E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)
ISSN – Online 2720-7722 | Print 2821-8949
Volume 7 Issue 10 2026 pp 3193 - 3205
Available online at: https://noyam.org/journals/ehass/
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202671019

Check for updates

The role of career guidance services in shaping work readiness among commerce education students at a South African University

Olwethu Solundwana[1], Nondwe Mtshatsha[1] & Zanoxolo Gobingca[1]

[1] Faculty of Education, iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The current study examines the impact of career guidance services on shaping work readiness among commerce education students at a South African university. Programmes offered by learning institutions prepare students to possess and demonstrate graduate attributes that sustain and enhance countries' economies. The present study offers context-specific qualitative evidence on how career guidance shapes work readiness among commerce education students in South Africa, highlighting the need for discipline-tailored, collaborative, and curriculum-integrated career support in universities. The study was underpinned by Career Construction Theory. An interpretivist research design was adopted. A qualitative approach was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 final-year commerce education students who were purposively sampled. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings suggest that students who actively engaged with career guidance felt more confident in their employability skills, including resume writing, interview preparation, and understanding workplace expectations. However, some reported that career services lacked tailored support relevant to commerce education. The study recommends that universities could improve the visibility and accessibility of career guidance tailored to commerce students. The study concluded that career guidance services play a vital role in enhancing work-readiness, but they require greater customisation to address the unique needs of commerce education students. Additionally, collaboration between academic departments and career guidance services is crucial to creating a more cohesive support system that ensures students receive consistent, relevant career preparation throughout their studies.

Keywords: Career guidance services, Commerce education students, Curriculum integration, Employability skills, Work readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Mseleku highlighted that commerce education students at South African universities face a challenging job market, with youth unemployment rates exceeding 60%.[1] Work readiness, which includes job skills,

[1] Zethembe Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives," *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning* 12, no. 4 (2022): 775–90.

CORRESPONDENCE – Olwethu Solundwana **Email:** finizaolwethu@gmail.com
PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received: 31st March, 2026 | Accepted: 8th September, 2026 | Published: 20th November, 2026.
TO CITE THIS ARTICLE – Solundwana, Olwethu, Nondwe Mtshatsha, and Zanoxolo Gobingca. "The role of career guidance services in shaping work readiness among commerce education students at a South African University." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 7, no.10 (2026): 3193 - 3205. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202671019
COPYRIGHT AND LICENSING - © 2026 The Author(s). Published and Maintained by Noyam Journals.
This is an open access article under the CCBY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

professional abilities, and career knowledge, is still a big problem. This leaves graduates unprepared for jobs in accounting, economics, and business teaching. Career guidance services in higher education aim to bridge this by equipping students with tools for job searching, skill development, and workplace adaptation.[2] Yet, their impact on specialised domains such as commerce education, which emphasises accounting, economics, and business pedagogy, remains largely unexplored. Kools et. al. emphasised that general career services fail to meet specific field needs, such as course-matched financial modelling or business teaching methods.[3] In South Africa, rural campuses worsen access problems.[4] Students underuse them due to poor advertising and poor fit with commerce courses. The gap arises from a lack of real-world studies on how career guidance helps commerce students prepare for the workforce. These studies miss key local challenges, such as economic gaps and multilingual classrooms. The current study examines how career guidance builds work-readiness among final-year commerce education students at a South African university. The study calls for tailored changes to boost students' skills and the country's economy. The study was underpinned by the following research questions:

- How do commerce education students perceive the impact of career guidance services on their employability skills?
- What barriers exist in accessing tailored career guidance for commerce-specific needs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study synthesises global and local insights into the role of career guidance in work readiness for commerce education students. Drawing on Europe, Asia, Africa, and South Africa, the current study highlights perceptions of guidance services, access barriers, the role of career guidance services, challenges in commerce education, and strategies for curriculum integration. These perspectives reveal universal benefits tempered by contextual gaps, informing tailored strategies for South African commerce contexts.

Perceptions of Career Guidance on Employability Skills

Commerce education students typically regard career guidance as an essential tool for improving their employability, including crucial areas such as resume writing and interview techniques.[5] While many students appreciate the development of soft skills, such as effective communication, key competencies for careers in economics and accounting, their perceptions of career guidance could vary significantly.[6] Students tend to view these services as helpful starting points, but there is a clear demand for more in-depth training tailored to the nuances of commerce.

Looking at the studies from Europe, Asia, and Africa shows that there are many different ideas about career guidance in higher education. In Europe, studies often stress adding career services to school courses. European studies highlight internships and hands-on practice as key to job skills.[7] Kools et al. show that students who participate in these activities are better prepared for work.[8] In Asia, particularly in countries such as Japan and South Korea, Melinu affirmed that career guidance often centres on holistic development and a strong emphasis on personal branding.[9] Institutions increasingly focus on creating opportunities for networking and mentorship, recognising that connections could

---

[2] Yvonne Ododo Osunde, "Role of Career Service in Enhancing Students Employability in the 21st Century," *Kontagora International Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 1 (2025): 324–39.

[3] Farah R W Kools et al., "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers," *BMC Medical Education* 24, no. 1 (2024): 1121.

