INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUPPORT ON THE THROUGHPUT RATE AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

by

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DECLARATION

"I, Julius Motala Makibinyane, declare that the work I am submitting is my own autonomous work and has not been previously submitted by any university/institution. It does not contain a section replicated in entirety or in part from any other source unless expressly specified in quotation marks and with detailed, full and correct reference."

…………………………

 (Signature)

……………………….

Date

DEDICATION

I humbly and respectfully dedicate this dissertation to my two sons, Neo and Mosa and my late mother, Mamollo Sana Makibinyane, who worked very hard to make me the man I am. May her soul rest in peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in South Africa face several challenges including low throughput rate. Low throughput rates have a strong bearing on the success of the TVET sector and its ability to respond to the needs of the country, such as skills shortages. The aim of the study was to investigate the implications of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rate at the selected TVET college. Qualitative research methodology has been used to help the researcher to explore and gather rich information on the college throughput rate and provision of academic support. The study utilised a case study design. Participants were student support services and academic staff at the selected TVET college. The collection of participants in this research was using a purposive sampling technique. The researcher recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data is based on thematic data. The themes used were derived from the research objectives and further broken down into categories and sub-categories.

The study found that there are various factors that influence the students' academic performance and the throughput rate such as students' family background, academic difficulties, poor class attendance, poor infrastructure, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of career guidance, lack of academic support and shortage of Student Support Services (SSS) staff. The study also found that students are not making use of the student support services because of lack of information about the SSS unit at the college. Without proper students' academic support programmes, students are likely not to succeed academically. Various challenges that hinder the effective utilisation of the academic support services include lack of qualified personnel, being understaffed, low prioritisation of academic support programmes by college management and limited access time. The college needs to develop ties with key stakeholders such as other TVET colleges and the Department of Basic Education to provide a forum for sharing crucial academic support information. The researcher suggests that more trained and qualified personnel should be hired to support students' academic support. Administration of admission tests for students should be enhanced, and the test results should be available round the clock. College management should demonstrate dedication to the well-being

of students by prioritising and acknowledging academic support as vital to the academic performance of students.

KHOTSO (SESOTHO)

Likoleche tsa thuto ea mahlale le koetliso (TVET) Afrika Boroa li tobana le liphephetso tse 'maloa ho kenyeletsa le tekanyetso e tlase. Litefiso tse tlase tse kenang li na le katleho e kholo katlehong ea lekala la TVET le bokhoni ba eona ba ho arabela litlhoko tsa naha tse kang khaello ea litsebo. Morero oa thuto e ne e le ho etsa lipatlisiso mabapi le litlamorao tsa tšehetso ea thuto ea baithuti ba NCV ka sekhahla sa thuto e fumanehang kolecheng ea TVET. Tlhahlobo e matla ea lingoliloeng e ile ea etsoa ho lekola phepelo ea lits'ebeletso tsa tšehetso ea thuto le sekhahla sa koleche e tsoang. Mokhoa oa ho etsa lipatlisiso tse nepahetseng o ile oa sebelisoa ho lumella mofuputsi ho fumana leseli le fumanehang ka sekhahla sa koleche le tlhahiso ea tšehetso ea thuto. Boithuto bo sebelisitse moralo oa thuto ea linyeoe. Barupeluoa e ne e le litšebeletso tsa tšehetso ea baithuti le basebetsi ba TVET koleche e khethueng. Mokhoa o nang le sepheo oa ho etsa sampole o sebelisitsoe ho khetha barupeluoa thutong ena. Lipuisano tse hlophisitsoeng hantle li ile tsa tlalehoa tsa ba tsa hatisoa. Ho ile ha sebelisoa tlhahlobo ea tlhaiso-leseling ho hlahlobisisa lintlha. Litema tse sebelisitsoeng li nkiloe ho sepheo sa lipatlisiso 'me li arotsoe hape ka mekhahlelo le likarolo tse ka tlase.

Boithuto bo fumanoeng ho na le lintlha tse fapaneng tse amang ts'ebetso ea barutoana le maemo a thuto a fetoloang joaloka maemo a lelapa a baithuti, mathata a thuto, ho se be teng hantle ha sehlopha, tikoloho e mpe, ho haella ha menyetla ea nts'etsopele ea mosebetsi, ho hloka tataiso ea mosebetsi le khaello ea basebetsi ba SSS. Boithuto bo boetse bo fumane hore baithuti ha ba sebelise litšebeletso tsa tšehetso ea baithuti ka lebaka la tlhaiso-leseling e mabapi le yuniti ea SSS eo koleche e e hlokang. Ntle le mananeo a ts'ehetso ea thuto ea baithuti, baithuti ba ka nna ba se atlehe sekolong. Liphephetso tse fapaneng li sitisa ts'ebeliso e ntle ea lits'ebeletso tsa tšehetso ea borutehi ho kenyelletsa, ho haella ha basebetsi ba tšoanelehang, ho se sebetse, ho etelletsa pele merero ea tšehetso ea borutehi ke batsamaisi ba koleche le nako e lekanyelitsoeng ea ho fihlella. Ho na le tlhoko ea koleche ea ho theha likhokahano le bankakarolo ba bohlokoa joalo ka likoleche tsa TVET tse ling, Lefapha la Thuto ea Motheo ho ba le sethala sa ho arolelana leseli la bohlokoa ka tšehetso ea thuto. Mofuputsi ke mohopolo oa hore basebetsi ba tšoanelehang le ba ngolisitsoeng haholo ba lokela ho hiroa ho

matlafatsa phepelo ea tšehetso ea thuto ho baithuti. Tsamaiso ea liteko tsa kamohelo ea baithuti e lokela ho ntlafatsoa, 'me liphetho tsa liteko li lokela ho fumaneha ho potoloha le nako. Tsamaiso ea koleche e lokela ho bonts'a boitlamo boiketlong ba baithuti ka ho etelletsa pele le ho amohela tšehetso ea thuto ea baithuti e le karolo ea bohlokoa katlehong ea thuto ea baithuti.

ABSTRAIT (FRENCH)

Les collèges d'enseignement et de formation techniques et professionnels (EFTP) en Afrique du Sud sont confrontés à plusieurs défis, dont un faible débit. Les faibles taux de production ont une forte incidence sur le succès du secteur de l'EFTP et sa capacité à répondre aux besoins du pays tels que les pénuries de compétences. Le but de l'étude était d'étudier les implications du soutien académique des étudiants NCV sur le taux de débit au la selection TVET collège. Un examen approfondi de la documentation a été effectué pour explorer la prestation de services de soutien scolaire et le taux de rendement des collèges. Une méthodologie de recherche qualitative a été utilisée pour permettre au chercheur d'explorer et d'obtenir de riches informations sur le taux de rendement des collèges et la fourniture d'un soutien académique. L'étude a utilisé un plan d'étude de cas. Les participants étaient des services de soutien aux étudiants et du personnel universitaire du collège la selection TVET. Une technique d'échantillonnage raisonné a été utilisée pour sélectionner les participants à cette étude. Des entretiens semi-structurés ont été enregistrés et transcrits. Une analyse thématique des données a été utilisée pour analyser les données. Les thèmes utilisés étaient dérivés des objectifs de la recherche et ceux-ci étaient ensuite divisés en catégories et sous-catégories.

L'étude a révélé qu'il existe divers facteurs qui influent sur le rendement scolaire des élèves et le taux de rendement, tels que les antécédents familiaux des élèves, les difficultés scolaires, la faible fréquentation des classes, les mauvaises infrastructures, le manque de possibilités de développement professionnel, le manque d'orientation professionnelle, le manque de soutien scolaire. et la pénurie de personnel SSS. L'étude a également révélé que les étudiants n'utilisent pas les services de soutien aux étudiants en raison du manque d'informations sur l'unité SSS que le collège. Sans programmes de soutien scolaire appropriés, les étudiants ne réussiront probablement pas sur le plan scolaire. Divers défis entravent l'utilisation efficace des services de soutien scolaire, notamment le manque de personnel qualifié, le manque de personnel, la faible hiérarchisation des programmes de soutien scolaire par la direction du collège et le temps d'accès limité. Il est nécessaire que le collège établisse des liens avec les principales parties prenantes telles que les autres collèges de l'EFTP, le Département de l'éducation

de base afin d'avoir une plateforme pour partager des informations vitales sur le soutien académique. Le chercheur est d'avis qu'un personnel plus qualifié et plus inscrit devrait être embauché pour renforcer la prestation d'un soutien scolaire aux étudiants. L'administration des tests d'admission des étudiants devrait être améliorée et les résultats des tests devraient être accessibles 24 heures sur 24. La direction du collège devrait montrer son engagement envers le bien-être des étudiants en priorisant et en reconnaissant le soutien scolaire des étudiants comme étant essentiel à la réussite scolaire des étudiants.

KEY WORDS

Academic support, National Certificate Vocational, Student Support Services, Throughput rate, Technical Vocational Education and Training.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DHET   Department of Higher Education and Training

FET   Further Education and Training

HET   Higher Education and Training

HOD   Head of Department

NATED   National Accredited Technical Education Diploma

NCV   National Certificate Vocational

NQF   National Qualifications Framework

NSC   National Senior Certificate

NSFAS   National Student Financial Aid Scheme

PDE   Provincial Department of Education

PSET   Post-School Education and Training

SSS   Student Support Services

TVET   Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VET   Vocational Education and Training

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1. CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges assume a noteworthy job in providing skills, both technical and vocational, to citizens in each and every country so that they can be able to cope with the ever-changing technology, economy and also social environment. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2006) indicates that about 80% of occupations in the world require the application of technical and vocational skills. Recent developments in the field of work have heightened the need for TVET colleges to be strengthened so that they can provide a high level of education and create learning and training opportunities to attract many school-leavers. The most significant current discussion in the TVET sector is the role of TVET colleges and their responsiveness to the labour market or industry.

These institutions of learning should play their role in making an important commitment to the inclusive developments of the South African citizen and, most importantly, the youth. To accomplish this at the end of each academic cycle, the TVET Colleges should have a sound throughput. The quality of education offered at a particular educational institution and the success of its students are the most important indicators that determine the success of the institution as a whole. Throughput rates and student support services at TVET colleges have received considerable critical attention from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as some of their key objectives. Success rates of college students in South Africa are still very low, even though there have been improvements in the sector over the past few years (DHET, 2015). According to the Statistics on TVET, CET and Private Colleges examinations in South Africa (2015) the average completion rate of NCV students was 42.8% in 2011, 39,3% in 2012, 37.1% in 2013, 34,5% in 2014 and 40,0% in 2015. High failure rates result in reduced throughput rates and become very costly to all stakeholders and also hinder the TVET sector from achieving its mandate or purpose. Nzembe (2018) found that TVET college students are not well prepared for the TVET curriculum and this has a great impact on their academic performance. Nzembe (2018) further identified the language of the course delivery and proper academic support programmes at the

college as other factors that become a challenge in students' academic performance and influences the throughput rates and the success in the TVET college.

The issue of students' academic support has grown in importance in the light of recent statistics on the throughput, graduation and success rates of the TVET college students. Strydom Basson and Mentz (2012) conclude that the path to higher success rates in higher education and thus to improving throughput is to improve teaching and learning. Similarly, Allen (2012) indicate that student support is imperative in ensuring that students succeed academically and are retained at the college. Many students were able to complete their studies because of social and academic support that they received from their peers and educators during their studies (Ngcobo, 2009). Moodley and Singh (2015) argue that DHET should align their student support programmes with courses or subjects that produce high failure rate for students to be able to cope. Moodley and Singh (2015) further state that higher education organizations are still adopting student retention measures as a corrective measure, rather than as a proactive measure, so low throughput rate continues. Mc-Donnel and Soricone (2014) emphasize the need for a comprehensive student support services that will be able to address various challenges that students face at the college.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

On 28 August 2014, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, indicated that over 3.4 million young people in South Africa are not in education or employment. He further stated that the country is confronted with a challenge of a high shortage of skills, poor quality of education, low throughput and high dropout rates in Post-School Education and Training. TVET colleges in South Africa attracts many school leavers and the enrollments are continuing to increase (Performance Expenditure review, 2015). However, there is still a concern regarding low number of students who are performing well academically due to various challenges that they encounter in the learning environment (Brock, 2010). Department of Higher Education and Training has been struggling to deal with this challenge of low completion rate as it has been persisting since the introduction of NCV curriculum in 2007 (Papier, 2009). The researcher reviewed factors that influence TVET students' academic performance and the provisioning of

students' academic support at the TVET colleges. Papier (2009) state that inappropriate student recruitment and Course or Programme mismatch are the ideal factors that lead to poor academic results. Similar argument is expressed by Cook and Rushton (2009) who state that lack of pre-entry consultation can lead to students not being prepared to undertake the programme that they enroll for. Tamuliene (2014) asserts that if institutions of higher learning are to deal with the challenges of low throughout rates, they need to realise the need to establish a comprehensive student support service. A comprehensive student support services should be able to cover a wider scope of students' needs. DHET released Student Support Services Manual in 2009 as the core document that TVET colleges can use to plan and implement their students support services (Jeffery, 2015). Student support services manual is a supportive and instructional guide for TVET colleges in South Africa that assist them to plan, evaluate and enhance their student support services from the time before the student register, throughout their studies until they exit the college (DoE, 2009). SSS manual give more emphasis on students' academic support that must be incorporated with the normal teaching and learning programmes. Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan and Rak (1997) revealed that students' academic support has a positive impact in improving the students' chances of succeeding academically.

It is therefore essential for TVET colleges to develop and revise their current policies and strategies to address these issues and guarantee improved throughput rates. This can be conceivable when recognising the reasons for students' low throughput rate and provisioning of students' academic support.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main objective of the TVET sector is to provide opportunities to citizens for them to acquire necessary skills that are required by the workforce. The DHET needs the support of the private sector to achieve its objectives. However, employers and stakeholders are dissatisfied with the performance of the TVET colleges (DHET, 2013). The TVET sector is failing to respond to the demands of the market as it slowly produces graduates. Low throughput rates have been a major challenge for TVET colleges in South Africa for over a decade (DHET, 2019). The National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) of South Africa shows high percentages of students who drop out on their first year of study at the

colleges, and very poor pass and graduation rates. It further points out that the money and resources that are being put on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) lead to a massive wastage when students do not pass or graduate and even drop out of these institutions. It also becomes very costly to produce a graduate in South Africa as they are taking more years to complete qualifications. The NDP (2012), Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013) highlight low throughput rates as a major challenge in the TVET sector. A very low percentage of students who enroll for a particular programme complete at the required time or duration. TVET colleges should be able to respond to the country's major problem of high youth unemployment rate which currently stands at more than 50%. And also, the scarcity of artisans in the country that has led to other major companies bringing in welders and carpenters from as far as China.

