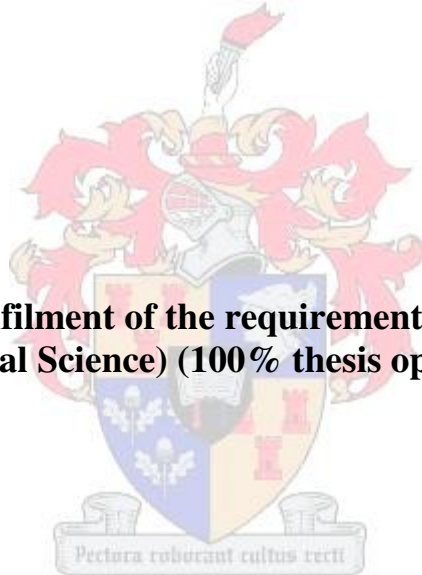


Problematizing unemployment: The competing representations of unemployment and the implications thereof

Caylynne Elizabeth Symes

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**Supervisor: Dr. U Adams-Jack
Co-supervisor: Prof. A.J. Leysens
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restrictive labour practices to increase employment by making labour cheaper for business to hire. The government is seen as responsible for reducing costs to business so as to foster growth. This problem representation will be discussed further under political effects.

4.2.2 *What is left unproblematised?*

Public policy dealing with the issue of unemployment is based on the representation of the problem as a lack of training and skills. The formulation of the problem as a lack of training and skills ignores other issues. Business' construction as a mismatch between the skills produced and those required by employers highlights what is excluded from the other representations. The assumption that a lack of training and skills underlies the unemployment problem does not touch on the issue of graduate unemployment (Pauw, Oosthuizen & Van der Westhuizen, 2006:2). There currently are approximately 600 000 unemployed graduates in South Africa (Mbanjwa, 2012). While the graduate unemployment is low compared to overall unemployment, it has risen rapidly since 1995 (Pauw *et al*, 2006:2). The incidence of graduate unemployment varies greatly between study fields, with the highest percentage in the arts and humanities, and the lowest percentages in the economic and management sciences and the natural sciences (Moleke, 2006:15). This provides evidence for business' representation that there is a mismatch of skills produced and the skills required by the market.

A consequence of presenting the problem as due to a lack of training and skills is that there is no problematisation of the gap between demand and supply of labour. Formulating the problem as one of unskilled labour ignores the fact that there is a larger supply of labour than there is demand for labour in South Africa. The underlying assumption that individuals are on some level responsible for being unemployed, prevents the exploration of the problem as too many people in the labour force and not enough new jobs. The representation of the problem as a lack of cooperation by government and other stakeholders also leaves the gap between demand and supply of labour unproblematised. By the representation precluding the issue of a too large labour

force, there is the appearance that the issue is being addressed without making significant reductions in unemployment as the excess supply of labour is not dealt with (McCord, 2005:565). Thus, the construction prevents the surfacing of policies that may prove unpopular with business (enforcement of labour-intensive production methods), labour (reducing labour regulations) or citizens (population control).

While skills development and training may serve to reduce unemployment, it is possible that smaller reductions in unemployment will be made than would be possible under a different interpretation of the problem. If the problem was represented as the supply of labour outstripping the demand for labour, there may be a drive toward fostering entrepreneurship or encouraging more labour-intensive production in existing South African businesses. This construction of the problem makes it easier for skilled individuals to find work. However, the representation also makes it more difficult to gain employment for those with skills that are not sought after in the market and those unable to acquire entrance to skills and training programmes (Siphambe, 2000:298).

This interpretation of the problem as a lack of work experience problematises access to work, as work experience cannot be gained without interning in a business, volunteering for unpaid work or working. This representation does not problematise labour demand and supply. It ignores the part that business can have in reducing unemployment. Focusing on this construction of unemployment, it is apparent that business' potential role in job creation via investment in more labour-intensive projects is ignored. The effect of this is to create the impression that business is not contributing to the problem of unemployment through the use of capital-intensive production methods (Lewis, 2001:24). By not problematising the use of capital-intensive production, there is a greater likelihood that labour supply will continue to outstrip the demand for labour, thus, resulting in the continuation of the unemployment problem.

Viewing unemployment as caused by a lack of work experience prevents the examination of South African labour regulations. The strict labour market regulations in South Africa contribute to the low levels of job creation by discouraging employers from hiring new

workers (Natrass & Seekings, 2001:494). This is because labour legislation makes it expensive to dismiss workers and because the remuneration for workers is not dependent on productivity. The growth in real wages outpaces the labour productivity growth, thus making workers more expensive (Klein, 2012:1). The imbalance between wages and labour productivity has impacted negatively on job creation, as capital has become cheaper in comparison to labour (Bernstein, 2011:3).