[4] Berrington Xolani Siphosakhe Ntombela and Gabaza Abigail Louisa Zanele Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners.," *Alternation* 29, no. 1 (2022): 47.

[5] Tharwat M El-Sakran, "Enhancing Business Students' Employability Skills Awareness," *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 2023, 687–708.

[6] Valentina Dolce et al., "The Soft Skills of Accounting Graduates: Perceptions versus Expectations," *Accounting Education* 29, no. 1 (2020): 57–76.

[7] Giorgio Di Pietro, "International Internships and Skill Development: A Systematic Review," *Review of Education* 10, no. 2 (2022): e3363.

[8] Kools et al., "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers."

[9] Irene Melinu, "Career Development and Employment Branding: A Study on Japanese Studies Students' Job Expectations in Europe," 2020.

significantly enhance career prospects. On the African continent, narratives around career guidance reflect both challenges and opportunities.[10] While many institutions recognise the importance of equipping students with employability skills, resources are often limited. While research in Nigeria is advancing, there remains an urgent need for more specialised programs that cater specifically to the needs of the commerce sector.[11] There is a growing consensus that to maximise the impact of career services, they may be tailored to align with industry requirements and the unique characteristics of the local job market. In South Africa, career guidance often includes generic workshops that raise basic awareness but lack the depth needed for commerce students.[12] Farounbi, Ibrahim and Abdulsalam express a desire for training in specific tools, such as financial modelling and market analysis.[13] Although foundational skills are helpful, students increasingly seek tailored guidance that prepares them for the workforce and bridges the gap between classroom theory and practical application.

Barriers to Tailored Career Guidance for Commerce Needs

In Europe, entrepreneurship education has gained increasing importance in higher education, particularly as a response to economic challenges and the need for innovation.[14] Pietro indicates a trend toward experiential learning, in which students engage in practical projects and internships that foster entrepreneurial skills.[15] Moreover, accessibility remains a barrier; students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often struggle to participate in entrepreneurship programs.

Entrepreneurship education in Asia is diverse, reflecting the region's varied economic landscapes. Countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have implemented government-supported initiatives to integrate entrepreneurship into university curricula.[16] However, there is a significant disparity in implementation and accessibility across the region. In some areas, resource constraints and a lack of trained educators hinder progress.[17] Issues such as cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship also play a role. In many Asian societies, traditional career paths are often prioritised, making it challenging for students to embrace entrepreneurial ambition. Customised programs that address local marketing needs and business contexts are essential in overcoming these cultural barriers.

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education is viewed as a vital tool for economic growth and job creation.[18] Incorporating entrepreneurship into the academic curriculum could significantly reduce youth unemployment. However, the country faces substantial challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and inadequately trained educators. Accessibility remains a major concern, particularly in rural areas where educational resources are limited. Furthermore, there is often a misalignment between academic programs and the realities of the job market, which hampers students' ability to develop viable business ideas. To address these gaps, there is a call for more tailored entrepreneurial training that aligns with students' backgrounds and regional economic contexts.

South Africa presents a complex landscape for entrepreneurship education, as indicated by the existing barriers highlighted in the provided text. Osunde emphasises the challenges faced by commerce students, particularly in rural campuses where events and access to resources are infrequent.[19] Moreover, limited awareness of available programs and insufficient integration into the broader educational framework exacerbate these challenges.

---

[10] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[11] M Umar, D Mukhtar, and M I Aziz, "SME-Led Growth: Harnessing Innovation and Frontier Technologies for Nigeria's 2025 Development," *Int J Entrep Manag Pract* 7, no. 24 (2024).
[12] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[13] B O Farounbi, A K Ibrahim, and R Abdulsalam, "Advanced Financial Modeling Techniques for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 1 (2020).
[14] El-Sakran, "Enhancing Business Students' Employability Skills Awareness."
[15] Di Pietro, "International Internships and Skill Development: A Systematic Review."
[16] N Abidin, "The Roles of National and Local Policy and Practices in Support Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation of Biotechnology in Malaysia" (University of Sheffield, 2022).
[17] Beauty Zindi and Modeni M Sibanda, "Challenges Impeding the Implementation of Effective Continuous Teacher Professional Development Programs in Eastern Cape Department of Education," 2023.
[18] Umar, Mukhtar, and Aziz, "SME-Led Growth: Harnessing Innovation and Frontier Technologies for Nigeria's 2025 Development."
[19] Osunde, "Role of Career Service in Enhancing Students Employability in the 21st Century."

Economic disparities further complicate entrepreneurship education, as many multilingual and economically disadvantaged students are underserved. Studies suggest a need for targeted support tailored to identified barriers, as well as for promoting entrepreneurship more effectively within curricula.[20] Collaborative efforts between educational institutions and local businesses could enhance the relevance of programs and support underrepresented student groups.