According to Young and Hopp (2014) the issues around low throughput rates are evident throughout the curriculum. Nzembe (2018) and Moodley and Singh (2015) indicated various factors that influence low completion rate at TVET colleges. Student support services at the college is significant at this point to mitigate and assist students to cope academically. Student support framework (2008) states that students must be supported in three ways: there must be a pre-entry support, on-course support and exit support. However, Ngcobo (2018) expressed a concern that student support services only priorities pre-entry support and neglect the other two categories. One of the main roles of student support services is to provide academic support to students. Ngcobo (2018) further argues that effective, well-structured and continuously monitored academic support may assist in improving low throughput rates. There is an increase in the provisioning of student support services in recent years (Trends V report, 2007). However, Ciabanu (2013) argues that student support services offered by many educational institutions are not well developed to address the diverse needs of the students. He further indicates the role of student support services is to contribute positively to the quality of students' leaning experiences and their academic success. Hill, Lomas, MacGregor (2003) states that the quality of teaching and learning service systems and support for students are the most important factors in education quality assurance.

Without the provision of effective student support services at the college students would likely drop out (Tinto, 1993).

The main problem explored in this study is the recurring low throughout rates in the TVET sector owing to lack of balanced student support particularly academic support which is a mandated to student support unit to provide to every student at the college. TVET colleges are unable to provide comprehensive and appropriate academic support for students who are really in need of it thus impact on the student's success or completion rate. Not all TVET colleges are providing effective and adequate support to its students and this situation needs to be taken of. Even those TVET colleges that are providing student support programmes do not often priorities or give them enough attention that they deserve.

This problem needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency so that students can be interested to come to the TVET colleges willingly, and regard them as the institutions of choice. The government is funding these TVET colleges and their students through the non-refundable National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) grants. Therefore, if students are not supported and throughput rates are not improved then the government is getting poor returns on its investments. Many researchers have concentrated on academic support and throughput rates in one field of higher education, which is the university sector, with little attention being given to TVET Colleges. In addition, most of the studies examined have not been able to explore the essence of student academic support and its connection to the throughput rates TVET Colleges. This has also been compounded by the insufficient number of studies undertaken to investigate the causes of low throughput rates at TVET Colleges in South Africa. Consequently, such limitations have yielded unsatisfactory results and have left a void in the literature requiring further study.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1.4.1. Main Research Question
❖ What is the influence of National Certificate Vocational students' academic support on the throughput rate at a TVET college in the free state province?

1.4.2. Sub-questions

- ❖ What is the influence of students' academic support on throughput rate?
- ❖ Which strategies do TVET colleges use to support students academically?
- ❖ What are best practices of improving throughput rate?
- ❖ What guidelines could be developed to improve throughput rate?

1.5. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1. Research aim

- ❖ The study intended to investigate the influence of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rates at the selected TVET college.

1.5.2. Research objectives

- ❖ To understand the influence of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on throughput rate.
- ❖ To identify strategies that TVET colleges use to support students academically.
- ❖ To determine best practices of improving throughput rate.
- ❖ To determine guidelines that could be developed to improve throughput rate.

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1. Research approach

For the purpose of this study, the intention of the researcher was to gather evidence based on the perceptions, views and opinions of various stakeholders of the selected TVET college towards the influence of the NCV students' academic support on the throughput rates. The intention of the researcher was to use a research approach that is more appropriate to provide valid conclusions after the analysis of the answers received from the participants. The current study adopted a qualitative research approach because data in the form of perceptions, views and opinions was collected. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) indicated that when the researcher intends to understand the life experiences, attitudes and behaviours of the participants and draw a holistic picture of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, a qualitative research approach is an appropriate option to take.

1.6.2. Research design

The researcher chose the case study as a research desing for the reason that a holistic understanding of academic support and throughput rates at the TVET college needed to be developed. A case study is commonly used to break down multifaceted field or data into small manageable or researchable pieces (University of Southern California Libraries, 2016). Gerring (2004) suggested that the case study design is more useful and appropriate when the phenomenon is not necessarily known. The study intended to provide detailed and specific answers to the research questions and use the case study to focus on a particular circumstance rather than being too general.

1.6.3. Sampling

The study drew a sample from the college Deputy Director: Academic, Deputy Director: Student Support Services or Deputy Director: Registry, Head of Department: Student Support Services, Head of Department: NCV Business Studies, Head of Department: NCV Engineering, one lecturer in Business Studies, one lecturer from the Engineering campus and one Student Support Services staff member. The researcher used purposive sampling. In terms of purposive sampling, Schwandt (2007) argues that units are chosen only when they have a direct contribution to the aims and objectives and the research questions of the study. All participants should have the minimum of at least two years' experience in the post that they currently occupy in order to get rich information from them as they have direct influence on the aim of this study. Participants were selected from one of the TVET colleges in the Free State. This particular college was selected because is in the close proximity of the researcher thus makes it easier to access the participants.

1.6.4. Data collection

Data was collected by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the aim of sourcing specific and constructive suggestions from them. Studies conducted by Genise (2002) and Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005) explain interviews as an appropriate method of data collection if the researcher needs to obtain rich and detailed information from few participants. For this study to achieve its aims and objectives, the researcher needed to learn about the behaviours, beliefs, views, perceptions and opinions of the

participants that influence students' academic performance. Learning about all these human factors requires the study to ask both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Thomas (2012) mentioned that semi-structured interview inherited the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews that enables the researcher to get a clear picture about the TVET sector from the responses of the participants. Delamont (2012) states that the research interviews create an opportunity for the researcher to get in-depth information and a high level of focus from human beings, unlike when using surveys and observations. The study also generated various data forms from an evaluation of documents such as college operational plans, policies, theses, government publications, books, journals and reports associated with the TVET curricula, academic support and throughput rates. Document analysis is one of the qualitative data collection method where the researcher gathers various documents, effectively analyse them and give them a voice around the study (Bowen 2009).

1.6.5. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data by transcribing interviews. This approach was used so that the researcher can look for a wider pattern from the responses or data collected from the participants and conduct a more detailed analysis. The researcher chose this approach with the aim of being able to understand and describe the findings. answers. Boyatzis (1998) indicates that this approach has an advantage of enabling the researcher to read a broad data and effectively analyse it to identify patterns and develop themes from them.

1.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS

For this study to maintain a high level of trustworthiness and ensure valid interpretation of data, Krefting (1991) suggests that the following four criteria should be taken into consideration: truth value, applicability, reliability and impartiality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that the use of credibility and trustworthiness are excellent criteria for qualitative research. King and Horrocks (2010) describe credibility as an extent to which participants agrees with the interpretations of the researcher. To ensure credibility in this study, participants were interviewed individually and at different times. A concerted effort

was made to ensure that there were no external influences or disturbances. The researcher and the participants together went through the responses in order to confirm the interpretation of the researcher.

1.8.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the theory of social capital as it is frequently mentioned in the field of education as it contributes more to the students' academic performance in different educational institutions. It is apparent that many forms of social capital like social networks, the family, schools, community, parental obligations and expectations are significant for the academic success of the student. Aldridge, Halpern and Fitzpatrick, (2002) indicate that the involvement of people in education has an impact on the success of the students. Education does not operate in isolation, it is connected and integrated with factors that surrounds it. Some of the students in colleges, and the colleges themselves as institutions of learning, do perform better than others, be it in academic or non-academic activities. The exact reason for these disparities in performance is often difficult to identify, hence one may suggest that it is because of the variations in the levels of social capital. Social capital as a theoretical construct assists to explain the differences in the students' academic performance.

1.9.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

According to McMillian and Schumacher (2001:196), ethics always has to do with beliefs or one's ability to distinguish between what is good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper. The responsibility of ensuring adherence of the ethical standards lies with the researcher. Participants were provided with written assurances that their names would not be disclosed, and that care would be taken to guarantee that all their information remained confidential. Permission was obtained from (a) DHET, (b) UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee and (c) the Principal of the selected TVET college to conduct interviews and gather all the necessary college data from college documents and staff. All participation was voluntary. Respondents were given a short description of the study and requested to sign a consent form. Henning (2004) emphasize the importance of providing participants with all the information regarding the processes of

the interview and the confidentiality thereof. All interviewees were informed about the research process and what was required of them, and about their rights.

1.10. KEY CONCEPTS

1.10.1. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Finch and Crunkilton (1999) refer to "Technical and Vocational Education and Training" as education and training that focus on equipping students with technical and vocational skills that prepare them for the world of work. TVET can take place in different forms or places like formal school, technical colleges or by means of training at a workplace.

1.10.2. National Certificate Vocational (NCV)

NCV levels 2, 3 and 4 qualifications offered at TVET colleges are equivalent to grades 10, 11 and 12 in the formal schooling sector. Grade 9 is the minimum entry requirement for all new students in the NCV programme (DoE, 2007). Each NCV level consists of seven subjects that include three fundamental subjects and four vocational subjects which all take a full year to complete. It takes three years to complete the whole qualification or programme.

1.10.3. Throughput rates

The DHET (2013b) explains a throughput rate as the total number of students who complete the programme within a specified duration divided by the total number of students who enrolled for the same programme. In addition to this benefit, the throughput rate can also measure the students' success at the college or educational institution.

1.10.4. Academic support

Academic support is support in terms of academic activities that aim at assisting an educational institution with its primary mission of making sure that students succeed in their studies. (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Glossary, 2015) describe academic support as the provision of classroom support through the display of academic materials to enhance academic functions of the educational institution.

1.10.5.   Academic achievement

Academic achievement is a reflection of performance results which determines the extent at which the student has achieved specific learning objectives (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan and Ahmed, 2013).

1.11. CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to formulate an understanding of the academic support programmes for TVET college students so as to analyse and determine their impact on the college throughput rates. The research problem was then developed from the literature on South African TVET colleges facing the challenge of low throughput rates and lack of academic support to students who are not performing well academically. After careful consideration of factors that influence students' performance, the researcher developed the purpose of the study, which is to understand the implication of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rates at the selected TVET college and also to develop students' academic support strategies to maximise throughput rates. The research study will then provide guidance to the college management on how to develop and implement academic support programmes that are relevant to the identified needs of the students. The chapter further discussed the qualitative research design that was used to gather verbal data from the participants, using semi-structured interviews. The focus was more on understanding the views, opinions, perceptions and behaviours of the respondents, more especially, the students that influence their academic performance. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical consideration have been discussed to make sure that the research is credible, valid and reliable.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to understand the influence of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate within the TVET college context. The focus of this literature review was to look at what other researchers have found during their studies, that is applicable to the researcher's topic, with the main aim of realising the knowledge gaps as well as being able to locate where this study fits in. The existing knowledge was used to further the understanding of this current study. Polit and Beck (2008) argue that literature review is for experiential description of the phenomenon that the study is focusing on and to enrich the knowledge and broaden the understanding of the researcher on the phenomenon from different perspectives. Creswell (2008), on the other hand, views literature review as the summary on various work that has been done by researchers and non-researchers in describing the historical and present state of the knowledge on the topic. Similarly, De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2013) argue that literature review creates a foundation using information gathered by other researchers.

This chapter determines what is already known about the phenomenon in the TVET sector so that the researcher can obtain a comprehensive representation on the topic. It begins with the status, overview and synopsis of the TVET sector in order to give a clear picture of what the sector aims to achieve. It is also important to discuss legislation that impacts directly on the TVET sector in South Africa. This is then followed by zooming in on the current status of the throughput rates at the TVET colleges in SA and abroad. The possible causes of low throughput rates or factors that influence the throughput rates of the students, strategies used by other educational institutions to support students academically and also look at best practices and guidelines to improve students' throughput rates. Social capital theory will be discussed as it is the theoretical framework chosen for this study. The researcher found it very significant to also look at the international perspectives regarding the topic, with specific reference to Brazil, Russia, India and China.

2.2.   STATUS, OVERVIEW AND SYNOPSIS OF TVET SECTOR

In 1989, UNESCO argued that the improvement of TVET ought to add to the defending of harmony and amicable comprehension among countries (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014). Different countries have been using different terms to describe the elements of the TVET field. These include vocational education, technical education, and career and technical education, to mention a few. The usage of many terms was influenced by the geographical areas. According to Maclean and Lai (2011), United States of America preferred to use "Career and Technical Education" and in South Africa the term used was "Further Education and Training" and Europeans were using the term "Vocational Education and Training". Therefore, at the second UNESCO International Conference on Technical Vocational Education and Training held in the Republic of Korea, Seoul in 1999, it was concluded that a specific term would unite the sector and that the term TVET would then be defined (Maclean and Lai, 2011).

Finch and Crunkilton (1999) define TVET as an education and training system that seeks to provide students with specialised and professional abilities that set them up for the space of work. Similarly, Olaitan (1998) defines TVET as the form of training that prepares a person for the work environment by concentrating on the advancement of employability aptitudes. This form of education can occur in various structures or places like conventional school, specialised universities or at a work environment. This interpretation is reinforced by Abubakar (2010) who points out that learning experiences may occur in various ways, be it at the workplace or at the educational institution.

2.3.   LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK RELATED TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

From 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) published a series of policy documents aimed at resolving the political, economic and social problems facing society in South Africa then. For further developments on education-related policies in future, a policy framework on education and training was released (ANC, 1994). After the ANC-led government laid a foundation for the development of TVET policies, a great number of policies and national initiatives, which had a major effect on the conversion of the TVET

colleges, were then published. These documents include National Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006), Further Education and Training Act, 2013 (Act No. 1 of 2013). These policy documents will be discussed below.

2.3.1. Continuing Education and Training Act (CET), 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006)

This act is also known as the Further Education and Training Act No.16 of 2006. It was promulgated on 11 December 2006 and came into effect on 01 January 2007. The CET Act exists to regulate and promote quality in all public FET colleges (CET, 2006). The purpose of this act or legislation is to create opportunities for all students at South African educational institutions in acquiring the required and necessary expertise, applied technical and educational skills. It is intended to provide students with the requisite attributes for jobs and entry into a higher education institution. The CET Act was then amended and brought about the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act 1 of 2013.