The effect of the problem representation of unemployment as a lack of work experience is to problematise access to work. The representation also directs attention to government to provide the unemployed with work experience through the EPWP and state-owned enterprises. A lack of work experience does not problematise the high costs of labour or the large surplus of labour in South Africa. Thus, the effect of this formulation of the unemployment problem is to limit the possibility for reducing unemployment substantially. This is because it does not take into consideration the creation of more jobs through labour-intensive methods, for example, but only focuses attention on work experience, which creates the impression that, if an individual has previous work experience, they should not struggle to find work. Constructing the problem as a lack of work experience only problematises the employability of individuals and leaves unproblematized how jobs can be created through labour-intensive production or the reduction of the costs of hiring new labour.

The assumption that a good education will lead to employment does not consider the problem of graduate unemployment and removes from consideration technical skills and aptitudes which cannot be pursued through the standard schooling system. The assumption that education is the key to reducing unemployment excludes the aptitudes of individuals from consideration as not everyone is academically inclined and can excel at school (Doerr & Ferguson, 1968:29). The consequence could be that individuals attempt to pursue tertiary education although their aptitude lies elsewhere, as they attempt to conform in order to increase their chances of finding employment.

The interpretation of the problem as a lack of education does not problematise the lack of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs have been acknowledged as possessing the potential to create jobs and grow the economy (Dempsey, 2010:2). The effect is to exclude the increase of and investment in entrepreneurial courses from consideration. One effect of this may be to serve to reduce the numbers of entrepreneurs by emphasising other solutions and problem representations. By ignoring this potential for growth, there may be a lot resources and time funnelled into existing businesses which may not have the same potential for expansion and job creation as entrepreneurs (Dempsey, 2010:2). By not focusing on entrepreneurs, not only will an avenue for job creation be overlooked, but it is likely that entrepreneurial training and entrepreneurship in general may go into decline. A lower number of entrepreneurs in South Africa would be likely to have a very negative impact on employment (Dempsey, 2010:2). Potential for job creation may be missed if not enough training and money is not invested in those potential entrepreneurs who can provide other means of unemployment alleviation

Viewing the problem as too many young people in the labour force implies that working age population needs to be reduced. This could be achieved either through tertiary education or military service. The effect would not be a real reduction in unemployment but a temporary measure to delay resolving the problem. Increasing the numbers of people enrolled in tertiary education removes them from the labour force, but it merely postpones the problem until these individuals graduate (Hill, 2012). This solution would make it appear that the problem of unemployment is being dealt with, without a permanent solution to the problem being found.

The construction of the problem as too many people searching for work, precludes from consideration the qualifications of the unemployed individuals. The formulation of the problem also removes from consideration the restrictive labour laws in South Africa. The labour laws increase the costs of employing more people (Flower, 2006:9). The effect is that the high costs of labour in South Africa, due to these laws, are ignored and by ignoring these costs, there is little chance of increasing employment in the long run when businesses find labour more expensive than capital (Lewis, 2001:26). Because of the

costs associated with restrictive labour law, businesses and entrepreneurs are more likely to invest in capital-intensive production and not labour intensive production, which serves to exacerbate unemployment. This construction does not focus attention on how capital-intensive practices by business impacts on unemployment, nor does it focus on the high costs of labour due to restrictive labour legislation and extensive workers' rights fought for by COSATU and the SACP.

The construction of the problem as a lack of labour-intensive employment opportunities is underlined by the assumption that the government can afford to provide large scale work and wages through infrastructure projects. This assumption is problematic as the government currently has large commitments in terms of social grants and is likely to be unable to provide jobs for all those who are unemployed (Dlamini, 2012:3). This is due to the fact that the South African tax base, the number of individuals who pay taxes, is much smaller than the numbers of individuals in need of work. The government's income would be far outstripped by its expenditures. This is as the tax base stood at 5.9 million 2009-10 and the unemployed reached 7 396 000, using the broad definition (Thornton, 2011). The implication of the problem representation is that the South African government should be the main provider of work. This leaves the role of business unproblematised as a large scale work provider. If the government does take on this role as main provider of work, it could have large financial implications for the employed.

Constructing the problem as too many restrictive labour laws makes the assumption that businesses are currently employing the maximum of individuals at which it remains profitable to do so. There is also the assumption that businesses will hire more workers if tax breaks and exemptions were extended to them. This does not account for businesses that may try to take advantage of certain measures suggested, through the possible substitution of younger labour in order to enjoy the benefits of exemptions (Byrne & Buchanan, 1994). This representation emphasises the private sector's ability to create jobs if the costs of business and labour were reduced.

Formulating the problem as too many restrictive labour laws directs attention to what business requires in order to contribute to reductions in the unemployment rate. This construction leaves unproblematised the employability of individuals. An effect of ignoring the employability of individuals is that while there may be a reduction in unemployment, it may not be significant due to the shortage of skilled labour. The construction could perpetuate the skills shortage that South Africa suffers from (Department of Labour, 2003:1). The lack of employment opportunities is not addressed by this interpretation, which is problematic as it is the innovation of entrepreneurs that is needed to create more employment (Dempsey, 2010:2). Entrepreneurs create more employment by seeing opportunities where others do not and it is such creative thinking which provides the opportunities for employment (Ortmans, 2012). This representation has the effect of ignoring the training of new entrepreneurs and sees job creation as dependent on existing businesses.