Role of Career Guidance Services

In Europe, career guidance has become more individualised, with countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany offering comprehensive services, including resume workshops and mentoring.[21] These initiatives have increased students' job placement rates. Elgeddawy, Abouraia, and Magd support integrating career guidance into educational frameworks to enhance professional development for advisors.[22] Asian countries show varied approaches to career guidance.[23] In India and Japan, universities have begun offering career fairs and skill development workshops, helping more graduates secure employment. South Korea emphasises career counselling in high schools, helping students make informed career choices.[24]

In Nigeria, career guidance services are limited, and many students struggle to access tailored support.[25] Research revealed that many students felt prepared for the job market.[26] However, non-profits are stepping in to offer mentorship and skills training, boosting student confidence. South Africa's university career services have increased student engagement through workshops.[27] The Department of Higher Education and Training noted a boost in student confidence, yet there is a need for greater field-specific customisation. Addressing equitable access remains a challenge.[28]

Challenges in Commerce Education Contexts

European studies address integrating entrepreneurial pedagogy into higher education curricula, emphasising the need for practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge.[29] Omelianenko and Artyukhova suggest that innovative teaching methods, which include project-based learning and real-world business challenges, could enhance students' entrepreneurial capabilities.[30] Furthermore, accounting programs in Europe have gradually aligned more closely with international accounting standards, meeting both local and global expectations.[31] The emphasis here is often on bridging the gap between academic instruction and industry requirements.

Abidin highlights the unique challenges students face in entrepreneurial education, particularly in countries with rapidly changing economies.[32] There is a strong focus on adapting curricula to meet local business needs and skills shortages.[33] For instance, countries such as India and China are increasingly implementing hybrid models that incorporate traditional teaching with entrepreneurial

[20] Ntombela and Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners."
[21] Michelle Hood and Peter A Creed, "Globalisation: Implications for Careers and Career Guidance," in *International Handbook of Career Guidance* (Springer, 2020), 477–95.
[22] Mohamed Elgeddawy, Mahmoud Abouraia, and Hesham Magd, "Academic and Career Advising: Factors of Success and Opportunities for Institutional Improvement.," *International Society for Technology, Education, and Science*, 2024.
[23] Abidin, "The Roles of National and Local Policy and Practices in Support Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation of Biotechnology in Malaysia."
[24] Youngsun Lee et al., "Equity in Career Development of High School Students in South Korea: The Role of School Career Education," *Education Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2021): 20.
[25] Umar, Mukhtar, and Aziz, "SME-Led Growth: Harnessing Innovation and Frontier Technologies for Nigeria's 2025 Development."
[26] Tinashe Harry and Willie Tafadzwa Chinyamurindi, "'Still Haven't Found What I Am Looking for': Rural Black Students' Perceived Work Readiness and Assessment of Labor Market Access," *Education+ Training* 64, no. 2 (2022): 276–89.
[27] Farounbi, Ibrahim, and Abdulsalam, "Advanced Financial Modeling Techniques for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises."
[28] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[29] Ana Luísa Rodrigues, "Entrepreneurship Education Pedagogical Approaches in Higher Education," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 9 (2023): 940.
[30] Olena Omelianenko and Nadiia Artyukhova, "Project-Based Learning: Theoretical Overview and Practical Implications for Local Innovation-Based Development," *Economics and Education* 9, no. 1 (2024): 35–41.
[31] Hood and Creed, "Globalisation: Implications for Careers and Career Guidance."
[32] Abidin, "The Roles of National and Local Policy and Practices in Support Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation of Biotechnology in Malaysia."
[33] Lee et al., "Equity in Career Development of High School Students in South Korea: The Role of School Career Education."

initiatives. In terms of accounting standards, many Asian countries are moving towards International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) to enhance global competitiveness, but discrepancies remain in curriculum delivery that may not fully address regional contexts.[34]

In Lesotho, literature points to significant educational gaps, particularly in technical and vocational training.[35] Research highlights the need for incorporating entrepreneurship into the educational framework to foster economic development. Challenges such as limited resources and a shortage of qualified educators hinder the implementation of effective entrepreneurial pedagogy. Studies suggest that localised curriculum development, reflecting Lesotho's unique economic landscape, may empower students and better align with national development goals. In South Africa, there is a growing body of literature focused on the multilingual and rural-urban divide that impacts access to quality education.[36] Research indicates that students in rural areas often lack exposure to modern teaching practices, including entrepreneurial education.[37] Furthermore, while the formal accounting curriculum is transitioning to align with international standards, additional support is needed to help students understand and apply these standards in local contexts. Interventions aimed at bridging these gaps are essential to improve access and utilisation of educational resources.

Curriculum Integration Strategies

Kools et. al. highlighted the importance of integrating career modules into curricula to enhance students' workforce readiness.[38] Countries such as Finland and Germany have adopted dual education systems that combine academic learning with practical, hands-on experience.[39] Elgeddawy, Abouraia, and Magd suggest that these models significantly improve graduates' employment rates.[40] The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training emphasises that curricula integrating career skills not only enhance academic outcomes but also foster essential soft skills such as communication and teamwork. In Asia, countries such as Singapore and Japan are leading the way in embedding career-oriented modules into their educational frameworks.[41] The Ministry of Education in Singapore has implemented initiatives to align academic learning with industry needs.[42] Lee et al. report positive correlations between such programs and employability, with graduates reporting greater confidence in their job searches.[43] Japan's focus on lifelong learning and vocational education has similarly been linked to improved job readiness, with policies that encourage integrating career guidance into school systems.[44]