2.3.2. Further Education and Training Act, 2013 (Act No. 1 of 2013)

The primary objective of this act is to ensure that programmes and colleges are restructured and transformed in order to better meet the human, economic and development needs of South Africa. It is also aimed at ensuring that there are enough opportunities created for learning, development of knowledge and enhancement of skills that are appropriate and in line with international requirements for academic and technical excellence. This act brought about several changes that include changing the name from "Further Education and Training (FET)" colleges that was established by DHET to "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)" which is the term that is internationally recognised. TVET colleges were then moved from the provincial departments to the DHET in April 2015. The other significant and constructive progression brought by this act is an effort to establish the South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) whose sole purpose is dealing with curriculum-related challenges that include the development of the college staff and the promotion of research on TVET-related issues. SAIVCET also seeks to promote and improve communication between TVET colleges and employers and industry.

2.3.3. White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)

In November 2013, the DHET promulgated the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013c). It released the white paper with the aim of ensuring that the PSET system reaches its maximum capacity to address the challenges faced by the country, and subsequently respond to its needs. The policy intends to expand access to education and training by 2030.

This paper outlines different strategies or ways that can be implemented by both the public and private sector employers in creating a skilled labour force (DHET, 2013c). The white paper incorporates the significance of strengthening the economy of the country, to reduce unemployment and to capacitate people or citizens so that they can achieve sustainable livelihoods. Its primary aim is to strengthen the quality of the TVET sector (DHET, 2013c: 14-19). This includes, to mention a few, offering market or industry-related programmes, re-aligning the knowledge, qualifications and capacity of the TVET lecturers and members of the college management. This paper also reveals a strong effort to enhance funding norms and standards.

2.4.   CONCEPTUALISING STUDENT SUPPORT AND THROUGHPUT RATE
2.4.1. The throughput rates

TVET colleges play a significant role in providing skills, both technical and vocational, to citizens in each country so that they can cope with the ever-changing technology, economy and social environment. UNESCO (2006) indicates that about 80% of occupations in the world require the application of technical and vocational skills. The need for technical and vocational skills cannot be over-emphasised in today's world. Many countries around the world, including African countries, have invested a great deal in the TVET sector as they believe that it will unlock the human resource potential so that there can be a positive contribution in the economy. However, the sector has been under constant criticism by the industry and society based on various reasons. In South Africa, learners who fail high school or cannot get good marks for university entry often opt for TVET colleges. This then develops a negative perception that TVET colleges are for failures or students who cannot perform. This perception is also encouraged by low

student enrolment standards at TVET colleges. The researcher's TVET college experience makes him realise that most students are affected by this negative perception, more especially those who have friends or relatives who are at universities. They often develop low self-confidence and do not necessarily work hard to achieve good results; they just want to get a pass mark so that they can leave the college.

One of the most significant current discussions in the TVET sector is the role of TVET colleges and their responsiveness to the labour market or industry. These institutions of learning should play their role in making a meaningful contribution to the inclusive development of the South African citizen and, most importantly, the youth. The quality of education offered at an educational institution and the students' academic excellence are the most crucial indicators which determine the institution's performance. Success rates of the college students in South Africa have been very low despite the certain improvements in the sector (DHET, 2013c). South Africa is facing a key challenge of improving TVET college student success and throughput rate. The DHET (2013b) describes the throughput rate as the total number of students who complete the programme within a specified duration divided by the total number of students who enrolled for the same programme. For instance, if 2000 students enrol for a three-year Diploma in Human Resources in 2018 and only 1300 students from the same group complete their qualification at the end of 2020, then the throughput rate for that group of students is 65%. In addition to this benefit, the throughput rate can also measure the students' success at the college or educational institution.

The throughput rates in colleges and universities in South Africa are generally too low when compared to those of other countries (DHET, 2019). The average completion rate of NCV students was 42.8% in 2011, 39,3% in 2012, 37.1% in 2013, 34,5% in 2014 and 40,0% in 2015 (Statistics on TVET, CET and Private Colleges examinations in South Africa 2015) The key problems facing the sector are overcoming the extraordinarily low rate at which students receive their qualifications and enhancing the standard of the training they offer and its usefulness (Performance and Expenditure Review, 2015). The DHET, Council on Higher Education (2018) raised a serious concern about the dropout and completion rates of students in higher education institution that stand at 29% and

19%, respectively. South African HEIs receive funding from government, and the government uses the throughput rates as one of the factors that determine institutional funding. This implies that if the throughput rates at a college are very low then the college receives a very low amount of money. This puts a strain on the college management to source funding to keep the institution running.

The poor performance and low throughput rate of the TVET students are a very serious concerns not only in South African colleges but in other countries as well. According to the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture (MBESC) (2005), a vast majority of employers as well as the public are not content with the poor quality of education offered at Namibian Vocational Education and Training (NVET) centres and also the poor performance of their graduates. Mlambo (2011) mentions that the academic performance at West Indies University has not been satisfactory over the years and that has led to high costs in producing graduates and it reduces the opportunity for high school leavers seeking university education to be admitted. If the throughput rate of the college is low and students take more than the minimum years to graduate, then the intake of the new students from high school can somehow be affected or reduced due to the shortage of space. From the researcher's experience, the other possibility could be the increase in class size, if current students do not progress or graduate and new students are admitted to the college, then the size of the class will increase. Heinesen (2010) identifies class size as another factor that can impact on the academic success of the students and also on student-lecturer relationship.

South Africa is a diverse country and educational institutions are populated by students with different needs, so having a huge number of students in one class makes it very difficult for a lecturer to address individual needs, and that can affect students' performance. There has been quite a number of developments in the field of work that have heightened the need for TVET colleges to be strengthened so that they can provide a high level of education and create learning and training opportunities that attract many school-leavers.

2.4.2. Student support services

Crowther (1995) defines support as the assistance or inspiration given to someone or something, more particularly if that person or a thing is struggling or in a difficult situation. Mandew (2003) views student support services as units and departments working together in the provisioning of counselling and health facilities to students at educational institutions. According to Steyn (2014), support services are specialised functions that are incorporated in the education system. In the educational context, SSS assists students facing barriers to learning with a range of specialised support and strategies at different levels for them to achieve their full academic potential. The concept of student support realises that students are not academic sponges that can absorb information and understand immediately, but each student is different, he or she learn at his or her own pace and has the potential to achieve everything in accordance with his or her unique abilities and skills when supported and taught how to use those skills and abilities.

Mandew further argues that the student support services evolved over time with three broad models being developed, that is, the in loco parentis, the German and hybrid models. The first and oldest model is the in loco parentis that simply means being a student's parent. With this system, the entire staff, including academic or non-academic staff, are responsible for the support and welfare of the student. The system focuses on the student holistically, whereby different people will be looking at different aspects in the life of the student. University of Berlin established the German model which is also called the "Intellectual" approach. Universities wanted to shift to intellectualism where academic staff will be focusing on the academic activities and allow non-academic staff and specialists to handle student support services (Allen and Garb, 1993). The hybrid model is mostly commonly used by HEIs as it combines the in loco parentis and the German model.

Because of the diverse classrooms at TVET colleges, students have different needs and there is a need for wider range of student support services. This was one of the motives the DHET had to establish and publish the SSS Framework in April 2008. The aim of the frameworks is to provide guidelines on the provisioning of students support services to achieve academic success. The framework was later supported by the Student Support

Services Manual for Further Education and Training Colleges that aims at closing the gaps and upholding the principle of integration to break separation whereby SSS is seen as the responsibility of support staff and academic support as the responsibility of lecturing staff (Student Support Services Manual, 2009). Many colleges already have SSS in place and the framework together with the manual are not meant to replace what colleges are already doing but to assist them in addressing some gaps and improving where there is a need. The same way that the poor students' performance and low throughput rate are not the challenge for only TVET colleges, various student support services are also provided at different educational institutions.

Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:66) argue that each learning institution needs to establish an institution-based support structure to provide support services to students in collaboration with lecturers who are involved in teaching and learning. TVET colleges realised that there is a need to establish such structures that will be responsible to support students by providing career guidance, funding, counselling, academic support that involves reading and study skills, extra-mural activities, campus support services such as library services and internet service and placement. Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005) further state that students need to be supported to deal with all learning barriers and challenges that hinder the maximum possible independence in learning. In support of this view, Kotze (2008:123) states that all student support systems, including academic, social, psychological, health and emergency services, should always be available. Karp, O'Gara and Hughes (2008:3) maintain that providing adequate and effective student support services enables the college to address various needs of the students. SSS may vary between educational institutions and the overall responsibility lies with the institutional management to make sure that the appropriate student support framework or policy is in place and functional.

The college should strive to enhance the cognitive dimension of the student in the learning process (Prinsloo, 2010). Prinsloo further differentiates between affective and administrative student support rendered in different educational institutions. In support of Prinsloo, Fryer (2014) emphasised the importance of affective student support as it includes the social element that has an impact on the student's success and retention.

Fryer also highlights that affective student support is needed at all spheres of education; however, it requires highly trained and specialised staff. These students need to be supported for them to cope with the demands of the TVET sector or institution. From the different support service categories stipulated above, the researcher will focus on the academic support of the students at the TVET college.

2.5. THE RATIONALE BEHIND STUDENTS' UNDERPERFORMANCE AND LOW THROUGHPUT RATES

The common idea is that the NCV curriculum was going to assist the country to keep abreast with the ever-changing social, technological and economic factors in every country (DHET, 2013c). However, the relevance of the TVET sector has been criticised by most researchers and stakeholders as their students' performance and throughput rates have been very low for almost every programme. Therefore, one can start to wonder what the causes of unsatisfactory performance of TVET students and low throughput rates are. The following constitutes the reasons for low throughput rates.

2.5.1. Pedagogical practices and class attendance

The delivery of quality vocational education is highly dependable on the lecturer's theoretical knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills as well as being up to date with technological developments (African Union, 2007, p. 33). Mlambo (2011:79) has identified the teaching methods used by the lecturers at the college and class attendance by the students as other factors that influence students' academic performance. One of the criticisms is the pedagogical practices in the TVET sectors, emphasis is put on the lecturers as they are believed not to be prepared for the ambitions specified in White Paper on Post-School and Training of 2013. There are currently limited qualifications specifically designed for the TVET lecturers, so that might be another factor to the issues of pedagogical practices in the sector. In their study, Mgijima and Marobe (2012) identified unqualified and under-qualified lecturers (approximately 50%) as one of the factors that have been associated with TVET college student's academic performance. If there is this gap in the sector or it is believed that TVET lecturers have a problem, then the question that can be posed to the DHET and colleges as the employers is that of the availability of

mechanisms to close this gap or developmental programmes for lecturers to enhance their teaching ability. According to Lucas, Spencer and Claxton (2012:13), quality of teaching and learning that take place in different educational settings are critical for the effectiveness of all education systems. They further point out the necessity of outstanding personnel (teachers, trainers, tutor, etc.), well-designed curriculum and facilities which are appropriate for the demands of education. As mentioned earlier, the TVET sector has undergone many changes over the years due to various reasons. TVET college lecturers have been found wanting, operating in an environment of uncertainty and instability because of these changes that have impacted on the college structures, staffing and management (Gewer, 2016). Wedekind (2010) uses terms like "disempowerment", "depersonalization", "alienation" and "disillusioning" to describe TVET college lecturers and also label them as "change fatigue" because of changes in the curriculum, the management of TVET colleges and the nature and characteristics of the new learners.

In 2014, the DHET introduced 80% attendance policy to the TVET colleges with the aim of dealing with attendance and punctuality as they were variables that impede the effective implementation of the TVET concept. The work of Newman-Ford, Lloyd and Thomas (2009) revealed that students fail to attend classes because of poor delivery of content by the lecturers and assessment pressures. In their study, Durden and Ellis (2005) acknowledge that there is a link between students' academic performance and class attendance. And they further argue that few absents from class do not necessarily lead to poor academic performance, but if a student becomes extremely absent from class then he or she will likely not be successful in his or her studies. Ali, Jusof, Mokhtar and Salamat (2009) report that when students attend classes, most often their academic performance improves.

2.5.2. TVET NCV curriculum

Bourdieu (1986) points out that the NCV curriculum is biased as it favours middle class students because they are already familiar with those things that are being done in class. In support of Bourdieu, the researcher's teaching experience in the TVET sector confirms that most of the assessments, whether formal or informal, require resources like the internet, a laptop or computer and social skills because students are sometimes requested to visit various companies or interview people in or outside the college.

Another essential factor that can be a challenge to students is that many of them are not comfortable to communicate in English and the same language is used for assessment and examinations. After the realisation of challenges within the TVET sector, Minister Nzimande, in his Budget Vote Speech (2010), made an announcement that a task team had been established in line with the recommendation of the 2010 FET summit to review and realign NCV qualification so that it can serve its purpose in the economy of the country. Nzembe (2018) suggested the introduction of bridging programmes in fundamental subjects such as English, Mathematical Literacy and Mathematics to address the issue of under-preparedness of students for the curriculum. Thomas (2012) argues that the focus should not only be on students because TVET colleges themselves are not prepared enough for the demands of their population. In 2013, the Council of Higher Education (CHE) proposed that qualifications be extended by one year of preparatory programmes, where first year students undergo an intensive programme on student readiness and development.

2.5.3. Students' social, economic and educational differences

The admission requirement for NCV qualifications is grade 9. However, colleges find themselves also enrolling students who are doing or have passed grades 11 and 12 at school level. TVET colleges consequently sit with students with huge differences in their educational backgrounds, ages and educational or career goals. They attract young and adult students in various departments or faculties. According to statistics on Post-School Education and Training (2013, p.29), many students enrol at the TVET sector from the age of 15 to 24 years. The above statement leads to the conclusion that many students

who enrol at TVET colleges are adolescents. Carr (2006) views adolescence as the phase where the child develops from childhood to adulthood. Carr further indicates that a child can go through this stage with various difficulties in physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes that are taking place in his or her life, normally between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Regardless of when the developments are taking place, an adolescent can feel anxious, self-conscious and awkward and thus make his or her life difficult (Vernon, 2002).

In his speech at Garankuwa campus in July 2018, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Buti Manamela, showed a great concern about the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse by TVET college students. The study of McIntosh, Gidman and McLaughlin (2013:7) identifies travelling times, finances, workload, demands and unrealistic expectations of the course as some of the reasons for poor students' academic performance and high dropout rate. Unlike McIntosh, Gidman and McLaughlin, Jafta (2013:161) points out that in the study he conducted, students mentioned inclusion, availability of computers, learning material, learning spaces, accommodation, other academic-related facilities and student support as factors that influence their academic performance.