Problematising the high cost of business excludes the issue of employers' preference in terms of capital goods. The effect of viewing the problem this way is that incentives may be created for businesses to create more jobs, which in turn would cost the government and tax payers a large amount of money that cannot be utilised (Sharp, 2011). This may be due to business not wishing to incur the expenses of creating more jobs and the expenses of training and skilling labour when the productivity of capital is greater (Sharp, 2011). The implication is that the government is seen as responsible for providing an environment in which businesses can and do create more jobs. The blame is laid partly on labour regulations which need to be relaxed or incentives that need to be extended for businesses to hire more labour. The solution constructs the role of government as helping the market to increase employment through the private sector.

The problem of unemployment has been formulated as the high cost of business being the obstacle to creating more employment by COSATU. The presumption underlying this construction appears to be that businesses are currently employing the maximum number of individuals that they can afford with the current costs of conducting business. The construction of the problem draws attention to taxes, electricity and other payments by

business that increases the cost of the product and move money away from the allocation of more labour. The assumption that business would hire more labour if costs of business was reduced, does not take into consideration that businesses may prefer to make use of capital-intensive methods of production instead of hiring labour (Van Aardt, Ligthelm and Van Tonder, 2011). Businesses are generally more inclined to buy capital goods than hire labour because tax distortions make capital cheaper compared to labour, the shortage of skilled workers and higher productivity of capital than labour (Samson, Quene & Van Niekerk, 2001:6).

The formulation of the problem of unemployment as due to the high costs of hiring new labour is how business and government have presented the problem. This has been seen as the reason that businesses have not been hiring young first-time employees. Constructing the problem in this way problematises the cost of training first-time employees as well as the costs of supervision and firing the employee if he or she does not do the work properly (Schnotz, 2012). It also does not take into account the possible preference employers may have for capital-intensive production. This representation of the problem as the high costs of hiring first-time employees places the responsibility on the legislature and government to foster an environment for businesses to grow and hire more new labour.

The various ways in which the problem of unemployment is represented by South African government and non-governmental actors contain within them transference and acceptance of blame. Business' problem representations direct attention to government and the way in which government needs to respond to the problem. Business constructs their representations so as to avoid acceptance of its role in combating unemployment. Business directs attention away from its role by placing an emphasis on tax breaks, exemptions and looser labour restrictions. These solutions serve business' interests as they reduce the costs of business. These representations serve business' interests as they allow for a greater profit margin. Thus, the representations protect the interests of business by focusing on government's responsibility to act and highlighting solutions

where business stands to gain via lower labour costs or lower costs of doing business (taxes and so forth).

4.3 Political effects of problem representations

This section focuses on the political effects of problem representations. The political effects refer to the possible political consequences of problem representations. The political effects can be defined as those consequences which come from problem representations and affect the interests or politics surrounding unemployment. Political effects in this study are for example strains in relationships between actors, the tripartite alliance members for instance, due to different problem representations or the interests served by the dominant problem representations. The discussion on the potential political effects is used to further demonstrate the utility of applying the WPR approach to the problem of unemployment in South Africa.

The section begins by discussing the political effects of problem representations. The discussion is organised around the potential political effects of problem representations. The discussion on strains in relationships is more focused on the tripartite alliance and the political effects of disagreement on the representations of the problem. The tripartite alliance consists of COSATU, the SACP and the ANC, thus the relationship between them is of interest. The reason for the focus on the tripartite alliance is that the alliance has shaped the political landscape, and if a split in the alliance were to occur there could be a reconfiguration of the South African political landscape (Faull & February). This could occur if COSATU split from the alliance as it is believed that COSATU would take the voting power of its workers to whichever party it endorses. This can be evidenced by the many discussions to this effect with some evidence to support this notion (Pillay, 2011:8). The persistent question of a possible split in the tripartite alliance and the consequences which could follow from such a split make it important for this study to consider the tripartite alliance. The chapter includes a discussion on the dominant problem representations and how these are established. This is done as the interests served by the dominant problem representations can then be discussed.

4.3.1 Representations which could strengthen relationships between actors

The problem representation which all actors share with government is that of the problem as a lack of employment opportunities. It shows that all actors view the unemployment problem in the same way in this regard. This makes it more likely that the non-governmental actors will not take actions which will further reduce the number of employment opportunities. The fact that all actors share this representation with government makes it more likely that the actors will support government's preferred policies addressing unemployment as a lack of employment opportunities. If problem definitions, which are very similar to problem representations, are shared between actors, it is more likely that there will be support for measures from those sharing the problem definition (Morss, 2005:182). The implication of the representation being shared by all actors is that there is a better chance that actors will not oppose policies recommended to increase employment opportunities and that the potential for concerted action exists. Shared problem definitions increase the chances that those sharing the definition will back policies based on those problem definitions (Morss, 2005:185). This increased likelihood of support can be evidenced by business's support for the youth wage subsidy which will be discussed below.