In Lesotho, integrating career modules into curricula remains a developing concept. Local studies suggest that while there is an awareness of the benefits, actual implementation is hindered by resource constraints and a lack of trained educators.[45] The Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training is currently developing strategies to incorporate career guidance and vocational training, recognising the alignment gap between education and labour market demands.[46] However, more comprehensive policies and funding are needed to make substantial progress. South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) aims to ensure that educational programs include career-oriented content, promoting not only

[34] M Nguyen, "Implications of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Adoption of Higher Education of Accounting (HEA) in Vietnam: The Institutional Perspective" (RMIT University, 2024).
[35] M P Khoabane and L M Du Plessis, "The Importance of Strategic Management Resources for Successful Technical and Vocational Education and Training Governance in Lesotho," *Administratio Publica* 31, no. 4 (2023): 44–70.
[36] Ntombela and Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners."
[37] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[38] Kools et al., "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers."
[39] Anastasiya Ilyina, "Innovative Approaches to the Education System in Higher Education Institutions and Specialized Sectoral Establishments," *International Science Journal of Education & Linguistics* 4, no. 2 (2025): 34–55.
[40] Elgeddawy, Abouraia, and Magd, "Academic and Career Advising: Factors of Success and Opportunities for Institutional Improvement."
[41] Melinu, "Career Development and Employment Branding: A Study on Japanese Studies Students' Job Expectations in Europe."
[42] Low Ee Ling, "Enabling Sustainable Success: Lessons from Singapore," in *International Handbook on Education Development in Asia-Pacific* (Springer, 2022), 1–20.
[43] Lee et al., "Equity in Career Development of High School Students in South Korea: The Role of School Career Education."
[44] Futao Huang, "Transformations in Higher Vocational Education in Japan," *Vocation, Technology & Education* 1, no. 1 (2024): e5–e5.
[45] Khoabane and Du Plessis, "The Importance of Strategic Management Resources for Successful Technical and Vocational Education and Training Governance in Lesotho."
[46] J Mohapeloa, "Education in Lesotho," in *Education in Africa* (Routledge, 2022), 140–61.

academic learning but also skills relevant to the workforce.[47] Despite the policy framework, the literature indicates a significant lag in practical implementation, particularly within commerce programs. Studies show that many institutions struggle to integrate these modules effectively due to varying levels of commitment and resource allocation.[48] Proactive collaboration between educators and industry stakeholders could enhance the effectiveness of such initiatives, ultimately leading to better student outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current study adopts Career Construction Theory (CCT), which posits that individuals construct careers through narratives shaped by life experiences, roles, and adaptability.[49] CCT frames work-readiness as an active process in which career guidance helps students narrate their commerce education into viable professional identities.[50] For South African commerce students, CCT addresses contextual challenges such as economic inequality by emphasising adaptability resources, clarity of self-concept, vocational identity, and career adaptability. This lens guided interview probes on how guidance services facilitated students' career narratives, revealing strengths and gaps in the customisation process.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a qualitative methodology to understand commerce education students' experiences and perceptions of career guidance and work readiness in a South African university context. The methodological choices were guided by the aim to generate rich, contextualised understandings of how students construct their career trajectories and navigate institutional support structures, rather than to produce generalisable, statistical findings.

Research Approach

A qualitative approach suited the exploratory nature, capturing nuanced perceptions of career guidance's role in work readiness. An interpretivist paradigm underpinned the current study, prioritising participants' lived experiences over positivist quantification.[51] A single-case study design focused on one South African university's commerce education program, allowing in-depth exploration of context-specific dynamics.

Population and Sampling

The study involved a qualitative analysis of the experiences of 150 final-year Bachelor of Education Commerce students at a selected university in South Africa. Purposive sampling selected 10 participants based on their engagement with career services and their having utilised these resources at least twice. This criterion was set to ensure participants provide information-rich cases, enabling a deeper thematic exploration of the effectiveness and accessibility of career services. The interviews focused on various aspects, including the types of services utilised, the perceived value of these resources for career preparation, and any challenges encountered during the process. Additionally, the study examined how these services impacted their confidence in transitioning from academic life to the professional world.

Data Collection

Data came from 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews conducted virtually via Zoom in October 2025. An interview guide explored perceptions of guidance services, skill gains, barriers, and integration suggestions. Probes ensured depth in responses, yielding 10 transcribed hours of data. The participants were selected from a diverse demographic background to provide a comprehensive understanding of

[47] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[48] Ntombela and Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners."
[49] Mark L Savickas, "Career Construction Theory and Counseling Model," *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work* 3 (2020): 165–200.
[50] L LeBouthillier, "Technical Education and Career Readiness: A Case Study Investigating Career Readiness of Connecticut Technical Education Career System Students" (2024).
[51] K.A.D.P. Kaluarachchi, "Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research (Positivism, Phenomenological Approach & Critical Social Sciences)," *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Work* 8, no. 2 (2025).