It is evident that when students first enrol at the college there are too many changes and challenges that they go through in their lives and there is also a feeling of uncertainty in what they do. Because of this reason, the need arises to provide the necessary support to these students. This may include, but is not limited to, psychological, emotional, financial and academic support. It is very significant for the TVET college management together with other relevant stakeholders to come up with a bucketful of strategies and approaches to deal with all factors that affect students' poor academic performance and under-preparedness for the TVET curriculum.

2.6. SOCIAL CAPITAL AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Burns and Grove (2009:126) define the theoretical framework as the rational and conceptual structure of the actual description of the concepts that will direct the study and also for the researcher to relate the results of the study to the body of knowledge. Theoretical framework can also be described as the supporting structure of a theory that introduces and describes the theory so that the existence of the research problem can be explained. Different researchers argue that factors that influence students' academic performance differ from one academic setting to another, from one group of students to another and it even depends on the surroundings of the student and the educational institution itself. From the research's perspective, there is no one-size-fits-all reason for non-performance in the academic context hence the researcher deemed it appropriate to employ the social capital theory for this study.

There seems to be no one specific definition of social capital. It has been mainly defined by its functions rather than as a concept (Fukuyama, 1999). In other words, many scholars explain social capital by its manifestations rather than by itself. Cohen and Prusak (2001) define social capital as a flexible and natural phenomenon. Their study also emphasises the manifestation of social capital rather than social capital itself. The World Bank Social Capital Initiative (1998:3) defines social capital as social and cultural coherences within and amongst societies, standards and ethics that govern interaction amongst individuals and the societies in which they are embedded. Therefore, social capital relies more on the unity and interactions of the societies, and if these societies do not come together, social capital collapses.

Green and Preston (2001) view social capital as a flexible conceptual tool that is useful in identifying and giving explanations on various social problems such as education. To illustrate how social capital functions in a society, the researcher cites an example of Gauteng parents who take their children to a school in Steynsrus in the Free State, believing that their kids would be safer and less exposed to drugs and alcohol because of the size of the town and the values and norms of its residents. With this perception that the parents have about Steynsrus people having less access to drugs and alcohol, these children are believed to be focused on their studies, unlike if they were in Gauteng where

drugs are easily available. Coleman (1988) argues that social capital can influence communities positively. For example, neighbours can create a WhatsApp group to report and inform each other about suspicious acts and crime in their neighbourhood. According to Putnam (2000), social capital creates a platform that allows communities to operate and advance smoothly. Acar (2011) states that the strong bonds amongst individuals and organisations maintain characters such as respect, empathy, toleration and willingness to engage with other people.

2.6.1. Relating social capital to education

Social capital is frequently mentioned in the field of education as a major contributor to students' academic performance in different settings. It is evident that many forms of social capital like social networks, parental obligations and expectations that exist within the family, schools and community are significant for the academic success of the student. Aldridge, Halpern and Fitzpatrick, (2002) indicate that the involvement of people in education has an impact on the success of the students. Education does not operate in isolation, it is connected and integrated with factors that surround it. Some of the students in the colleges and, the colleges themselves as institutions of learning, do perform better than others, be it in academic or non-academic activities. The exact reason for these disparities in performance is often difficult to identify hence one may suggest that it is because of variations in levels of social capital. Social capital as a theoretical construct assists in explaining the differences in students' academic performance. Rury (2013) states that students' academic success is directly influenced by social capital.

Poor students' academic performance has been a major challenge for universities and TVET colleges over the years. A number of studies have found that students' effort in their academic work, their previous educational institutions (Siegfried and Fels, 1979), parents' level of education, wealth class of the family (Anderson and Benjamin, 1994), students' intrinsic motivation, choice of learning, age of the student (Aripin, Manmood, Rohaizad, Yeop and Anuar, 2003) and lecture attendance (Romer, 1993) are the determinants of students' academic success. This theory assisted the researcher to understand that factors that affect students' academic performance differ from one setting to another and there is no one specific reason why students fail (Acar, 2011). Students'

performance is influenced by many factors that surround the students and the institution itself. These factors can either be positive or negative.

Putman (2000) provides four ways to get value from social connections and they are discussed below:

❖ Information

People get information as they meet and interact with one another. This is very important in education whereby students get valuable information when interacting with other students, lecturers and support staff.

❖ Reciprocity or mutual aid

People need to support each other. The college management needs to support lecturers and students by providing them with all the necessary resources that they need to achieve their objectives.

❖ Collective action

Social Capital Theory promotes the inclusion of everyone in education. It relies on unity amongst all those who have a role to play in education. This is also in support of the Student Services Manual (2009) that aims at closing the gaps and upholding the principle of integration to include everyone in the SSS. The SSS is seen as the responsibility of those who are employed under SSS department and academic support is seen as the responsibility of those who are employed in the academic department. The study of Francis (1998) found voluntary participation of parent-teacher associations, school communities and other grass-roots organisations contributed significantly to the school's infrastructure, maintenance and security and also improved school's enrolments and attendance. Aslandogan and Cetin (2007) urge that lecturers who are committed to education and the success of the students tend to be selfless and help students and attract parents and other stakeholders. Putman (2000) showed a concern about the weakening of relationships amongst societies or communities because people will then loose benefit of social connections.

❖ Identity and solidarity

It is of paramount importance for all these people to develop a mentality of "we" instead of "I". Once there is solidarity then students will feel empowered and develop a sense of trust in the college and its staff. According to Maslow (1954), people possess a need for sense of belonging and acceptance in groups that they find themselves in. Students also need to belong, they need to be cared for and supported so that they can stay at the college until they complete their studies.

2.7. INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUPPORT ON THE THROUGHPUT RATE

Fluke, O'Connor, Hoff and Peterson (2014) view academic support as support programmes and strategies that are used by educational institutions to improve students' academic success, especially to those students who are having challenges or barriers to succeed. Academic support may also be referred to as a wide variety of pedagogical practices, educational services or resources that are provided by educational institutions to students in order for them to achieve academic success, be on par with other students or peers and meet academic standards. In the TVET context, academic support encompasses a broad array of educational programmes and strategies that include bridging courses, extra classes, study groups and counselling. This kind of support can be provided to specific students depending on the need or it can be provided to all students.

According to ETDP SETA's Public Further Education and Training Skills Plan 2013/14, TVET colleges were, and are, still struggling to fulfill their mandate, especially regarding the students' throughput rate that is very low. In their study, Cosser and Winnaar (2011) found that 60 out of 100 students that enrol for NCV programmes at a TVET college either fail or drop out. Even though most educational institutions have policies and a framework on SSS it does not necessarily mean that those services are actively functioning, or are of benefit to the students. One other factor that can be a challenge when it comes to the functionality of the SSS is the students' access to the services as the SSS programme can sometimes clash with the college schedule.   Lea and Farbus (2000) point out that

some lecturers do not take the tutoring role seriously. This can be influenced by the commitment of the students to attend the tutoring classes.

The researcher argues that TVET college managers have to champion the importance of SSS at TVET colleges because of the unique characteristics of the sector. Dhillon, McGowan and Wang (2008) conclude that SSS may suffer from inadequate staffing. Hence in their study they suggest that the gap between the needs and demands of the students and capacity of the personnel providing support to students should be addressed. Lea and Farbus (2000:23) maintain that SSS is an "educational necessity" and it can benefit all stakeholders. Shikulo (2018:77) suggests that SSS requires interaction between students and institutions to iron out the desired goals or outcomes. Many educational institutions provide SSS by means of information and communication technology to students. Because of the current technological developments, Gulati (2008:1) acknowledges that the use of ICT in delivering SSS is currently an international phenomenon. In other words, with the use of technology, educational institutions can be able to assist students even if they are not physically present on the campuses. And it can also promote continuous discussions between students and lecturers and thus has a great potential to increase student academic success.

Maimane (2016) suggests that identifying students' academic support needs is vital to enable the student, lecturer or institution to determine where to find support or how to support a student. He further argues that it sometimes becomes too late to support students if an academic support need has been identified towards mid-year or final examinations. In his study, Maimane (2016) found that academic support that is provided at the college contributes to the success of the students. In the study of examining the relationships among students' perception on support, course satisfaction and learning outcome in online learning, Lee, Srinivasan, Trail, Lewis and Lopez (2011:19) maintain that students' needs and learning styles can be met and enhanced through appropriate academic support and strategies, and can lead to academic success. SSS requires significant system resources and time. It is therefore very important for educational institutions to have a good view of which support programmes are often accessed by

students and to identify the expectations of students when it comes to the efficacy of these programmes.

Balfanz, Herzog and Mac Iver (2007) state that educational institutions that provide academic support to students can assist them to achieve their academic goals. The provision of effective academic support not only increase students' chances of performing well academically but it also has a positive impact in the decision of the student to remain at the school (Somers & Piliawsky, 2004). Students who have been supported academically has shown a great improvement in their test scores and also on their social and communication skills (Nelson-Royes, 2013). VanLehn (2011) argues that an effective implementation of academic support leads to an improved academic success. According to Stenhoff and Lgnugaris – Kraft (2007) academic support can be offered by an educator or peer. There has been a growing interest on the importance of student support services (Burge and Lenkgi, 1990, Hipp, 1997 and Tapling & Jegede, 2001). Farajolla and Moenikia (2010) found that there is a positive relationship between student support services and academic achievement.

In their study, Karp, O'Gara and Hughes (2008:22) found that quality advising by the lecturers and special support programmes offered at the educational institution result in academic success. They further suggest that colleges should make the SSS available to all students and assign an adviser to each student in their first year of study. Many institutions make use of peer tutors who are identified through academic excellence in their studies to assist their fellow students who might be having challenges with their academic work. The findings of the study of Mokgokong (2007:40) reveal that all the students, whether prepared or underprepared, benefit from peer tutoring and mentoring as academic support services.

Lecturers are required to act in loco parentis for the obvious reason that the students are not always able to voice out their challenges or issues and that requires an educator to be observant and sensitive so that assistance or support can be provided at an early stage. Students spend most of their time at the college with their lecturers, so that means the lecturers are in a great position to realise and identify the students' needs. Gammon and Morgan-Samuel (2004:169) support this view that lecturers are in a good space to

provide students with all the necessary information and support in their studies. They further note that well-structured tutorial support provided to the students enhance assertiveness, personal control, empowerment and confidence that result in less uncertainty, and enable them to cope with the academic demands and succeed. This could also help students with low self-confidence because of the public perception that TVET colleges are meant for underperforming students.

2.8. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO BRICS

It is a known fact that many employers around the world are complaining about the lack of skilled labour force. TVET institutions seem to be functioning as "bridges to nowhere" and this has certain social and economic implications. Different countries' policy makers and experts have emphasised the need for every country to upgrade the quality and effectiveness of the TVET colleges (Remington, 2017). Many governments around the world recognise that globalisation and technological changes will bring about a rapid change in the skills that are required by industry or labour market. Hence BRICS member states seek to promote transformation in education that will effectively address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, especially regarding the fourth industrial revolution. The passion of the governments, industries and other role players to produce graduates with skills and expertise that will afford them an opportunity to access employment resuscitates the need to realign the TVET sector worldwide (Saunders and Zuzel, 2015). The researcher then chose to explore the elements of TVET from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, formally known as BRICS countries. TVETs in these countries bear many similarities and the countries are working together to better and improve the TVET sector.

2.8.1. Vocational education and training in Brazil

In the Brazilian formal education, there are two possible routes. Firstly, there is general education that aims to provide students with a general knowledge in different subjects so that they can be able to choose a profession after completing general schooling. Secondly, there is TVET which aims at providing students with specific set of skills and

expertise needed for the world of work. Hanushek, Woessmann and Zhang (2011) assert that TVET provides youth with opportunities to access the labour market and participate in it. TVET in Brazil is seen as an important educational policy. Aedo and Walker (2012) argue that vocational education can provide students with appropriate competencies that enable them to enter the workforce in a short period and with higher productivity than in the general education. Tansel (1999) and Hanushek (2011) found that TVET graduates stand a better chance of employment than those of general education. With this evidence of great benefits of VET, it is understandable why Brazil is investing more in this sector. There have been many initiatives and developments in the VET in Brazil but the main initiative that relates to the current VET was launched in 2011 by the Federal Government (SETEC/MEC, 2014).

2.8.2. Vocational education and training in Russia

That skills shortage or mismatch is also a common theme in Russia cannot be over-emphasised. McGowan and Andrews (2015) and OECD (2013) argue that the actual problem is getting people with the correct skills to perform certain duties, and not necessarily the shortage of skills. The shortage of skilled labour force is also a concern in the manufacturing industries in Russia. The TVET sector in the Russian Federation is faced with the challenge of providing the industry with qualified and skilled labour force (European Training Foundation, 2011). It further highlights challenges such as inconsistencies that exist between the TVET courses or curriculum and the modern technologies that are applied in the market. Teachers and trainers do not have the necessary innovative and developmental skills in the subjects that they are teaching and there is also poor communication between the TVET sector players and industry.

According to Fedorov and Tretyakova (2016), the recent developments in the Russian industry or market require the quality of training of the specialists to be changed so that they can possess specific qualities or skills to ensure their competitiveness and professional mobility. In 2013, Russia's Ministry of Education and Science aimed at substituting university diplomas with continuing vocational education and training programmes (Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation, 2013). The TVET system in Russia is being structured accordingly for the provision of professionally

qualified and skilled labour force in line with the modernisation of the economy (Ministry of Education Science, 2010). This document further indicates that several programmes were put in place after it was realised that the TVET sector plays a significant role in the development of a country and its ability to achieve the following objectives:

❖ The development and institutionalisation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
❖ Appropriately improving the quality of TVET and establishing an independent quality assurance system.
❖ Encouraging advanced vocational education and training and lifelong learning.
❖ Build a competency-based TVET system that is versatile and sensitive to change and incorporates new instructional practices taught by trained and inspired teachers.
❖ Appropriate relation between TVET and the labour market.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science (2010), the Russian education system consists of three levels. Firstly, the general education level that takes approximately nine years to complete. Secondly, the technical and vocational educational level that consists of initial and secondary. And lastly, the professional education level that includes higher or university education.