The representation of the problem as a lack of skills and training is shared by all actors. One political effect of this formulation is to bring together all the actors, thereby providing common ground for the alliance to strengthen its bonds, as well as a basis for labour and business to improve their relationship. This shared problem representation increases the likelihood that business, COSATU and the SACP will support the measures that the South African government implements to ensure that more people receive training and skills.

COSATU shares the government's representation of the problem as a lack of work experience. The implication of this shared representation is that it demonstrates that these two alliance members are in agreement on some issues therefore there is still agreement between the two members. Thus, COSATU and the ANC may not be as estranged and

ready to split as recent reports have made them out to be (Ngamlana, 2011; Meersman, 2012). The shared problem representation makes it more likely that COSATU will support the policies recommended by government to address the issue and reduce the chances that there will be a political backlash from the imposition of policies dealing with this representation of the problem.

Government and South African business share the representation of the problem of unemployment as a youth unemployment problem due to the high costs of young workers. The implication of this shared construction is that attention is directed to the costs of employees as a factor that leads to less employment of young workers in South Africa. The shared interpretation has benefits for business if government adopts policy solutions that reduce the cost for business, business would benefit from more employees at a lower cost. The increase in employees and decrease in cost would lead to greater profit through both lower costs and more output of the product. Thus, this formulation is likely to make the current government more popular with South African business as this representation benefits business through lower labour costs. This popularity is important for government and specific government officials to help further their political careers through re-election. The sharing of this construction is likely to also work in government's favour as business may be more inclined to support government's recommendations concerning unemployment. Government sharing problem definitions with other actors increases the other actors' likelihood for support for government's recommendations (Morss, 2005:182).

The solutions based on reducing costs to businesses serve the interests of business by directing attention to the high costs of conducting business which is incurred due to South Africa's restrictive labour legislation. By problematising this and reducing these costs through the policy of youth wage subsidies, South African business stands to benefit. These solutions secure less spending on labour by business and allow business to better maximise their profit margins. Business would also benefit from more employees and the resultant higher output of the product, which, in turn would equal more profit. The South African government's interests would also be served as this interpretation increases the

chances for support from business. By government benefiting South African business, the government is likely to receive support from business. This could be realised in terms of supporting government policy proposals, or it could be through finance pledged to an election campaign. This endearment of government to business through business-friendly policies is likely to benefit members of the government. This is could benefit government through securing the favour of business in South Africa which may translate into funding for the next election campaign or greater influence among business members.

4.3.2 Representations that could create political tensions

There is divergence of problem representations among the various actors. The researcher chose to mainly focus on divergence between the representations of the tripartite alliance members, COSATU, the SACP and the ANC which is the ruling party and occupies the vast majority of government positions. The tripartite alliance is an important part of South African politics as it has shaped the political landscape in South Africa since the democratic transition. The importance of discussing these problem representations is that points of tension between the ANC and its alliance partners can be identified. Exploring the potential tensions between the alliance members is of great importance as a split in the alliance could change the political landscape in South Africa.

The tensions over different representations of unemployment can be explored. The question of whether a split will occur in the tripartite alliance has been asked for many years and the rumbling of discontent from alliance members has increased in recent years (Marrian, 2012). There have already been signs of tension between COSATU and the ANC over the top position in the ANC (Marrian, 2012). The battle over the South African Reserve Banks' inflations targeting policy and the lifestyle audit that COSATU called for are only some of these tensions (Ngamlana, 2011). The examination of divergent problem representations may highlight some of the strains in the relationship and thus, may add to the mounting evidence that there may be a split in the alliance in future. The dismissal of COSATU's concerns over e-tolling and labour brokering seems

to point to a reduction in the power that COSATU commands within the tripartite alliance.

There has also been contention between the SACP and COSATU. This is in regards to their competing stances over nationalisation with COSATU supporting nationalisation and the SACP opposed to nationalisation, claiming that it is not necessarily progressive (Marrian, 2012). The ANC has made it clear that nationalisation is not ANC policy and that there will not be any policy shift to nationalisation, thereby demonstrating the party's opposition to COSATU's stance on the matter (ANC reiterates nationalisation stand, 2012).

The government's interpretation of the problem as due to a lack of cooperation between government, business and other actors is not shared by any of the other tripartite alliance members. This construction works to the governments' benefit as it directs attention to the roles that business, labour and other stakeholders have to play in the reduction of unemployment. The representation serves government's interests as it steer attention away from the continual emphasis placed on government action by the other actors. The representation suggests that the other actors are also needed in combating unemployment and that the government cannot deal with the problem on its own. The way the problem of unemployment is presented here suggests a different way for the South African government to deal with the problem.

