnt more in the industry, I use more of what I have learnt in the industry than I ever could when I was in film school.....(Lebo)

Even though graduates recommended that practice is more important than theory, they still felt that theoretical background provides them with the necessary skills in understanding and conceptualizing film.

You know for me I think Universities or film schools they are necessary in terms of consensual backing that is why you are able to critique the films and hopefully do a better picture and you know film making it is like a talent if you do not work with it you can have all the consensual abilities and all but you need to practice it.....(Cindi)

I would say it is worthwhile if you've got a qualification, you are broad minded, you can do your own project, which is the nice thing about it.....(Siya)

I believe that my school played an extremely important role in preparing me for the industry, I think so because what they do is that they force you to go out there and get a mentor in the industry and then that mentor will obviously mentor you whenever, whether it is film department or television department, that is how I survived..... (Patrick)

Another challenge facing film schools is the ever changing technology. Technological advancement is moving at a fast pace, such that by the time students complete their studies, the industry is already using the new technology and companies find it hard to entrust a young graduate to do the job.

Ja and also like maybe have more equipment in university to explore with because you find that the stuff that you use in university are not even used in film industry...it is outdated the school equipment. If they had bigger like more equipment, then we would have more chances of like actually getting in there.....(Thando)

Given that the nature of the film industry is technically driven it requires more training on the job, as a result more emphasis should be placed on practical training.

(ii) Relevance of Degree to Market

Employers do not only require qualification, but they also interrogate the extent to which the qualification prepared the graduate for the work environment. Hence relevance of degree to the market is crucial as it also assesses education. The following quotes are evidence of relevance of the degree to the market.

Because what I learnt in film school does not apply in that sense. The industry is a beast, it is a different ball game, you know what I mean, you do not play the game and you do not work it out very quickly, then you going to be left behind, and film school does not prepare you for that, and film school does not tell you.....(Sipho)

I do not know because I have been applying, then they should tell us what is relevant or not relevant because no one is really telling us anything about whether it is about its relevancy. Is it relevant or is it not relevant.....(Lebo)

There are skills that graduates deemed as critical to learn in order for them to make a success of their careers in the film industry, there were also other skills that they gained through film school which found relevant in other fields

I am not focusing on one specific thing in case it does not work out then I know I have backup plan so I interned at a magazine and I was not shooting videos but the writing skills that I learnt from my film course I could use in the magazine because I had started off by being a writer.....(Sonke)

So even with filmmaking, I am also interested in that which schools do not give us, you know the sort of business aspect of it, and it is like they do not understand the context of the South African film.....(Tee)

I think maybe most of the problem especially that film student have is that we do not have much of the business sense in our film studies and thing like that, because if we

cannot get employment we do not look at the other ways where we can be able to find the gap and grow the industry....(Thandi)

Education plays an important role in preparing students for the workforce; however films schools need to align their educational resources and methods with the ever changing needs of the film industry.

7.2.5 NFVF Role

The NFVF is an agency of department of arts and culture responsible for creating a viable and sustainable South African film industry. In order to achieve this objective, the NFVF disburses bursary funds to students with a sound academic record and financial need. The NFVF also offers opportunities for graduates to network through international film markets. Graduates expressed gratitude to the NFVF for opening up opportunities.

On the record if the NFVF did not give me the bursary, I would not have made it all, I probably would have unemployed, I probably would have been a blue collar worker and I would have fit in the average stereotype of young men from Cape Town going nowhere in life.....(Clint)

Because look I appreciate the NFVF for what it has done for me, I mean just recently, you guys took me to Cannes as one of the best performing students and when I was at Cannes, I made a lot of contacts, and a lot of networking.....Pinky)
Thanks to the NFVF that I actually started studying film in the first place because they are the only ones who bothered to give me any sort of funding.....(Angela)

Although graduates appreciate the support they received from the NFVF they believe that the NFVF should also focus on creating programmes for bursary holders upon completing their studies.

So I am crying on behalf of mentoring, meaning you mentor the people you sponsored but, it is like you are throwing us into the deep end, it is like you are saying we did our part, we do not care....(Wandi)

I mean if someone can pay R66 000 a year for me to study and then someone else is going to use your money as a tool to serve water and serve coffee you know, and

in a way you should not let that happen to someone who you have spent so much money on.....(Siya)

Some graduates believed that the NFVF was doing enough and that they should not rely on the NFVF to provide funding for them.

No offence to any of you, but I just think you guys rely on the NFVF far too much, where I think like we have to find alternative ways of raising funds....(Lebo).

The NFVF should invest in creating sustainable programmes such as Internships opportunities for their bursary holders because graduates feel like after NFVF has paid thousands of money to educate them, they just drop them off.....(Patrick)

Some also recommended labour be regulated so that there are sort of guidelines for film specifically, because as it stands graduates are not aware of how much they should earn on their internship or first job, what they are suppose to do if they get injured on set and things like that.

The results from the qualitative analysis have shown that there is still a number of graduates with skills and capabilities who are forced to enter second choice careers or end up staying at home doing nothing because of limited opportunities available within the film industry. Graduates felt that opportunities in the South African film industry are not enough for them to explore as it is a difficult industry to penetrate. Factors that have been identified as major drawback in terms of getting employment are: experience, discrimination, exploitation and network and/or connections.

8. Conclusion

Graduate absorption is a topic of concern for the South African Labour market with younger people struggling to find employment. The situation has led to an expansion in the labour force amid fewer jobs being created in the SA economy and more graduates fail to find jobs. Studies have identified some reasons as to why some of the graduates fail to find employment and among the following were issues raised as reasons beyond employment.

- Types of qualification and fields of study
- Quality of education

- Continued discrimination
- Lack of soft skills, work experience and workplace readiness

The NFVF bursary scheme helps in giving skills and education to disadvantaged individuals who would not have been given an opportunity to further their studies and increase the chance of being employed. While the NFVF itself does not offer opportunities it does however empower them to take advantage of job opportunities that arises from the industry.

The SA film sector is not exclusive to the problems highlighted above, the study confirmed the prevalence of the same issues in the industry. The study observed that amid the high unemployment rate, graduate in the film industry are able to find employment in the sector they have studied towards. With an 83% of the surveyed graduates being able to find jobs in the sector it is apparent that the industry does not loose its skilled labour force to other industries as it can happen that graduates get frustrated and look for jobs in other sectors and therefore leading to a loss of skill in the particular sector.

Another important observation from the study is the fact that those who found employment start at junior position, which gives them an opportunity to learn and develop their skills as professional filmmakers and map out a career path for them.

Further to be noted from the study is the challenges encountered by the graduates which require an intervention from the NFVF. Challenges such as lack of experience

and discrimination based on race are some of the challenges that were noted by the respondents and they can only be addressed through interventions from the NFVF. Transformation continues to be a challenge for the film industry as the study notes that there has been some form of discrimination and encountered by the graduates with some of them being exploited and experiencing some unfair labour practices. While animation is growing in the local industry it is a concern that the industry is producing few animators with most preferring to study producing and directing. More students should be encouraged to study animation.

9. Recommendations

- The NFVF should coordinate sessions with film practitioners for NFVF bursary holders in order to expose their work;
- Increase partnerships with production companies similar to the current one with Quizzical Pictures;
- NFVF should partner with film schools to educate students about basic conditions of employment;
- Training should be more practically focused than theoretical so that students are able to keep up with technological advancement in the in film industry e.g. training in medical schools;
- The NFVF should continue giving out bursaries;



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