2.8.3. Vocational education and training in India

According to Smith and Kemmis (2012), the economy of India is growing at a much greater pace. Vocational education and training has become very popular and has gained much greater attention from the Indian government and it is one of the government's main policy agendas (Agrawal, 2013:20). TVET in India is known as Vocational Education and Training (VET) with the primary aim of developing students to have strong, positive and holistic attitude towards work and life, provide lifelong learning opportunities and enhance students' employability (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018). Moreover, vocational education in India is meant to provide college graduates with the necessary entrepreneurship skills so that they can be self-employed (Agrawal, 2012). Jackson (2013) also states that TVET is regarded as a significant sector that can provide competent and highly skilled graduates

for industry. In response to the creation of employment opportunities, the Indian government has established TVET colleges (Tognatta, 2014). It is crucial for one to distinguish between the forms of vocational education offered in India. According to Mehrotra, Gandhi and Sahoo (2013), Indian vocational education begins after secondary school level and is offered at 11th and 12th grade in the formal education. Vocational education also takes place in institution-based training programmes for a period that varies from six to three years. According to International Labour Organisation (2003) and Agrawal (2012) the TVET system in India is faced with, but not limited to, the following challenges, (a) lack of employment for the college graduates, (b) public institutions are not able to produce required skilled graduates, (c) the quality of the financing system and the ineffectiveness of the funding model, and (d) the mismatch between what the labour market needs and what is offered by the TVET institutions.

2.8.4. Vocational education and training in China

Like other BRICS countries, China is also offering general and vocational education to its citizens which makes it very difficult for people to choose between the two education systems (Yang, 1998:239). Looking at the human capital framework, Becker (1964) argues that the general education ought to produce a universal human capital whereas vocational education produces a precise and specialised human capital. This means that the general education results in a workforce that can change or move from one job to another, but vocational education produces a workforce with specialised set of skills for a job. One can then conclude that both educational systems are equally important. It is generally known that China's economy is the world's second largest. In 1949, more than 80% of the population of the People's Republic of China was illiterate (Guo and Lamb, 2010). Over the past three decades, the Chinese authorities at local, provincial and national levels have been investing more in education. With the world's largest population, it has been very difficult for China to expand its education system due to limited resources that they have (Stewart, 2015). According to the Statistical Bulletin of Education Development, Ministry of Education (2013), China currently has about 92% of graduates from junior secondary school. The enrolments of senior secondary education also expanded significantly raising from 42,8% in 2002 to 84% in 2011 (Yuan, 2013).

According to Stewart (2015), in order for China to increase participation in the senior secondary education it developed senior vocational schools that lead directly to the workforce. After this initiative, participation has increased tremendously and today China is the largest supplier of students to universities in many countries (Institute of International Education, 2012). Sending students abroad for undergraduate and post-graduate studies has been a very important strategy of its educational development. Yan (2010) indicates that China has reached its goal of allocating 4% of the GDP to education after three (3) decades of many milestones and great efforts. There can be no doubt about China's ambition for and commitment to education. However, such rapid expansion and success came with various problems as it might be expected. As reported by McKinsey Global Institute (2013) there has been a huge decline in teaching standards and a high college graduates' unemployment rate.

According to Guo and Lamb (2010), there are three vocational schools at the upper secondary level, (a) specialised high schools that provide three-year-certificate courses that enable students to directly enter industry, (b) the recently transformed vocational schools - after completion students can enter the workforce directly or further their studies at the vocational colleges, and (c) schools of skilled workers that provide three-year-certificate courses for a state professional licence. On the other hand, Yan (2010) identifies three types of vocational education institutions at the tertiary level in the People's Republic of China, namely, (a) vocational colleges that are sometimes called polytechnics colleges, and they provide two- or three-year-diploma courses, (b) specialised junior colleges that provide two- or three-year-diploma courses for capacity building, and (c) technician colleges that provide two- or three-year-certificate courses for state technician licences.

2.8.5. Vocational education and training in South Africa

In South Africa, there are fifty TVET colleges that report to the DHET and are administered in terms of the Continuing Education and Training Act No 16 of 2006 (as amended). TVET colleges' main objective is to offer programmes that equips learners who have completed grade 9 with technical and vocational skills through the NCV programmes. These qualifications enable them to meet the existing and upcoming needs of the country. The

sector also provides opportunities for learners who have completed grade 12 by enrolling them in Report 191 National Technical Vocation Education programmes so that they can acquire qualifications in the Engineering and Business Studies fields, and in occupational learning programmes. It is evident that there have been many changes in the field of TVET throughout history. One of the major changes was the introduction of National Certificate Vocational curriculum in 2006 by DHET that was to be offered at TVET colleges from levels 2, 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). NCV level 2 was then implemented in 2007 followed by NCV level 3 in 2008 and NCV level 4 in 2009. The intention of DHET, in collaboration with the Department of Labour, was to enable the TVET colleges to produce graduates who possess both practical and theoretical skills or content knowledge so that they can be able to cope with the demands of industry or different fields of work.

The NCV programme replaced many programmes that were offered at the colleges and this has led to the view that the programme was developed to close the gaps, tackle the issue of low quality programmes that were adding little or no value to the students, programmes that lacked relevance in the economy as well as lack of technological cognitive abilities of TVET college graduates. In the same vein Pretorius (2007) maintains that the NCV curriculum was introduced in South African TVET colleges as a systematic and organised response to the skills shortage in the country. The duration of each NCV level is one year and it takes at least three years to complete all three levels. It comprises two components, namely, fundamental learning and vocational learning with at least seven subjects per level. According to SACPO (2007), the introduction of the NCV, with eleven programmes, is a major achievement in the TVET sector. Looking at the developments and changes around the world, the technical and vocational education is necessary so that people can respond to the new world's demands, specifically the Fourth Industrial Revolution, technological changes, the increasing use of ICT and globalisation of production necessitate proper implementation of the NCV policy.

2.9. REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19 OUTBREAK ON STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

2.9.1. Background of the pandemic

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), coronaviruses are a wide family of viruses that can cause respiratory illnesses ranging from mild colds to more serious diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The most recent coronavirus disease is COVID-19. Reflecting closely, the rapid-spread virus was first discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China, in December 2019 (WHO, 2019). WHO also indicated that the epidemic had spread to other countries, with Egypt reporting the first case on the African continent. South Africa's Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, reported on 5 March 2020 that the virus was spreading to the country, with the first identified patient being a male citizen who tested positive on his return from Italy. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, coughing, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. In more severe cases, an infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death (WHO, 2020).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries around the world have put into effect a number of public health and social initiatives, including efforts by people, organisations, local and national governments and foreign agencies to prevent or discourage the dissemination of COVID-19 to their populations. The ultimate goal for all countries is to monitor COVID-19 by decelerating the spread of the virus and avoiding related illnesses and deaths (WHO, 2020). Essential to this holistic approach are time-tested, fundamental public health interventions that crack the chains of person-to-person dissemination, including detection, separation, monitoring and clinical treatment for all cases, and tracing and quarantining of all associates

In his statement of measures to combat COVID-19 pandemic on 15 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa mentioned that public social and health interventions contribute to stopping individual transmission chains and preventing outbreaks and are crucial in limiting the further spread of COVID-19, especially because vaccines and therapeutics are not yet available. Such measures shall contain the following:

- ❖ Specific interventions are intended to minimise the exposure of people to persons, protect individuals and their interactions, and minimise the degradation on commonly touched surfaces. Personal precautions include regular hand washing, physical space, respiratory etiquette, use of masks while sick or caring for someone who is sick, and cleaning and disinfecting the environment at home.
- ❖ Physical and social distance measures in public spaces prevent transmission between infected individuals and non-infected individuals and protect those at risk of developing serious illnesses. These steps include physical isolation, reduction or cancellation of mass events and minimising cramped environments in various settings (e.g. public transport, restaurants, bars, theatres), working at home, staying at home and promoting modifications for employers and educational establishments. For physical distance, the WHO advises a minimum distance of at least one metre between individuals in order to reduce the possibility of interpersonal transmission.
- ❖ Movement interventions are aimed at avoiding and restricting the flow of the virus from one location to another. Measures include limiting movement of persons locally or nationally, providing guidance on travel, pre-ordained travel arrangements to avoid congestion at travel hubs, including train stations, bus terminals and airports, and considering cordon sanitary or other selected measures as justified by the local epidemiology of COVID-19.

On 15 March 2020 President Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster and announced steps such as immediate travel restrictions and school closures as of 18 March 2020. The National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) was formed on 17 March 2020 "to lead the nation's plan to curb the spread and mitigate the negative impact of coronavirus" (Republic of South Africa, 2020). The national shutdown was declared on 23 March 2020, beginning on 26 March 2020, with the following levels of alert and their priorities:

- ❖ Alert level 5
    - ▪ Immediate action to stop the transmission of the infection and to save lives.
- ❖ Alert level 4

- Extreme precautions to reduce communal transmission and outbreaks while allowing certain activities to resume.
- ❖ Alert level 3
  - Limits on other practices, particularly in the workplace and socially addressing the high risk of transmission.
- ❖ Alert level 2
  - Active isolation and limits on recreation and social activity to avoid the re-emergence of the infection.
- ❖ Alert level 1
  - Some regular practices should still be continued with guidance and safety recommendations followed. The population prepares for a rise in alarm levels, if necessary.

Public health and social policies offer a range of strategies that countries should adopt and calibrate on the basis of their local background. However, national and local authorities must balance interventions to address the direct health impact of COVID-19 with strategies to reduce the short- and long-term impact on health and socio-economic well-being, such as the loss of income or access to services, which may result from the implementation of certain measures. According to Hallgarten (2020), advance preparations are often important in order to prevent the unintended health effects that can occur when hospital facilities are disrupted or when vital health and social services are affected.

2.9.2. Education response to COVID-19 pandemic

With the outbreak of COVID-19, countries are adopting emergency measures to hold back and slow the spread of the virus – and prepare for a potential longer-term loss to school and university attendance. Hallgarten (2020) asserts that more weeks of school closing will result in a substantial loss of human resource growth with major long-term economic and social consequences. While the SA nation continues to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions have had to come up with creative approaches to guarantee that graduates successfully conclude their studies by 2020. In the light of the complete lockdown declared by the government of South Africa,

educational institutions have established the necessary steps and initiated numerous programmes to help protect students. Although this is a clear stress check for school programmes, it is also an incentive to create new curriculum options. The study of Marinoni and Van't Land (2020) indicates that the percentage of HEIs where teaching has been cancelled is very low in all regions except Africa, where it is currently reported to be 24%. Marinoni and Van't Land (2020) further report that just 29% of African HEIs were able to switch teaching and learning online easily relative to 85% of HEIs in Europe. This indicates that two-thirds of African HEIs were not prepared to switch teaching online and had to stop teaching as they closed their campuses. Luckily, all of them are focusing on designing strategies for continued education and learning through internet or self-study (Marinoni and Van't Land, 2020). However, there are still a quarter of African HEIs for which teaching is completely cancelled. When this situation lasts for a long time, it could have a huge adverse effect on the academic experiences for students. China, which was hit first by the coronavirus, is well advanced in providing a large proportion of its students with access to online learning opportunities. The universities responded in a variety of ways, based on their contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant effect on all facets of life and work. The nationwide shutdown is pressuring every citizen to behave creatively and to act in a creative manner in relation to the provision of education. Below are some of the strategies put in place by other educational institutions to ensure that they continue to deliver quality reach and support to students:

- ❖ Revised 2020 academic calendar
    - ▪ Extended the holiday time for students due to the nationwide lockdown. However, this meant that the academic year 2020 had to be adjusted. To guarantee the teaching and learning activities continue throughout the lockdown and the students finish the school year with as little interruption as possible.
- ❖ Online learning initiatives
    - ▪ One of the strategic goals is to provide students with the best available opportunities to successfully complete their studies. It is therefore necessary to

maximise in-class and out-of-class experience in order to increase student success rate. The cessation of physical teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing shutdown meant that universities needed to switch to electronic channels to ensure the success of the 2020 academic year so that students would not miss their academic semester or the whole year. Universities have established strong private sector tools and networks to move their online operations. At a minimum, migration includes a learning management system and a video conferencing solution. The market for Learning Management Solutions is dominated by Moodle (open source), Blackboard, Canvas, and a few smaller players. Other forms of distance learning – from email delivery/return of assignments, to utilising mail, TV, radio, phones and mobile applications where broadband is limited, to independent study – are being tried and tested in this massive global experiment with off-site learning potential and modalities.

- ❖ Zero-rated academic platforms and data bundles
  - ▪ Several universities have secured zero-rating connectivity to their digital portals and have also tried to secure data packages with specific service providers to ensure that students continue to have access to a wide variety of digital support resources despite the national lockdown.

- ❖ Psychosocial support
  - ▪ Students' well-being is important, and institutions continue to provide dynamic and student-centered psychological development and support services during the national lockdown. Various Centres for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) operate virtually or by telephone – depending on the student's choice.

2.9.3. Technological challenges to anticipate

In several nations, the initial reaction to the need to close the physical campuses of post-secondary institutions was to concentrate on distance learning as much as possible. This has culminated in online delivery in many countries (OECD, 2020). Learning and communicating in an online world does not come easily to teachers and students.

Policymakers need to consider the following challenges or factors when designing government responses to school closures:

- ❖ Inequality in connectivity:
  - ▪ Students do not have enough connectivity and devices at home, especially for the most remote and poorest. The digital divide remains strong, both within and between countries. The capability of the external bandwidth and local server (and hosting/data storage) is not equipped for the huge load.
- ❖ Academic staff capacity to deliver remote courses
  - ▪ The academic staff is often under-prepared to deploy content. While most faculty members are active online, many have not taught online before the crisis. Although there is a lot of content online, there is no technological and pedagogical assistance available all the time. Academic personnel may require technical technology training in the long term.
- ❖ Students' capacity to adapt
  - ▪ Many students are not experienced as online learners. Although students can learn easily, they face obstacles that lead to disappointment with their learning experience. Student feedback can be leveraged to improve teaching, but feedback can also threaten revealing grievances that are difficult to tackle.
- ❖ Mistakes
  - ▪ We need to learn by doing something in an emergency, but we also need to make sure that we can minimise their impact and correct the mistakes that have been identified. Contracts with service providers, for example, need to be developed very carefully, particularly with regard to contract duration, exclusivity, security and privacy issues, in order to minimise the impact if pilots prove unsuccessful.
- ❖ Regulation
  - ▪ The regulatory climate is not yet consistent with online learning. The main problem is the profitability of the telecommunications industry, which frequently benefits a cartel and does not offer affordable alternatives for the disadvantaged. Quality and assurance systems are not helpful in improving online delivery in many countries.