their experiences. Questions focused on the effectiveness of existing guidance services and the specific skills participants felt they had developed through these interactions. Additionally, barriers such as accessibility, awareness, and cultural factors were thoroughly examined. To enhance data quality, follow-up questions were used to clarify and expand on key themes that emerged during the interviews. Initial findings indicate a strong demand for more tailored guidance services that cater to individual needs and backgrounds, as well as suggestions for integrating technology to improve access to these services. Data analysis involved coding for recurring themes and patterns, enabling richer insights into participants' experiences and suggestions for improvement.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-step process: familiarisation, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting.[52] During the familiarisation phase, researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading transcripts multiple times, ensuring a deep understanding of the content and context. During the coding phase, initial codes were generated line by line to capture key ideas and concepts. These codes were then collated into potential themes, which were reviewed in the theme generation step to ensure they accurately represented the data and were distinct from one another. For confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms from S1 to S10, allowing their insights and experiences to be shared without compromising their anonymity. After defining and naming the themes, a thorough review was conducted to ensure consistency and coherence within each theme. This step involved re-examining both the coded and original datasets to ensure alignment. The report not only outlined the themes and sub-themes but also illustrated them with relevant quotes from participants, providing rich, contextual insights into the findings. The combination of independent verification and member checking played a crucial role in enhancing the rigour of the analysis, ensuring that the researchers' interpretations resonated with participants' perspectives.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher carefully protected the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. This ensured participation was voluntary and that participants had a clear understanding of the study's purpose, steps, risks, and benefits. Participants knew they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and privacy remained strong through the use of anonymised data and secure storage, preventing unauthorised access. The researcher minimised harm or discomfort with respectful, sensitive observations and interviews. Transparency guided the entire process, including honest reporting of findings and their limitations. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's Research Board to ensure compliance with all guidelines. These steps ensured the study ran with integrity, fairness, and respect for everyone.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Biographic Profile of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Criteria	Final-year Bachelor of Education Commerce students	Frequency
	Males Females	4 6
	23-27	
Pseudonyms for interview participants	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10	10

[52] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

The current study sample consisted of 10 final-year Bachelor of Education (Commerce) students. The demographic ranged in age from 23 to 27 years; the gender distribution was 4 males and 6 females. To enrich the qualitative dimension of the research, a purposive sample of these 10 students was selected. Semi-structured interviews enabled a deeper understanding of how career guidance services shape work readiness, particularly by developing financial problem-solving and analytical skills essential to commerce educators.

Table 2: Research Themes and Research Questions

Research Question	Theme	Sub-theme
How do commerce education students perceive the impact of career guidance services on their employability skills?	Perceptions of Career Guidance Impact	Employability Skills Enhancement
What barriers exist in accessing tailored career guidance for commerce-specific needs?	Barriers to Tailored Career Guidance Access	Commerce-Specific Resource Gaps

How do commerce education students perceive the impact of career guidance services on their employability skills?

When participants were asked how they could enhance their employability in accounting education roles, some participants, who were S1, S2 & S4, shared the common sentiment by saying: *" I shared that career guidance workshops really sharpened my financial analysis skills. Now, I can quickly break down balance sheets, which makes me feel much more confident in my abilities.*

This comment highlights positive perceptions of career guidance enhancing specific employability skills, particularly technical competencies such as financial analysis via balance sheet breakdowns, and resulting self-confidence. This response mirrors global and local findings in the literature review on students valuing career guidance for practical skill-building, echoing El-Sakran and Dolce et al. on improvements in resume/interview skills and soft skills such as communication,[53] while extending to commerce-specific tools such as financial modelling and market analysis.[54]

Other participants elaborated on the research question asked by saying: *"Without those one-on-one sessions, I wouldn't have learned resume tailoring for commerce jobs. It boosted my problem-solving confidence for real classroom scenarios*." Participants S6 & S9 stated.

Participant S10 reported that: *"Guidance helped me identify transferable skills like data interpretation from accounting; it's made me see myself as ready for industry-linked teaching positions."*

The comments highlight positive perceptions of personalised career guidance, building practical employability skills such as resume tailoring, problem-solving confidence in classroom scenarios, and transferable competencies such as data interpretation from accounting, resume writing and interview techniques, Dolce et al. on soft skills such as communication for economics/accounting careers, and demands for tailored commerce training. [55]

What barriers exist in accessing tailored career guidance for commerce-specific needs?

Participants reported key barriers to accessing tailored career guidance for commerce-specific needs, emphasising a lack of customisation and support structures. They noted the absence of targeted workshops on essential skills such as financial modelling, noting that available services remain too generic and fail to address the needs of commerce teaching roles. Some participants highlighted logistical issues at rural campuses, where infrequent sessions limit exposure to commerce-specific mentoring. One participant captured this shift as follows: *"Limited sessions at our rural campus mean we miss out on commerce-specific mentoring; events are too infrequent."* As stated by S2.

[53] El-Sakran, "Enhancing Business Students' Employability Skills Awareness"; Dolce et al., "The Soft Skills of Accounting Graduates: Perceptions versus Expectations."
[54] Farounbi, Ibrahim, and Abdulsalam, "Advanced Financial Modeling Techniques for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises."
[55] Dolce et al., "The Soft Skills of Accounting Graduates: Perceptions versus Expectations."