The most noticeable divergence of representations is over the youth unemployment problem. COSATU and the SACP present the issue as too large a youth labour force whereas the government and business present the problem as the cost of labour. This divergence in representations has been most apparent in government's youth wage subsidy policy, which both COSATU and the SACP are steadfastly resisting (SACP Central Committee, 2010; COSATU, 2012a). Both COSATU and the SACP refuse to accept the youth wage subsidy as a solution to the youth unemployment problem. COSATU and the SACP have claimed that the youth wage subsidy will have large

substitution effects with employers retrenching unsubsidised labour for subsidised labour (SACP Central Committee, 2010; COSATU, 2012a).

The SACP also raises the concern that the youth wage subsidy will be used to dilute workers' rights mainly through the substitution of labour. COSATU has argued that there is ample international literature on wage subsidy schemes which shows that they are very wasteful and costly, with massive deadweight losses (COSATU, 2012a:1). The SACP and COSATU argue that these substitution effects exist. Both argue that the substitution effects exist, because this will affect workers who are represented by COSATU. This solution of the problem therefore does not serve the interests of the workers who are established in employment and it does not work in the interests of the SACP or COSATU. This resistance to the subsidy has led to a lack of implementation of the subsidy due to COSATU protesting against the subsidy. Political tension has also been sparked between COSATU and non-alliance members. This was seen with the Democratic Alliance march for the implementation of the youth wage subsidy when COSATU members allegedly threw rocks and pieces of cement at Democratic Alliance (DA) supporters, thus stopping the protest (Zille: DA march a turning point for SA, 2012).

Steadfast refusal to accept the youth wage subsidy by COSATU and the SACP has not only caused a lengthy delay in the implementation of the subsidy, but has throughout caused tension within the tripartite alliance. These tensions have once again brought the possibility of a split in the alliance to the fore. These tensions have once again brought up the possibility of a split in the alliance (Marrian, 2012). Tensions within the alliance have remained just under the surface for a long time (Helen Suzman Foundation, 2000). Recently COSATU has openly disagreed and have made known their displeasure with the ruling party, even going so far as to suggest that the country may soon have a president Zille (leader of the DA opposition) (News24, 2011 While this statement was made by Zwelinzima Vavi as an individual, he is the general secretary of COSATU and is seen as speaking for the organisation. Thus, there could be ramifications for the alliance if the South African government decides to disregard COSATU's objections to the wage

subsidy just as it has disregarded their concerns over e-tolling and labour brokers (COSATU, 2012b). A conflict over the youth wage subsidy may add to the tensions which may one day break up the alliance.

While it may appear that COSATU is concerned about a displacement of unemployment, it is more likely that they are concerned that older workers will be retrenched in favour of younger subsidised labour. Older workers make up a large portion of COSATU members (COSATU, 2001) and thus it is more likely that COSATU is worried its members will suffer. It could possibly decrease their bargaining power because it would adversely impact their membership. The SACP has also resisted the youth wage subsidy, stating that the potential abuse of the wage subsidy had not been seriously considered and it could be used as a cover by unscrupulous employers to dilute workers' rights, because it could be used to substitute current fulltime workers with temporary subsidised workers (SACP Central Committee, 2010:10). The SACP is resisting the youth wage subsidy because it goes against the tenets of socialism and is most likely to affect its members adversely. The contention between alliance members over this solution has led to a deadlock in the policy process. The youth wage subsidy has not been implemented by government. The negotiations on the implementation of the youth wage subsidy are still dragging on, more than two years after the announcement of the subsidy, making it unlikely implementation will occur soon (Visser, 2012).

The representation of the problem as caused by a high cost of labour, while agreed upon by business and the government, puts both at odds with COSATU and the SACP. The divergence in representations could have implications for the tripartite alliance, as mentioned above, but also for business. If the solutions, from which this representation was extracted, are implemented to reduce labour costs, it is very likely that COSATU will call for strike action. That COSATU often calls for strikes in an attempt to influence policy is demonstrated by COSATU's strikes over labour brokers (Wide support for Cosatu strike, 2012) and the strike action taken over the Gauteng e-tolling system (Serrao, 2012). Such strikes have a large negative impact not only on business in the area surrounding the protest, but also have a substantial negative impact on the South African

economy as a whole (Styan, 2012). If the youth wage subsidy were to be implemented without considering COSATU's concerns, it could result in COSATU calling for large-scale strike action. The economy would suffer losses that could run up to R 8.2 billion in the event of mass strike action (Styan, 2012). Divergent representations thus have economic implications as well as political implications.

4.3.3 Interests served by dominant problem representations

While Bacchi does not use her approach to understand how and why certain problem representations become dominant, it does allow the examination of dominant representations, which aids the analyst in identifying the interests served by those representations. Dominant problem representations are those representations which inform South African public policy and are shared by government and at least one non-governmental actor. By highlighting the dominant representations, the politics surrounding unemployment policy can be better unpacked. The representations of the problem of unemployment as a lack of employment opportunities, lack of skills and training, lack of quality education, high costs of labour and a lack of work experience are the dominant representations. These representations are considered dominant as they have been repeated throughout previous macroeconomic strategies and policy documents.