- ❖ Students' emotional health
  - ▪ The background of the outbreak and the closing of schools have the potential to be disturbing and disorienting for students. Technological solutions need to find a way to provide communication, engagement and support when learning is going on, particularly in a time of uncertainty.
- ❖ IT infrastructure
  - ▪ Getting all the students accessible at the same time can be a challenge in certain cases, and access to the IT network can therefore be controlled to ensure decent connectivity for everyone, even under some timeframes.

The implications of this pandemic on TVET education has been disruptive just like in other higher education sectors. As a result of this disruption, TVET colleges are forced to adopt innovative and strategic student support initiatives that will ensure that teaching and learning continue with minimal disruptions. Digital and distance learning have prompted massive changes on how content is received and how students continue to understand. Students who do not have connections or the resources to afford the equipment or have academic disabilities are being left behind. Institutions situated away from urban centres and stable services are also left behind. Education leaders and partners must try and collect data from learning sciences while adopting technical advances to ensure that this initiative to transform the transmission of teaching through electronic channels delivers on the promise of learning and skills growth. These improvements need to be researched in order to be successful and to consider better what works and does not, and for whom. To date, most electronic learning strategies do not have equivalent evidence-based frameworks, so that should be important enough to motivate innovation in the science of teaching and learning (Scholars at Risk, 2018). In doing so, even when moving their tertiary education structures to the post-crisis world, policy makers and practitioners respectively would need to concentrate their attention on the most disadvantaged students and ensure that teaching and learning approaches, technical set-up, infrastructure innovation and financing modalities are directed towards retaining these students at risk to support their learning process and outcomes.

2.10. CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 discussed the overview and synopsis of the TVET sector. It was also important to discuss legislation that impacts directly on the TVET sector in South Africa. The analysis of all the relevant concepts of the study was done on the National Certificate Vocational, throughput rate and student academic support. This was then followed by zooming in on the current status of the throughput rates at the TVET colleges in South Africa and abroad. The social capital theory was then discussed as it is the theoretical framework chosen for this study. The researcher also considered the international perspectives with reference to BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries. Chapter 3 will deal with the methodology of the study.

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to understand the influence of the NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate at the selected TVET college in the Free State, South Africa. In this chapter, the researcher covers the research design that enable the study questions to be answered and the research goals to be achieved. The chapter further gives details of other research methods, including sampling procedure, data collection and analysis of data. Trustworthiness and ethical issues that need to be considered before the commencement of the study are also discussed.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher carefully selected the research methodology based on the aims of the research, together with the research questions and a thoughtful consideration of the nature of the research study. The researcher's aim was to produce a study that is efficient, effective and scientific. Mouton (2011) and Yin (2011) define the research approach as the logical plan of how the researcher is intending to conduct a research. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) and Creswell (2008:37) note that the research approach is a plan and a procedure that include when and from whom data should be collected with specific methods of data collection and analysis.

For this study, the researcher's purpose was to collect information based on perceptions, views and opinions of various stakeholders of the selected TVET college towards the influence of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rates. The intention of the researcher was to use a research approach that is more appropriate to provide valid conclusions after the analysis of the data received from the participants. Hence the study adopted a qualitative research approach because of the qualitative data in the form of perceptions, views and opinions that were collected. Qualitative research approach differs with quantitative research approach in the sense that it does not always provide the researcher with a sequential plan to follow when conducting a study (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Pope and Mays (1995) describe qualitative research as a process where concepts are being developed to enhance the understanding of a social phenomenon,

give detailed emphasis to the meaning, views and experiences of the participants in a natural setting rather than an experimental setting. In the same vein, McMillian and Schumacher (2001:35) explain the interactive qualitative inquiry as an in-depth study whereby data is collected from the participants in their natural setting using face-to-face techniques. In addition, qualitative research takes place in an actual field/setting/situation/workplace. Qualitative researchers believe that behaviour can be understood if it occurs without any external control or constrains. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) indicate that a qualitative research design is appropriate when the researcher intends to understand the life experiences, attitudes and actions of the participants and draw a realistic image of the phenomenon from several different perspectives.

The researcher had to go to the college to interact with the student support staff members and lecturers to provide him with the required information or even observe the behaviour of the participants. Several data collection techniques such as interviews were used. The researcher approached this study with a flexible mind that would not be sucked on his assumptions that academic support has an influence on the college throughput rates. This assisted the researcher to accept different perspectives from the respondents.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher chose a case study as a design for the research for the obvious reason that a holistic understanding of academic support and throughput rates at the TVET college needed to be developed. The case study is an investigation of a phenomenon with an attempt to answer specific research questions that require a range of different evidences from a setting (Gillham, 2000). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that a case study is defined by the primary features of investigating multiple or various perspectives which derive from a specific setting or context. A case study is commonly used to break down multifaceted field or data into small manageable or researchable pieces (University of Southern California Libraries, 2016). This is more appropriate for this study as the "student support" is a complex concept and must be narrowed, and the researcher focused on the students' academic support so that he could be able to accomplish the aims and objectives of the current study. The study intended to provide detailed and

specific answers to the research questions and use the case study to focus on a circumstance rather than being too general.

Bromley (1990) defines case study as a systematic inquiry into a series of interrelated events or an occurrence whose primary objective is to clearly describe and clarify the particular phenomenon. From the researcher's perspective, a case study is characterised by its intention to seek a holistic understanding of how participants interact and relate in a particular setting, and how they make complete sense or meaning of the phenomenon under study. Gerring (2004) suggests that the case study design is more useful and appropriate when the phenomenon is not necessarily known. In this study, the influence of students' academic support and the throughput rate is not necessarily known. According to Maree (2007), multi-perspective analysis of case studies creates an opportunity for the researcher to consider not only the perspectives of one or two participants in the settings, but also the voices, perspectives and interactions of the other relevant groups. All the evidence collected form the participants was organised in such a way that the researcher could arrive at the best possible answers to the research questions. The researcher gained a deeper understanding of the reasons why such events happen or happened the way they did and was able to look at various aspects of importance that one would need to consider intensively in a future research study.

Merriam (1998) identifies four basic features of a case study: (a) Particularistic – it refers to the focus of the study in terms of a setting, situation, context, event or a process, (b) Descriptive – refers to rich, all-embracing and wide set of information relating to the phenomenon, (c) Heuristic – with the two that is already mentioned, the understanding of the phenomenon is improved and perfected, and (d) Inductive – refers to the type of reasoning used to define concepts and generalisations formed from the collected data. Even though there has been criticism about the case study for non-representativeness and lack of statistical generalisability. Yin (2003) argues that case studies can be extended by looking at various situations and actors and it can be used for analytical generalisation. The case study allows further focus on what can be learnt from a single case that is being studied and not trying to be representative (Tellis, 1997). Hence Stufflebeam, Madaus and Kellaghan (2000:283) argue that a single case study's basic

principle is not to prove but to change. Case studies are of great importance in enhancing awareness and developing it. This research specifically aims to enhance the understanding of the influence of the NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate at the TVET college, which might then be applicable to another educational institution with similar characteristics.

3.4.   RESEARCH METHODS

3.4.1. Population

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define population as a group of people, events or objects that the researcher intends to conduct a research on and generalise the research findings. Population can be viewed as where the answers of the research questions can be extracted from in order to solve the research problem and achieve the research objectives. The target population of this study was members of management, lecturers who are teaching all programmes in three NCV academic levels and SSS staff members at the selected TVET college in the Lejweleputswa District, Free State, South Africa. The rationale behind the decision not to choose newly appointed lecturers or staff members is that they are not yet familiar with the college life and they might not give the researcher valid and reliable information.

3.4.2. Sampling

The study drew a sample from the college Deputy Director: Academic, Deputy Director: Student Support Services or Deputy Director: Registry, Head of Department: Student Support Services, Head of Department: NCV Business Studies, Head of Department: NCV Engineering, one Business Studies lecturer, one lecturer in the Engineering campus and one SSS staff member. All participants have the minimum of at least three years' experience in the post that they currently occupy in order to provide rich information and as they have direct influence on the aim of this study. The researcher anticipated to interview seven participants but only managed to do five individual interviews because one participant was not available due to the college examinations that were taking place and the other one had family issues on the day of the interview and could not take part thereafter. The remaining SSS staff showed no interest to participate in the study and

others did not have at least two years of experience in their current position and did not therefore meet the inclusion criteria for this study.

The sample for this research study has common characteristics as they are all involved in different TVET curricular levels. This created a solid platform to draw a sample purposefully. According to Terblanche (2017), purposive sampling means that the selected participants have a distinguished characteristic that qualifies them to be needed for a research project because of the information that they are holding. In terms of purposive sampling, Schwandt (2007) argues that units are chosen only when they have a direct contribution to the aims and objectives and the research questions of the study. Schwandt (2007:272) further asserts that there are two critical issues in the logic of theoretical or purposive sampling. Firstly, the explicit establishment of relevant criteria based on the selection of the units that were made. Secondly, using a strategy to check that the units chosen were not simply done because they supported the developing account. The researcher ensured that the selected sample possesses an adequate TVET college experience, necessary skills and knowledge, together with a wide range of characteristics that will enable them to provide relevant and trustworthy information. The participants were selected from the selected college in the Free State. This college was selected because it is within the proximity of the researcher's residence and this made it easy for him to access the participants.

3.4.3. Data collection

3.4.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

Data was collected by means of individual or one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the aim of sourcing specific and constructive views from them. Studies conducted by Genise (2002), Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005) describe interviews as an appropriate method of data collection where the researcher needs to obtain rich and detailed information from few participants. The study applied 40 minutes semi-structured interviews per participant to collect data from the sampled population. Unlike the structured interview that is formal with pre-set questions, the semi-structured interview is flexible and allows the interviewer to ask additional questions based on what the interviewee has said (Namey, Guest, Thairu & Johnson, 2008). The rationale for using

the semi-structured interview approach is that the clarity-seeking questions can be asked for the purpose of clear understanding.

For this study to achieve its aims and objectives, the researcher needed to acquire sufficient information about behaviours, beliefs and perceptions of the participants regarding the influence of students' academic performance on the throughput rate. Learning about all this human factor requires the study to ask both closed-ended and open-ended questions. It was mentioned in the study of Thomas (2012) that the semi-structured interview has the benefits of structured and unstructured interviews in combination. This enabled the researcher to view the world of TVET in the eyes of the participants. Delamont (2012) states that the research interviews allow the researcher to get in-depth information and a high level of focus from human beings unlike when using surveys and observations. The individual or one-on-one interviews took place as semi-structured discussions, with the focus on several topics that clearly answered the research questions and enabled the researcher to achieve the research objectives with the data provided by informed respondents. All these interviews were conducted with the college management, SSS and lecturers with the aim of capturing the uniqueness and richness of everyone's perceptions. They were also guided by a list of research questions that were asked. However, participants were given an opportunity to talk freely without restraint. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

3.4.3.2. Document analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative data collection method where a document is analysed, and the researcher interprets it to give it meaning or an expression around the subject of the study (Bowen 2009). The study generated various data forms from a review of the following documents related to TVET curricula, academic support and throughput rates:

- ❖ Welkom campus subject statistics per subject and level (2018/2019)
- ❖ DHET Annual Report (2018/2019)
- ❖ Education Series Volume V: Higher Education and Skills in South Africa 2017
- ❖ Statistics on Post- School Education and Training in South Africa 2016
- ❖ Statistics on TVET, CET and Private examination 2015

When reviewing these documents, the research sought to obtain the following information from the documents:

- ❖ Students enrolments
- ❖ Pass rate
- ❖ Certification rate
- ❖ Performance overview on TVET
- ❖ National examinations and assessments
- ❖ System performance (TVET)
- ❖ NCV graduation rate

O'Leary (2014) outlines eight steps that should be followed during the process of all textual analysis:

- ❖ Collecting related text
- ❖ Build a strategic and organisational scheme
- ❖ Export annotations of the originals
- ❖ Evaluate record authenticity
- ❖ Explore the agenda and prejudices of papers
- ❖ Exploring context details (for example, sound, style, purpose)
- ❖ Start asking questions concerning the document (e.g. Who produced it? Why? When?)
- ❖ Examine their content

The researcher consulted a wide array of documents whilst considering the quality of a document instead of its quantity. Subjectivity and bias of the authors or writers of those documents were considered.

3.4.4. Data analysis

According to Holliday (2007), data analysis is a process of decoding, attaching meaning and making sense of data collected by the researcher. Similarly, Patton (1990) posits the data analysis approach helps the researcher to organise the information gathered from the participants and to give significance. In the same vein, Gray (2009) describes data

analysis as a very long and logical process of organising, structuring and making sense of the vast amount of data collected by the researcher. Data was collected from the interviews through purposefully selecting participants from the total population. As these interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher so that he can get a clear picture and have correct interpretation of the responses, data was analysed by categorising responses into themes.

Thematic data analysis was used by transcribing the interviews to interpret data. This approach was used so that the researcher could look for a wider pattern from the responses or data collected from the participants and conduct a more detailed analysis. The researcher chose this approach with the aim of being able to describe and understand answers. Boyatzis (1998) indicates that this approach has an advantage of enabling the researcher to read a broad data and effectively analyse it to identify patterns and develop themes from them.

This is done in line with the following qualitative data analysis steps as affirmed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- ❖ Arranging – filing, computer database development, and breaking large units into small units.
- ❖ Perusal – the overall meaning of the data and the preliminary interpretations.
- ❖ Classification – sorting data into groups or themes and defining data definitions.
- ❖ Synthesizing – theory or ideas, graphs, diagrams and hierarchies.

3.5. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Validity and reliability in a qualitative study are often referred to as trustworthiness (Maree, 2007). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) define trustworthiness as a quality assurance in a qualitative study. Multi-data collection instruments enhance the quality of the research. This enables the researcher and the users of the research findings, whether internal or external, to be confident that the study reflects what it was set out to do (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify credibility and trustworthiness as appropriate for qualitative research. To reinforce and maintain a high level of trustworthiness and ensure valid interpretation of data, the researcher followed four

criteria identified and explained by the study of Guba (1981) and Shenton (2004:70), namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Although using different terminology, Krefting (1991) suggests that the following four criteria should be taken into consideration: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

3.5.1. Credibility

King and Horrocks (2010) describe credibility as an extent to which participants agrees with the interpretations of the researcher. The researcher made use of interviews and document analysis to ensure credibility. The researcher and the participants together went through the responses in order to confirm the interpretation of the researcher. In order to ensure legitimacy in this research, the participants were chosen on the basis of particular attributes, knowledge or sensitivity to the academic support phenomenon and throughput levels of students.