This comment reflects geographical and logistical barriers to accessing tailored career guidance, specifically how rural campus locations lead to infrequent events and missed opportunities for commerce-specific mentoring, highlighting inequities in service delivery for students in underserved areas, as affirmed by Ntombela and Ntombela.[56]

Participants also reported several interconnected barriers to tailored career guidance for commerce needs, rooted in resource limitations, poor promotion, contextual irrelevance, and curricular silos. One highlighted funding shortages that block access to practical tools, such as Excel simulations for market analysis, stressing the need for commerce-specific resources. Another noted a lack of awareness, as commerce-tailored programs go unpromoted, leaving students to discover only basic options too late. A third pointed to online platforms' failure to customise for South African standards, such as IFRS, rendering them irrelevant.

Participants S6 and S8 highlighted that: *"Funding shortages mean no access to tools like Excel simulations for market analysis; we need commerce-focused resources."*

This comment reflects resource and funding constraints as barriers to tailored career guidance, specifically the lack of access to practical, commerce-specific tools such as Excel simulations for market analysis, and the need for targeted investments to support employability skills.

"Lack of awareness, nobody promotes commerce-tailored programs; I only found out about the basics too late." Stated by participant S9.

The comment from Participant S9 highlights informational and promotional barriers to accessing tailored career guidance, as poor marketing of commerce-specific programs leads to delayed or missed awareness, leaving students with only basic, generic services. It resonates with what Osunde and Mseleku emphasised.[57]

Participant S10 also argued that: *"Online platforms exist but aren't customised for South African commerce standards like IFRS; it feels irrelevant."*

This comment states that the contextual irrelevance of digital career guidance platforms is a barrier, as existing online tools fail to customise to South African commercial standards such as IFRS, making them feel impractical and disconnected from local needs.

DISCUSSION

The current study sheds light on commerce education students' perceptions of career guidance services and the barriers that hinder their tailored access to them, while interrogating how far existing provision realises the promises of Career Construction Theory (CCT). The results align with both international and local research on employability and guidance, yet they also expose specific gaps in South African higher education, particularly around contextual relevance and disciplinary specialisation. Drawing on CCT as highlighted by Savickas and LeBouthillier, participants' narratives demonstrate how guidance may foster vocational identity and adaptability through skill development, but they also show that systemic obstacles limit its potential to support full work-readiness.[58] While CCT stresses active career construction through meaning-making and intentional skill acquisition, the findings suggest that students' capacity to "construct" their careers is constrained by resource inequalities, generic programming, and insufficient alignment with commerce-specific labour market demands.

Participants viewed career guidance positively, recognising it as a catalyst for developing employability skills, which is consistent with the synthesis presented by S1, S2, and S4 regarding enhanced financial analysis skills, such as balance sheet breakdowns, and the integration of communication and other soft skills, as affirmed by El-Sakran and Dolce et al.[59] However, the expressed need for commercial tools such as financial modelling, as emphasised by Farounbi et al., suggests that

[56] Ntombela and Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners."

[57] Osunde, "Role of Career Service in Enhancing Students Employability in the 21st Century"; Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."

[58] Savickas, "Career Construction Theory and Counseling Model"; LeBouthillier, "Technical Education and Career Readiness: A Case Study Investigating Career Readiness of Connecticut Technical Education Career System Students."

[59] El-Sakran, "Enhancing Business Students' Employability Skills Awareness"; Dolce et al., "The Soft Skills of Accounting Graduates: Perceptions versus Expectations."

current services do not fully reflect the technical depth required in accounting and economics roles, raising questions about how "adaptability resources" in CCT are being operationalised in commerce contexts.[60]

Additionally, S6, S9, and S10's emphasis on tailoring resumes, problem-solving abilities, and transferable data skills resonates with European hands-on practices discussed by Pietro and Kools et al.,[61] Asian approaches to holistic development as reported by Melinu and Mseleku, and African calls for specialisation.[62] Yet, unlike many of these international models, the current study reveals that guidance in this South African case often remains generic and disconnected from discipline-specific trajectories, which weakens its function as a narrative bridge connecting theory to practice as described by CCT. The study identified several barriers, including a lack of resources, poor promotion, and mismatches with local needs, which complicate students' efforts to construct coherent career stories. Challenges in rural logistics and spatial inequalities reveal persistent disparities in South Africa, as noted by Osunde and Ntombela,[63] while funding shortages limiting access to tools such as Excel simulations mirror broader infrastructure problems in African and Asian contexts, as argued by Zindi and Sibanda and Abidin.[64]

Moreover, the lack of awareness of available resources and platforms that do not meet International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) indicates a disconnect from local market needs, as Mseleku stated, suggesting that guidance is not adequately attuned to the regulatory and professional environment commerce graduates will face.[65] The widespread use of generic services and separate curricula further highlights integration gaps also noted by Ntombela and Ntombela,[66] which contrasts with more coherent and embedded models seen in Europe and Asia, as highlighted by Kools et al. and Lee et al.[67]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the study's findings, which show both the empowering impact of career guidance on employability skills and persistent barriers such as resource gaps, rural inequities, and poor customisation, the following recommendations are proposed for higher education institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. Tailored to South African commerce education, they focus on strengthening embedded, equitable supports that foster work-readiness among BEd Commerce students and better link academic training to professional success.