Bacchi argues that the way in which a problem is represented is to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others (Bacchi, 1999:6). The dominant, accepted representations of unemployment, as seen through the South African government's policies to address the issue of unemployment, work to the benefit of some actors only. This section examines the dominant problem representations of unemployment to identify whose interests are being served and how they are being served. In this study, interest in terms of serving an actor's interests, means that the problem representation secures that actor a benefit of some kind.

All the actors share the construction of the problem as a lack of skills and training. This formulation serves the interests of business, COSATU and the SACP as it directs

attention to the South African government's responsibility for action. In directing the attention to government's responsibility for providing skills and training, the burden of providing training and investing in the skills development of workers is removed from business. COSATU represents employed workers and, thus, can use this interpretation of the problem to escape any responsibility for the current unemployment situation. The solutions to unemployment under this representation allow the government to accept limited responsibility for the issue. By constructing the problem in this way, the unemployed are seen as part of the problem. This works to government's benefit as it allows part of the responsibility for the problem to be shifted to the unemployed. Government is offered the scapegoat of the unemployed themselves, by claiming that it is doing what it can to reduce unemployment but that the unemployed have not acquired the right skills or training to become employed. The blame game is often played in South African politics when the public attempt to keep politicians accountable (Thom, 2012). Thus, it serves the interest of government by limiting its culpability when questioned on its achievements in reducing unemployment.

All the actors' interests are served by the shared interpretation of the problem as a lack of employment opportunities. This formulation serves the interests of business, COSATU and the SACP, as the suggested solutions direct the attention to government. Attention is directed to government's role in creating employment opportunities through the EPWP and other infrastructure projects. This representation serves both business and COSATU interests as it directs attention away from their contribution to the unemployment problem. The solutions that reveal this representation of unemployment serve the interests of government, as the temporary reductions in unemployment achieved by the implementation of infrastructure projects provides the government with figures to demonstrate the success of their term in office. While there is no permanent decrease as these schemes are only temporary, the government is able to show a reduction in unemployment under their watch, which allows the government to be seen as making inroads into the problem.

The interests of South African business are served as the presentation of the problem as a lack of quality education emphasises government's role in adequately preparing individuals to be able to function in a workplace environment. Business is able to secure the benefit of better educated employees who are better equipped for the workplace, without having to spend money on educating those individuals themselves. Therefore, business benefits as they do not incur any costs which could affect profits and better educated employees are less likely to cost the business in terms of lost revenue through incompetence. Government's interests are served by this construction as attention is directed to the Department of Education and the minister in charge of the department. The solutions allow government officials to shift accountability for the unemployment problem to different members of the Department of Education. This has already been seen with the government shifting accountability to the minister of basic education, Angie Motshekga, who then blamed the former Limpopo education administrator for the textbook saga in the Limpopo province of South Africa (Hlongwane, 2012). The interests of those politicians in higher government positions are served, as the responsibility for action or the responsibility of failure to provide better education can be passed on to those in the Department of Education. Thus, if government is seen as failing in its aim of creating 5 million jobs by 2020, it can focus the attention to the state of education and fault those in the Department of Education for what it could not achieve.

The representation of the unemployment problem as a lack of work experience is shared by government and COSATU. The Expanded Public Works Programme is informed by this representation. These solutions serve the interests of COSATU as it directs attention to government through state-owned enterprises and business, for providing work experience. COSATU's interests are served as attention is directed to those responsible for providing work experience and away from its role in exacerbating the problem of unemployment through the high wages they sought for members. COSATU secures the benefit of high wages for their members, which through its collective bargaining, has helped to increase the costs of business (Kenny & Webster, 1998:220). This solution also serves the interests of government by emphasising that it is not only government which needs to play a role in reducing unemployment. The sharing of this representation of the

unemployment problem with COSATU has the effect of appearing to take COSATU's concerns to heart and makes it more likely for them to remain part of the tripartite alliance. Thus, this construction works in the interests of government.

The government's representations of unemployment contain acceptance of some of the responsibility for action. These representations place an emphasis on government's role to create employment but the constructions also highlight the responsibilities that individuals have in ensuring their employability. Government's emphasis on the individual for improving their employability is in line with government's interests as it provides a safety net if it is seen as not providing enough employment. This emphasis on the individual can be seen in the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa in which the responsibility is given to the individual to ensure they study hard to increase their employability (Department of Education). There is the safe guard of making the case that the unemployed individuals contributed to their employment status, through lack of education and other deficiencies. The representation of unemployment gleaned from the stakeholder and Public Private Partnership (PPP) solution directs attention to the role that business and labour, represented by COSATU, have in the creation of employment.

Neither COSATU nor the SACP mention the high costs of labour within their representations of the problem of unemployment. This is because it goes against their interests as both represent employed workers who benefit from high labour costs because it translates into high wages (COSATU, 2001). Thus, COSATU and the SACP direct attention to the need for government to react to the problem of unemployment while attempting to negate their role so as to best serve their interests and those of their members.