3.5.2. Transferability

Shenton (2004) explains transferability as the extent to which the findings of the research can be safely transferred or applied in a similar situation or context. This study was conducted in one of the fifty TVET colleges in South Africa. The study can be transferred to any of the colleges and its students, lecturers and the SSS staff who may share similar features. Hansen (2006) argues that when other people, researchers or institutions understand and recognise the qualitative research results, then those results are transferable. The researcher based the interview questions on the research questions and the literature to ensure transferability.

3.5.3. Conformity

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the research results are a true representation and accurate interpretation of the respondents' information collected (Jansen, 2008). The research results and information reported should reflect the participants' actual voices and not the researcher's. The researcher was objective, and the information was verified with the participants to check if the researcher understood the concerns and realities raised by the participants.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics can be described as the ability to differentiate between what is good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). What is right with one person may not necessarily be right with the other. This study involves human beings and the ethical issues need to be taken into consideration. The responsibility of ensuring adherence to the ethical standards lies with the researcher.

3.6.1. Requesting permission and informed consent

Before conducting the research, the researcher received permission to conduct the study from (a) UNISA CEDU Research Ethics Committee (b) the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and (c) the selected TVET college's principal. In addition, before the interviews could take place, invitations were sent to participants to partake in the research study. They also received a letter of consent prior to any interviews being conducted. Respondents were given a short description of the study and requested to sign a consent form. Henning (2004) emphasize the importance of providing participants with all the information regarding the processes of the interview and the confidentiality thereof. All interviewees were informed about the research process and what it required of them, and also about their rights.

3.6.2. Confidentiality

According to Babbie (2014), confidentiality means that only the researcher or maybe a few people know the identity of the participants and all parties involved should be committed to confidentiality. Any information obtained in connection with this study and identifiable with any participant shall remain confidential and shall be disclosed only with personal permission or as required by law. Confidentiality was maintained by scanning all documents and saving them with a high security password on the external hard drive, and it was locked together with the digital audio recording machine in a fireproof safe. The researcher was the only person with access to the safe. The transcription notes were destroyed once they were scanned and safely stored.

3.6.3. Harm to participants

Participants can be harmed emotionally or physically during a research study (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The ethical principle requires the researcher to protect the participants from any kind of harm. Hansen (2006) notes that the responsibility of protecting the participants form any kind of harm (emotional stress, loss of self-esteem or any discomfort) during the study lies with the researcher. In this study, the researcher took an obligation to protect participants and avoid anything that would cause emotional or physical harm, or even humiliate them. There was therefore no personal risk or discomfort whatsoever to individual participants in this study.

3.6.4. Anonymity

Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain anonymity as the inability of the researcher to link the response with the identity of the participant. The participants were kept anonymous by not requesting their identities. Each participant was given a name code.

3.6.5. Voluntarily participation

A participant has the right to be or not to be part of the research. If they volunteer to be in this study, they can withdraw without repercussions of any kind at any time. They may also refuse to respond to any questions they do not wish to answer and remain in the study. If circumstances arise which justify doing so, the researcher may withdraw any participant from this research. The participants were given written assurance that their names would not be disclosed, and care was given to guarantee that all information would remain confidential. Participants were all given an invitation to participate in the study and all the necessary information was part of the invitation including the rights that they have and procedures of the interviews. All participation was voluntary.

3.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter had the function of presenting and describing the research methodology employed in this study. The researcher opted for a qualitative approach to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem, in this case, implications of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rates. College

management, lecturers and SSS staff were interviewed in their natural environments to strengthen the spirit of openness and comfort in sharing their experiences and views. Face-to-face interviews were used as methods of data collection. Thematic approach was discussed as data analysis method. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical consideration were also discussed.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the research design and methodology, together with data collection instruments, used in this study to acquire information from the participants. The study used qualitative research approach. Interviews and document analysis were engaged to collect data. This chapter will focus on the presentation of data, analysis and interpretation thereof. The main aim of this study was to investigate the influence of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate at a selected college in the Free State.

Selected verbatim quotations were used in this chapter to present the views, opinions and experiences of the participants. Nordquist (2019) describe verbatim quotation or direct quotation as a report of the exact words of the person, be it an author, speaker or the presenter and they are placed inside the quotation marks in a written work. Data were organised and grouped together into themes so that it can be easily interpreted. McMillian and Schumacher (2001:466) argues that data cannot be interpreted unless it is organised and grouped together. In this chapter, the views of the participants are categorised under various thematic strands and relevant documents analysis will also be explored as part of the findings.

4.2. INTERVIEW PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION

The participants of this study comprised one Head of Department (HoD), one Senior Education Specialist or Senior Lecturer, one Lecturer and two Student Support Services staff members. They were chosen from all three campuses, using purposeful sampling. The following codes were assigned to each participant to protect their identity:

- ❖ Student support services staff - Participant GTC100
- ❖ Student support services staff - Participant GTC200
- ❖ Senior Lecturer - Participant GTC300
- ❖ Senior Lecturer - Participant GTC400
- ❖ Lecturer - Participant GTC500

4.3.   PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS (BIOGRAPHIC DATA)

Age and gender were not perceived to have any significant impact on the perceptions of the students' performance and academic support but it was necessary to indicate the gender balance thereof. The study indicates that the average age of the participants is 38, thus supporting the assertion of Kheza (2018) that the majority of TVET college staff is below the age of 40.

Table 1: Biographic data of participants

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	TVET EXPERIENCE	QUALIFICATIONS
SSS staff member	40	F	10	BA degree, Hon. Psychology, PGCE, MA (Clinical Psychology)
SSS staff member	29	F	2	B.Human and Societal dynamics N. Dip Labour Law
Lecturer	46	M	14	Bachelor of Education
Senior Lecturer	34	M	7	-
HOD: Academic	42	M	18	-

The above information on the participants' experience and qualifications was required in order to present a profile of the participants in this study. Lecturers are resource persons during the process of teaching and learning or in class. And they are expected to apply suitable and appropriate teaching methods for successful teaching and learning and to achieve the required objectives. It is therefore imperative that lecturers are academically astute and that they be subject experts as well. It was found that the majority of the participants were in possession of a three-year diploma qualification. Moreover, the

academic staff is well trained for school level pedagogy instead of vocational pedagogy. Hence the argument by Kheza (2018) that there is a skills mismatch within the TVET sector. This also repeats the argument of Johnson (2012) that the sector battles to recruit and retain subject specialists. Lecturers and SSS staff members play a vital role in assisting students to achieve their academic excellence and also guide them towards their career goals. It may be difficult to achieve all these if lecturers are inexperienced and under-qualified. During engagements with the participants, the researcher found that there are lecturers employed by the sector as artisans, thus reducing further the minimum employment level for the sector. Radile (2018) reveals that there are three components of academic staff entailing lecturers, artisans and occupational programme specialists.

The inclusion of SSS staff members was based on the role that they play in supporting lecturers and students to achieve their academic goals and objectives. That support can be in different ways depending on the need from the students and lecturers. However, Maimane (2016) recommends that the focus should be on emotional and social needs of the students so that they can be encouraged to persist in college. The lecturers and SSS staff must have appropriate qualifications and adequate experience to be able to do their job effectively and efficiently. The selected participants possess more than two years' experience in the TVET sector which enables them to clearly understand the operations of the sector and the support needed by the lecturers and students.

4.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The content of data presented must match the research questions and objectives of the study in order to give meaning to the presented data. To ensure that the overall aim of this study is achieved, data was presented with a careful consideration of the following research objective:

- ❖ To understand the influence of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on throughput rate.
- ❖ To identify strategies that TVET colleges use to support students academically.
- ❖ To determine practices of improving throughput rate.
- ❖ To determine guidelines that could be developed to improve throughput rate.

The following questions were asked during the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, excluding the follow-up questions. All the research questions were addressed. All the participants were asked the same questions for consistency and fairness.

- ❖ Which factors influence the student academic performance at the selected college?
- ❖ What is the role of students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?
- ❖ How does the college support students?
- ❖ In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples.
- ❖ What is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?
- ❖ How do you perceive the effectiveness of current Student Support Services offered by the college?
- ❖ How does the of students' academic support influence academic performance?
- ❖ Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?
- ❖ Which strategies does the selected TVET college in the Free State use to support students academically?

4.5. EMERGING THEMES FROM INTERVIEW DATA

Themes emerging from the data were developed from the direct transcription of what the participants raised or said about their views, opinions and experiences on the students' academic support and the throughput rate at the college. In this study, the researcher presented the data in the form of written words after being recorded and transcribed. The written words were then categorised according to themes and they were later analysed using coding to give clear description of identified elements from the text. It will be found that there will be overlaps between themes as they are discussed and interpreted with selected responses from the data. The thematic analysis that the researcher performed on the interview manuscripts yielded the following themes:

Figure 1: Emerging themes from interview data

THEME 1	THEME 2	THEME 3	THEME 4
• Factors influencing the throughput rate.	• Students' access and usage of SSS.	•Effectiveness of the SSS.	•Strategies used by other colleges to support students
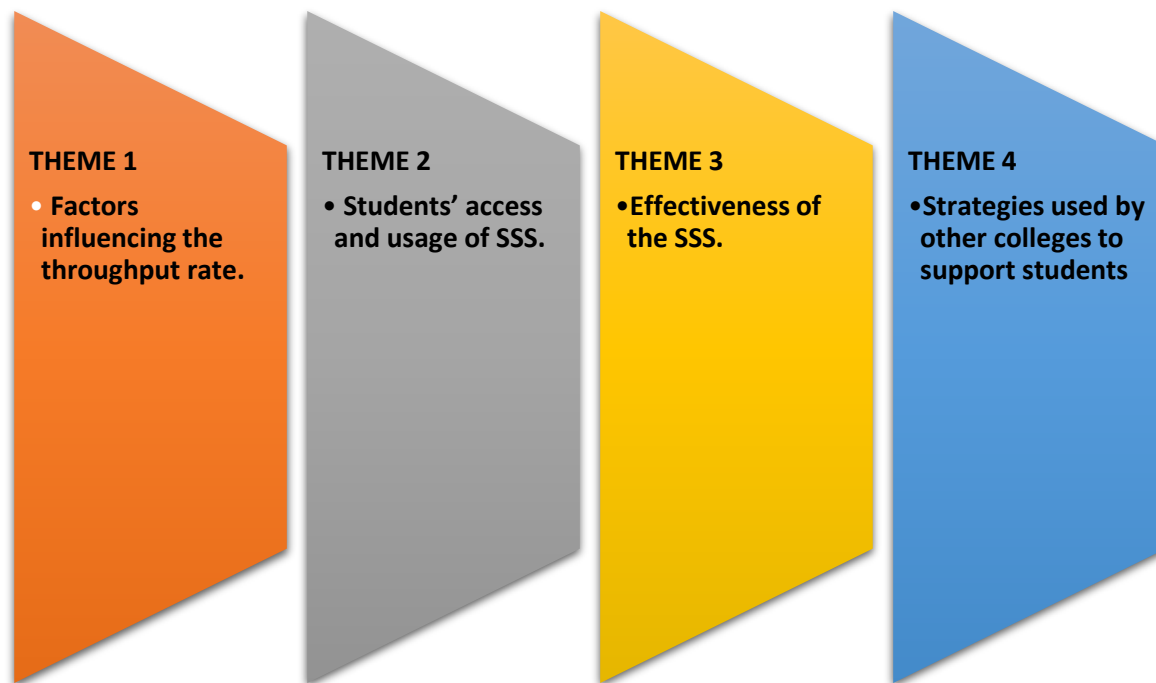
4.5.1. Factors influencing the throughput rate

One of the questions raised with the participants was to indicate factors that influence the throughput rates at the selected college and several factors were identified. Through the data collected during the research interviews, it was evident that there are multiple factors that influence the college throughput rate. This is against the endless efforts and government resources invested in the TVET sector in an attempt to improve students' performance and quality of education provided at the TVET colleges. Taking into consideration the initiatives that focus on improving the TVET colleges, the students' performance should have increased and the colleges should have been able to reduce factors that influence the students' performance and the throughput rate negatively. These factors will be discussed below.

Figure 2: Factors influencing the throughput rate
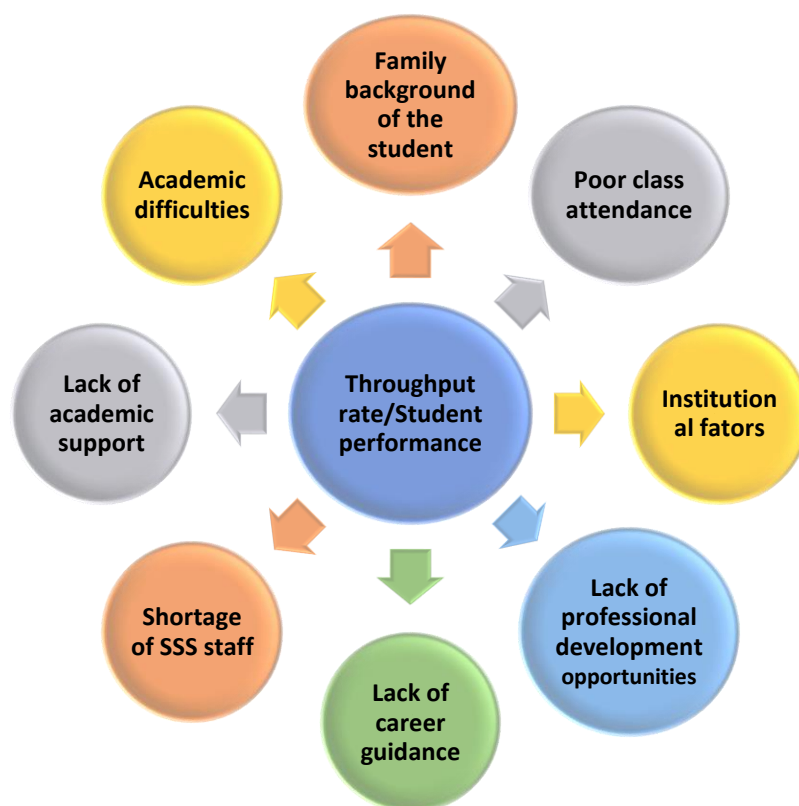
4.5.1.1.   Family backgrounds of the students

The development of students' learning behaviours and habits cannot be separated from the continuing influence of their surroundings, mostly their parents, families and communities that they live in or grew up in. Students come from different families with different dynamics, economic status and also from different communities. A common view amongst the participants was that students' family backgrounds influence their academic performance and throughput rate. Participant GTC400 mentioned the negative effect of violence in education within the community where the student comes from. Here is what he said:

"…some of the students come from backgrounds (mo holeng hore- where you will find) there is always violence or the area itself is violent, the area itself is not supportive to education you know, so they find it harder, you know, to come to school…"

Considering the above response, it means that the community where the student comes from has an influence on his or her academic performance. In support of this statement, McGaba-Garnett (2008) argues that there is a negative colouration between violence, student academic achievement and appropriate students' behaviour in the classroom. If students are exposed to violence from their homes or communities, this can reduce their academic progress and increase disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

Education institutions rely on the functionality of families and communities and if there is a dysfunctionality then there are less chances of academic excellence. This means that parents, communities and education institutions must work hand in hand in order to achieve the objectives of education. Participants GTC200 and GTC400 indicated that there is a lack of support from families of the students. GTC400 remarked below:

"Then you, we've got family factors as well, there were learners (mo eleng fore- where) from the family itself they are not supported or encouraged or motivated anyhow, when it comes to education. So, to them studying is just something that happens by magic. So, it's not something which they are being driven from their homes"

The above response reveals that there is lack of parents' involvement and support on their children's education. This finding is in support of the findings of Lara and Saracostti (2019) and Cole (2017) who argue that parents' involvement is a key component to any student's education, and for any student to perform well academically, parents must be involved and participate in the education process. The participants did not indicate the reasons for the non-involvement of the parents in education. The researcher was made to believe that there are many factors that may lead to non-involvement of parents in education, being the level of parents' education and the economic status of the families of the students. Akessa and Dhufera (2015) argue that there is an ultimate connection between students' academic performance and their parents' level of education and the economic status of their families. They further indicated that parents who have a further education qualification are more involved in their children's education than those who do not have a tertiary qualification. Parents can be involved in their children's education by discussing school-related issues with their children and teachers, checking and assisting the children with their homework and participating in school activities.