Institutional Integration in South African Universities: Universities could integrate discipline-specific career guidance into the BEd Commerce curriculum as a core component rather than an optional add-on. This includes closer collaboration between academic departments and career services to ensure guidance is aligned with commerce-related labour market demands and supports the theory-practice link highlighted by students.

Resources and Equitable Access Across Urban and Rural Campuses in South Africa: Institutions need to prioritise resourcing of commerce-specific tools and platforms and address rural and socio-

[60] Farounbi, Ibrahim, and Abdulsalam, "Advanced Financial Modeling Techniques for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises."
[61] Di Pietro, "International Internships and Skill Development: A Systematic Review"; Kools et al., "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers."
[62] Melinu, "Career Development and Employment Branding: A Study on Japanese Studies Students' Job Expectations in Europe"; Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[63] Osunde, "Role of Career Service in Enhancing Students Employability in the 21st Century"; Sithabile Ntombela, "Reimagining South African Higher Education in Response to Covid-19 and Ongoing Exclusion of Students with Disabilities," *Disability & Society* 37, no. 3 (March 16, 2022): 534–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.2004880.
[64] Zindi and Sibanda, "Challenges Impeding the Implementation of Effective Continuous Teacher Professional Development Programs in Eastern Cape Department of Education"; Abidin, "The Roles of National and Local Policy and Practices in Support Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation of Biotechnology in Malaysia."
[65] Mseleku, "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives."
[66] Ntombela and Ntombela, "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners."
[67] Kools et al., "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers"; Lee et al., "Equity in Career Development of High School Students in South Korea: The Role of School Career Education."

economic inequities in access. Strategic funding and technology-enabled delivery that include online support for geographically dispersed students may help ensure that practical, work-relevant career preparation is not limited to well-resourced campuses.

Visibility and Relevance of Services for South African Commerce Education Students: Career guidance offerings could be more visible and clearly differentiated for commerce education students. Targeted communication and outreach, beginning early in students' programmes, may raise awareness of specialised services and reduce reliance on generic support that does not fully speak to commerce teaching and related career trajectories.

Industry Partnerships and Mentorship Within South Africa's Commerce and Education Sectors: Stronger, formalised partnerships with professional bodies, employers, and alumni in the commerce and education sectors are recommended to enrich guidance through guest inputs, mentoring, and exposure to real workplace expectations. These collaborations may help align guidance content with current industry standards and enhance students' confidence in their employability.

Monitoring and Future Research in South African Higher Education: Ongoing monitoring of career guidance outcomes, including graduate work-readiness and employability, could be necessary to refine practice. Future research could adopt longitudinal and comparative designs to examine the impact of discipline-tailored guidance across different institutional and regional contexts, contributing to evidence-informed policy in South African higher education.

CONCLUSION

The current study emphasises the critical importance of career guidance services in enhancing the employability skills of South African commerce education students. The study also highlights the enduring barriers to access to these vital services, particularly for marginalised groups. The key findings highlight a generally positive perception among students of their skill-building opportunities, including essential competencies such as financial analysis and resume tailoring. However, these positive perceptions are tempered by several challenges, including significant resource gaps, inequities faced by students in rural areas, and curricular silos that limit interdisciplinary learning.

To address these challenges, it is important that educational institutions prioritise integrating commerce-specific career guidance programs. This includes securing funding for advanced tools and resources, such as platforms aligned with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which could significantly enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, outreach initiatives could focus on engaging rural communities through strategic partnerships to ensure that all students have equitable access to career services.

Looking ahead, future research could benefit from examining the longitudinal impacts of career guidance on students' employability outcomes. Additionally, quantitative interventions that bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications could yield valuable insights and foster a more equitable landscape for work readiness in the BRICS context. By prioritising these aspects, stakeholders may help create a more inclusive and effective career development system for all students in commerce education.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abidin, N. "The Roles of National and Local Policy and Practices in Support Knowledge Transfer and Commercialisation of Biotechnology in Malaysia." University of Sheffield, 2022.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

Dolce, Valentina, Federica Emanuel, Maurizio Cisi, and Chiara Ghislieri. "The Soft Skills of Accounting Graduates: Perceptions versus Expectations." *Accounting Education* 29, no. 1 (2020): 57–76.

El-Sakran, Tharwat M. "Enhancing Business Students' Employability Skills Awareness." *Journal of*

Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes, 2023, 687–708.
Elgeddawy, Mohamed, Mahmoud Abouraia, and Hesham Magd. "Academic and Career Advising: Factors of Success and Opportunities for Institutional Improvement." *International Society for Technology, Education, and Science*, 2024.
Farounbi, B. O., A. K. Ibrahim, and R. Abdulsalam. "Advanced Financial Modeling Techniques for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises." *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 1 (2020).
Harry, Tinashe, and Willie Tafadzwa Chinyamurindi. "'Still Haven't Found What I Am Looking for': Rural Black Students' Perceived Work Readiness and Assessment of Labor Market Access." *Education+ Training* 64, no. 2 (2022): 276–89.
Hood, Michelle, and Peter A. Creed. "Globalisation: Implications for Careers and Career Guidance." In *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 477–95. Springer, 2020.
Huang, Futao. "Transformations in Higher Vocational Education in Japan." *Vocation, Technology & Education* 1, no. 1 (2024): e5–e5.
Ilyina, Anastasiya. "Innovative Approaches to the Education System in Higher Education Institutions and Specialized Sectoral Establishments." *International Science Journal of Education & Linguistics* 4, no. 2 (2025): 34–55.
Kaluarachchi, KADP. "Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research (Positivism, Phenomenological Approach & Critical Social Sciences)." *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Work* 8, no. 2 (2025).
Khoabane, M. P., and L. M. Du Plessis. "The Importance of Strategic Management Resources for Successful Technical and Vocational Education and Training Governance in Lesotho." *Administratio Publica* 31, no. 4 (2023): 44–70.
Kools, Farah R W, Christine M Fox, Harold V M van Rijen, and Berent J Prakken. "International Online Mentorship for Translational Researchers." *BMC Medical Education* 24, no. 1 (2024): 1121.
LeBouthillier, L. "Technical Education and Career Readiness: A Case Study Investigating Career Readiness of Connecticut Technical Education Career System Students." 2024.
Lee, Youngsun, Gayeong Lee, Junghyun Kim, and Minwook Lee. "Equity in Career Development of High School Students in South Korea: The Role of School Career Education." *Education Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2021): 20.
Ling, Low Ee. "Enabling Sustainable Success: Lessons from Singapore." In *International Handbook on Education Development in Asia-Pacific*, 1–20. Springer, 2022.
Melinu, Irene. "Career Development and Employment Branding: A Study on Japanese Studies Students' Job Expectations in Europe," 2020.
Mohapeloa, J. "Education in Lesotho." In *Education in Africa*, 140–61. Routledge, 2022.
Mseleku, Zethembe. "Youth High Unemployment/Unemployability in South Africa: The Unemployed Graduates' Perspectives." *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning* 12, no. 4 (2022): 775–90.
Nguyen, M. "Implications of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Adoption of Higher Education of Accounting (HEA) in Vietnam: The Institutional Perspective." RMIT University, 2024.
Ntombela, Berrington Xolani Siphosakhe, and Gabaza Abigail Louisa Zanele Ntombela. "The Rural University and the Rural Student: Unequal Partners." *Alternation* 29, no. 1 (2022): 47.
Ntombela, Sithabile. "Reimagining South African Higher Education in Response to Covid-19 and Ongoing Exclusion of Students with Disabilities." *Disability & Society* 37, no. 3 (March 16, 2022): 534–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.2004880.
Omelianenko, Olena, and Nadiia Artyukhova. "Project-Based Learning: Theoretical Overview and Practical Implications for Local Innovation-Based Development." *Economics and Education* 9, no. 1 (2024): 35–41.
Osunde, Yvonne Ododo. "Role of Career Service in Enhancing Students' Employability in the 21st Century." *Kontagora International Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 1 (2025): 324–39.

Pietro, Giorgio Di. "International Internships and Skill Development: A Systematic Review." *Review of Education* 10, no. 2 (2022): e3363.

Rodrigues, Ana Luísa. "Entrepreneurship Education Pedagogical Approaches in Higher Education." *Education Sciences* 13, no. 9 (2023): 940.

Savickas, Mark L. "Career Construction Theory and Counseling Model." *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work* 3 (2020): 165–200.

Umar, M., D. Mukhtar, and M. I. Aziz. "SME-Led Growth: Harnessing Innovation and Frontier Technologies for Nigeria's 2025 Development." *Int J Entrep Manag Pract* 7, no. 24 (2024).

Zindi, Beauty, and Modeni M Sibanda. "Challenges Impeding the Implementation of Effective Continuous Teacher Professional Development Programs in Eastern Cape Department of Education," 2023.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Olwethu Solundwana is a Master of Education candidate at Walter Sisulu University, South Africa, with research interests in educational equity, curriculum development, teacher education, and the integration of technology in teaching and learning. He holds a Bachelor of Education in Economics and Management Sciences and a BEd Honours degree, and has five years of secondary-school teaching experience. His published work includes studies on Grade 10 Accounting education, entrepreneurship education, digital tutorship, and preservice teachers' use of digital platforms.

Dr. Nondwe D.M. Mtshatsha is a lecturer at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu in the Faculty of Education. With a career spanning several decades in teaching, lecturing, research, and management. She has successfully supervised both honours and masters students to completion and has served as an external examiner for various higher education institutions. Since 2004, Dr Mtshatsha has participated in the design and review of academic programmes at both national and local levels. Her professional and research interests encompass higher education and sustainable development, consumer sciences, curriculum studies and entrepreneurship.

Professor Berington Zanoxolo Gobingca holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education, Master of Education(MEd), Bachelor of Education (BEd), Bachelor of Commerce in Education (B. Com Educ), and a Diploma in Agriculture. Currently, he is an Associate Professor in the Business and Management Education (BME) Department in the Faculty of Education at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu (WS), geographically located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. His research focuses on Curriculum development, Governance, Leadership, and Management, and specialises in the Commerce stream. He is actively involved in postgraduate supervision and the review of manuscripts and book chapters for various accredited journals. He is also involved as an external examiner for Master of Education and Doctoral degrees in Education for various universities. He is a member of various statutory university committees.