The solutions work in the interests of non-governmental actors by securing benefits for members, such as high wages, lower labour costs or by directing attention away from the role that the actor could have in lowering the unemployment rate. The government's solutions to unemployment work to government's advantage by ensuring that just enough

of each non-governmental actor's interests are served so that none are alienated. By ensuring that none of these significant non-governmental actors are alienated, government removes the need for the actors to seek other means to make their concerns known.

4.4 Conclusion

Bacchi's approach highlights the effects of problem representations in particular, the discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects. By highlighting the effects of problem representations, the approach allows one to demonstrate the insights and utility of applying Bacchi's approach to the problem of unemployment. The focus of this chapter was the effects of the problem representations of unemployment in South Africa. The effects which Bacchi highlights in her approach were outlined before an explanation for the study's focus on discursive effects was provided. The discursive effects of the constructions of unemployment as they were observed through this research were explored and the discussion was organised around the various problem representations of unemployment.

Following this, the discussion turned to the politics of unemployment, referred to as the political effects of problem representations. This study has taken the effects discussed within Bacchi's approach a step further by including the political effects of the problem representations of unemployment. The dominant representations of unemployment were discussed briefly. The interests served by the solutions contained in those dominant problem representations were examined. These comprised potential political effects of problem representations shared with government and divergent representations were explored. The most notable divergence of representations was the representation of government and business of youth unemployment as problem due to the high costs of labour, and the representation presented by the SACP and COSATU of youth unemployment as too large a youth labour force. The implication of this divergence is strained relations between the tripartite alliance members. There is also the possible economic consequence as strike action would negatively affect the South African

economy. The next chapter shows how this study achieved its aim of providing a different way of analysing unemployment. The following chapter will also provide recommendations for further research before concluding.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Unemployment is a topic of central concern in South Africa. Much research has been devoted to the topic of unemployment across many fields of study, for instance economics, political science, sociology and psychology. The causes, trends, character of and determinants of unemployment in South Africa take up a large amount of the literature on the subject. Positivist literature on the topic is abundant, but little research has been undertaken outside of that paradigm. This research project was designed to approach unemployment from the post-positivist paradigm. This research applied an interpretivist approach to the issue of unemployment in South Africa in order to highlight the different understandings of the unemployment problem by significant actors in South African employment policy. The study aimed to provide a different way of analysing unemployment. The study also highlighted the potential effects of the various ways of representing unemployment. The aim of the study was achieved and the application of Bacchi's approach demonstrated. The addition of the effects - both discursive and potential political effects - allowed the insights and utility of Bacchi's approach to be properly illustrated.

This chapter seeks to bring together the research that was conducted with the aim set out in the first chapter. The main aim of the study and how this aim was achieved is set out. Related to the aim of the study, is the effects of the problem representations of unemployment. The effects of problem representations take the study beyond just providing a different way of analysing unemployment, it adds value to the unemployment literature. The study does this through effects as it provides insights into the politics surrounding unemployment in South Africa. This was done by examining the potential effects of unemployment problem representations and this chapter briefly discusses these to demonstrate the utility of the approach. Throughout the research different areas of interest appeared and these are discussed in the chapter as areas for further research.

5.2 Achieving the aim of the study

The main aim of this study was to provide a different and useful way of analysing unemployment. The study used Bacchi's approach to provide analyse unemployment in South Africa. Bacchi's approach was chosen as it is an interpretivist approach and a review of the literature on unemployment revealed that the majority of the literature was undertaken from a positivist stance. There was an abundance of positivist work on unemployment and little available interpretivist or any other post-positivist research on unemployment. This indicated that the literature could benefit from a post-positivist approach to the topic. The justification for providing a different way of analysing unemployment is that a post-positivist approach has valuable insights and that the use of an alternate way of analysing unemployment opens up other avenues for exploration through the different insights into the problem that it provides.

The interpretivist approach allows the analyst to identify common understandings shared by the significant actors in unemployment that are considered. The contradicting or competing representations of the problem, as occurring within one group of actors or between groups of actors can also be identified and explored. For example, government's representation of unemployment as due to a lack of employment opportunities, contradicts the assumption underlying the representation of the problem as a lack of training and skills, which suggests that those with the appropriate skills will find work. This identification of shared problem representations and divergent problem representations allowed the research to go a step further than just providing the different way of analysing unemployment, as it aimed. It allowed the researcher to uncover the dominant problem representations of unemployment in South Africa.

The identification of shared representations of unemployment, specifically between government and non-government actors, allowed for identification of dominant problem representations and the exploration of the discursive effects of shared representations. Chapter three highlighted the problem representations that non-governmental actors shared with government which were uncovered during the analysis of data. This

examination of shared problem representations allowed the analyst to take the research even further by including the potential political effects of unemployment representations. The main discussion on shared representations demonstrated that having the same problem representations as non-governmental actors, may make it possible for the government to increase their chances of gaining support from the actors for employment initiatives that represent the problem in the same way as in the shared representations. Another potential implication of these shared representations is that government may use them as way to strengthen their relationships with the other actors.

The investigation of shared problem representations facilitated the exploration of the interests served by the dominant problem representations of unemployment. Analysis of the dominant as well as shared problem representations demonstrated that each problem representation of each actor served their own interests. The analysis also showed that the dominant problem representations which underlie the policy solutions adopted by government, serve government's interests as well as those of other non-governmental actors with whom the representation is shared.

It was found that the problem representation of unemployment as a lack of training and skills development worked in the interests of all actors as removes the burden of the costs of training from the non-governmental actors and provides a scapegoat should the government be seen as not doing enough about unemployment. This representation of the problem of unemployment was found to work in the interests of business, COSATU and the SACP as it directed attention solely to the government for action. This problem representation serves their interests as it allows the roles of these non-governmental actors in reducing unemployment to go unquestioned. The government's interests are also served by the EPWP as it creates temporary reductions in unemployment while not addressing more structural causes of unemployment and thus, does not provide a lasting solution to the problem. The study shows that the other shared representations have also served the interests of those who shared the representations.

Although it was not a specifically stated aim of the study, the study was able to provide better insight into the politics surrounding unemployment. This was facilitated through the inclusion of the shared and divergent problem representations of unemployment. The political strains on the tripartite alliance relationship could be commented on through the discussion on the political effects of representations of unemployment. This was best illustrated in the section on the implications of divergent problem representations. The most noticeable divergence of representations was in the area of youth unemployment, with COSATU and the SACP presenting the problem as too large a youth labour force while business and the government present the problem as the high cost of labour.

The analysis showed that this divergence of representations may put pressure on the government to subscribe to the same view as their alliance partners, as implied by the current delay in implementing the youth wage subsidy. The current deadlock concerning the implementation of the policy was found to be related to the limited but noticeable influence on policy that the government's alliance partners are able to effect. This becomes obvious when considering that government forged ahead with certain policies regardless of the other members' opposition, but has taken a step backwards by stalling the implementation of the youth wage subsidy to avoid alienating the SACP and COSATU. This divergence may result in significant economic costs for business and government if the representation of high costs of labour as the problem is pursued.

5.3 Recommended further research

This study has provided a stepping stone for further research to the issue of unemployment from a post-positivist perspective. The study provided insights into the politics of unemployment as well as into problem definition and the impact it has on dealing with the problem. Other exciting avenues for research have been opened during this study and through some of the insights from this study.

The first recommended area of research would be into the influence of different non-governmental actors on the government's problem representations of unemployment. The

researcher suggests that research be conducted and an appropriate measure developed to determine who influences whom in a relationship between two actors. The development and the appropriate application of such a measure would allow one to examine which actors influenced the other in their shared problem representations. It would be of great interest to see whether the government was or is currently being influenced by any of the significant non-government actors. This research could then be expanded to other actors and determine the influence of non-governmental actors on the government's representations of unemployment. The development of such a tool could be beneficial in other fields of research.

If government would be found to be influenced by one of these actors, one would also wish to understand how the actor was able to influence government. Extending research to understand how government can be influenced by outside actors would prove useful for providing better insight into the actual policy process. If a tool were developed to determine influence and the direction of influence, and if one were able to determine how government is influenced, the policy process could be better understood. The development of a tool to measure influence and research to determine how one can be influence could potentially add to other areas in political science and perhaps other social sciences. For instance, a tool like this could be useful in international relations to understand who is influence by whom when examining two countries connected through trade.

Another suggestion for further research using this approach which is closely related to the first would be to increase the number of actors considered. The inclusion of think tanks, academics, important community organisations and international organisations such as the International Labour Office and World Bank would provide a more complete picture of the problem representations of unemployment in South Africa. The inclusion of these actors would prove most intriguing if shared interpretations of the problem between these actors and the South African government could be identified and examined. It would prove interesting to see if academics, think tanks and international organisations have an influence on how the problem of unemployment is framed. Research into this area could

also be fruitful, with the possible arguments being that the IMF, ILO and World Bank's neo-liberal orientation can be seen in the problem representations of unemployment, should there be evidence of this. Thus, Bacchi's approach would also be useful in exploring the ideological underpinnings which inform problem representations.

5.5 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how a post-positivist approach to analysing unemployment opens other avenues for investigating unemployment as a policy problem in South Africa. The research conducted adds value to the unemployment literature and real world value as it allows problem representations (also known as problem definitions) to be interrogated. The research adds real world value as it demonstrates how the problem of unemployment is understood by significant actors in South Africa and shows the implications of the various ways in which the problem is construed. Understanding how problems are defined and whose interests are served by the problem definitions, has real world value as it allows people to advocate for solutions which mitigate negative effects and best serve the interests of those they are meant to serve, in this case the unemployed.

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