The researcher can conclude that the students' family backgrounds, including violence at home or in the community, parents' involvement in their children's education and the level of parents' education have an influence in the students' academic achievement.

4.5.1.2. Academic difficulties

Academic performance is critical in the life of students in a tertiary institution like a TVET college. In order for students to do well in their studies, they have to cope academically. In view of this assertion, to a significant extent, the participants hold a view that students are challenged academically and are not able to cope with the demands of the college because of the two reasons that were revealed by the interviews. Firstly, the lack of preparation for or information about the TVET college and its operations. Students come to the college not knowing what is happening and what the college offers. They then realise once they are already registered that the environment and expectations are different to those of the basic education and that even the syllabus is much broader and more challenging. Flowing from these assertions, participant GTC300 notes:

"All of a sudden they come in to an NCV course where it is actually not easier than a school, they sit with this multitude of problems where they have to all of a sudden be at a higher level, also in NCV for example have now practical's in which they don't even have in schools which put more of a burden on them".

Secondly, the students lack basic foundation in the subject content and find it difficult to pass their subjects, particularly Mathematics and English. Commenting on this aspect, participant GTC300 further posited:

"…they struggle with English; they struggle with Mathematics. They cannot have, they do not have the basic foundation", When you try and engage with those learners then talk about, they are still struggling, they don't see themselves passing English, Maths, Life Orientation especially the vocational subjects and they just give up."

This study found that students are not prepared for the TVET sector and lack proper foundation or basic information on the content or subjects, and they struggle with the

TVET curriculum. To confirm this finding, Nzembe (2018) found that TVET college students are underprepared for the TVET curriculum.

4.5.1.3. Poor class attendance

Attendance of classes by students is an imperative. When students absent themselves from the classes they miss a great deal of valuable information and this has a negative impact on their general performance. The majority of the participants identified poor class attendance as a factor that influences the throughput rate at the college. The interviews revealed that many students do not attend classes due to various reasons. Here is what participant GTC500 had to say:

"I would say students' attendance. Negatively would say we have a very high err poor attendance with the NCV and that also influence it negatively"

Participants GTC100, GTC300 and GTC400 mentioned the lack of finances, peer pressure and drug abuse as some of the reasons why students do not attend classes. They went further to elaborate on this matter by indicating that some students do not have transport money to come to the college and attend classes. This also affects the NSFAS beneficiaries who receive their allowances very late. Participant GTC300 indicated that there is also a trend at the college where students would attend some classes and not attend others more especially after break as they would sit at the back of the college building and play games or do drugs. This might also be influenced by teaching methods practised by TVET lecturers in classes (Mlambo, 2011:79).

Attending classes gives students an opportunity to take notes and ask their lecturers questions for clarity as they are the subjects' specialists. If a student does not attend classes, they cannot participate in class activities and tasks that are part of the student's final mark. In supporting this assertion, participant GTC300 argues that,

"If they cannot be in class they miss out on work, they miss out on tasks and eventually they end up not err, if they qualify for the exam."

In further agreeing with this point of view, participant GTC400 strongly argued that,

"If they don't attend, they miss some of the lessons and they fail because of some policies, they fail some subjects, then at the end they won't make it."

TVET college students must get a minimum ICASS mark of 50% in all vocational subjects, 40% in Life Orientation and First Additional Language, and 30% in Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy for them to qualify to write the examination for each subject (ICASS Guidelines for the NCV Qualifications, 2019). If a student fails to acquire a minimum requirement in a particular subject, then that student will not qualify to write an examination in that subject. Durden and Ellis (1995), Kassarnig (2017) and Fadelelmoula (2018) acknowledge that there is a relationship between class attendance and academic performance. Similarly, Ali, Jusof, Mokhtar and Salamat (2009) report that when students attend class frequently, their academic performance improve.

4.5.1.4. Institutional factors (college factors)

In education, infrastructure can be any suitable and safe space where teaching or leaning can take place (UNICEF, 2013). Adequate buildings, classrooms, laboratories and appropriate equipment in education are significant in the process of teaching and learning at school, TVET college or university. Students spend most of their time at the college during the week and a healthy and safe environment is crucial for them to be motivated to stay longer during the day. Day-to-day teaching and learning take place in the classroom, students make use of the library to study, conduct research and do other work. They use the fields for extramural activities. For these reasons, the college infrastructure is very important in ensuring a successful education system. It is a fact that every college infrastructure is different and college infrastructural needs and requirement differ based on various factors, including the type of courses that they offering.

Participants GTC400 and GTC500 indicated that the processes, procedures, policies and infrastructure within the college influence the college's throughput rate. The researcher is of the view that if the college infrastructure is not adequate for lecturers to perform their duties and for students to learn then the performance of the students can be affected negatively. Here is what the participant (GTC400) said:

"So among others you have those factors, then the institution itself is also a factor, if you look at the policies, the processes, the type of staff they have, you know, the infrastructure they have, they also play a role there, in the throughput rates, I can mention those few."

Participant GTC500 made a specific reference to infrastructural challenges that impact on the students' academic performance in the Hospitality Department. The college cannot cater for the curriculum needs of the hospitality course and it creates problems for the students and lecturers. Here is what he had to say:

"Our college has got one kitchen, and we need to in our hospitality department we need to run practical's up to five o clock just to fit in the practical's, so we cannot do functions, we cannot do coffee shops, we cannot cater for outside things because we don't have a second kitchen"

In light of the above response, the researcher can conclude that the institution itself plays a role in the academic performance of the student. To support this finding, Lizzio, Wilson and Simons (2002) argue that the students' academic performance is significantly influenced by the institutional environment and facilities. However, contrary to the above statement, the study conducted by Ogbogu (2014) revealed that institutional factors alone do not have a significant effect on students' performance.

4.5.1.5. Lack of professional development opportunities

Lecturers are regarded as the most significant factor that influences students' academic performance. Poor students' performance in schools and higher education institutions have gained attention by most researchers and the government. Mgijima (2014) argues that the low throughput rate and high drop-out rate among NCV students in TVET colleges are the symptoms of poor teaching and learning. Furthermore, Al Mutairi (2011) indicates that although there are several factors that influence students' academic performance, lecturers' competencies are the main determinants of students' academic progress. Taking into consideration the significance of lecturers' contribution and influence in the life of a student, it is imperative for lecturers to continuously enhance their skills and competencies so that they can positively influence students' performance. There is a

need for lecturers to be developed so that they can become relevant to the objectives of the education sector.

The quality of lecturing and education that is provided in the classroom is essential. Lecturers must possess knowledge and skills that will enable them to deal with the challenges of the 21st century classroom. And to retain skilled workforce in the education sector, the department needs to look for different approaches to stimulate their professional development. SACE (2008:3) defines professional development as a process of upgrading and expanding lecturers' competencies for successful curriculum delivery using appropriate pedagogies and encouraging students to achieve academic goals.

Four participants (GTC200, GTC300, GTC400 and GTC500) indicated that for students to perform well academically and for the college to achieve its objective including improving the throughput rate, it needs staff members who are qualified and those with the right or positive attitude towards their work. The other issues that were raised by the participants are the qualifications and specialisation of the staff. They indicated that some lecturers are not qualified or trained to teach certain subjects, particularly in the engineering campus, and many of them are not able to identify students' needs. They further mentioned that some lecturers have qualifications that they received more than twenty years ago, and have not received any recent academic or professional development and that that affects their productivity. Emphasising this point of view, participant GTC500 strongly argued:

"It really makes them negative and they feel after a while, why must be in a classroom try excelling but I'm not being developed. I'm still siting with my 20 years old certificate of diploma and I haven't been refreshed after that. I think that is something that we need to look at. Not so much to develop new guidelines or new policy but rather to take what we have and just to fine-tune it and just make sure that it is implemented properly".

Further indicating the importance of professionally developing staff members, participant GTC200 claimed:

"Trained, qualified and dedicated lecturers have a very important and imperative role to play. I also believe that trained, qualified and dedicated student support services personnel also have value to add with that regard and staff member across all colleges need to have an attitude of going an extra mile for our students"

The above response indicates that lecturers who not adequately qualified are fundamental in influencing academic performance of students. This assertion confirms the strongly-held views of Mgijima and Morobe (2012), cited in chapter 2, when they argue that one of the factors that influence college students' academic performance is unqualified and under-qualified lecturers. This is also confirmed by the responses given by the participants. Moreover, the study found that lecturers are not being developed even though it is evident that most of them are not qualified or are under-qualified. Reasons for this lack of development are not given. TVET college lecturers' performance is assessed in terms of Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). One of the lecturer's roles stipulated in this document is that lecturers should develop a personal growth plan and then submit it to Senior Management Team (SMT) and Staff Development Team (SDT). It is the responsibility of the SMT and SDT to train all teachers. The researcher is of the view that IQMS is not being implemented properly if there is still lack of lecturers' development at the college.

4.5.1.6. Lack of career guidance

Career choice is the most important decision of every individual. Choosing a career that matches the interest, skill set, values, morals and principles of a person can increase the chances of success, fulfilment and satisfaction in a person's life. Every individual, particularly students, need to be helped and guided to make informed decisions to choose careers and improve employability. The participants showed a great concern regarding the lack of career guidance at the college. In confirming this view, participant GTC400 pointed his views this way:

"Another problem that we can find more now if I look at the perspective of the college is career guidance, or if I talk about career guidance, program guidance which is I think where we are lacking as colleges, because many of our learners' register, sometimes

they register because it's the only space they can get in a particular program without receiving the correct guidance in the system"

It is the function of SSS to make sure that students receive proper career guidance before they enrol at the college as stipulated in the Student Support Services Framework (2008) and Student Support Services Manual (2009). The above response shows that SSS is not doing a proper job in guiding students on the career choices. Students might end up registering wrong courses if this issue is not addressed and it can have a negative impact on the throughput rates. Participant GTC400 further stated that the lack of career guidance sometimes leads to students dropping out because after few months most students feel pressure and they then realise that the course that they have registered for is not what they initially wanted to study. As participant GTC400 put it:

"Now they sit in a program and all of a sudden after two, or three months they realise this is not what I want to do then what happens? They drop out. Err if students…. They know what it is they want, but come here, you will find a student who used to be captured, still confused of the course they want to enrol for, and my understanding is that should not be the case if you are having student support services at the college"

It is very important for students to enrol for the right programmes or courses that match their abilities, interests and aptitude in order to avoid dropping out later on (Maimane, 2016). This study found that there is lack of career guidance at the college and this leads to poor students' academic performance and it impacts on the student dropouts. This finding is against the requirements of the SSS Framework (2008) that the component of student support should ensure that all students access the institution and that they are supported through career counselling and guidance programmes to enable them to succeed in the institution.

4.5.1.7. Shortage of SSS staff

The SSS contributes to the welfare of all the students at the college. Zungu and Munakandafa (2014) argue that the SSS focuses on assisting students with the basic knowledge about the college requirements, creates opportunities for students' academic development and motivates students to successfully achieve their academic goals.

Interviews revealed that the SSS department is understaffed and that has a negative influence in the effectiveness and performance of its staff. As a department, they are unable to implement certain programmes because they need specialised knowledge. Students' academic needs would not be met as a result of this challenge because outstanding personnel is a necessity for education to be excellent (Lucas, Spencer & Claxton, 2012:13). Participant GTC100 expressed her views as follows:

"Currently the SSS department is not that effective because we are understaffed, we only have one student counsellor for all four campuses. If you check the ratio is 1:5000 which is not normal so I think that the executive management should hire more student counsellors so that we can be effective. But though we are not that effective we are still providing services to our students"

To support this view, Dhillon et al. (2005) argue that student support services department may suffer from inadequate staffing. This finding supports the study of Mahlo (2011) who argues that SSS is unable to address identified students' learning barriers because they are under-resourced.

4.5.1.8. Lack of academic support

All students need academic support during their time at college. However, this does not mean that a student must get special treatment from a lecturer. DHET (2013) defines academic support as the effort taken by the institution to assist students in their learning process to meet learning standards by using a wide variety of teaching methods, provide adequate resources and educational services. The lack of academic support has been identified as one of the factors that have an influence on the college throughput rate. Talking about this issue, participants GTC300 and GTC400 were in agreement and below are their respective views:

"The lecturer also has a large role to play in the throughput rate. And then I think academic support throughout the years crucial, we honestly as a college have been lacking to give especially the NCV learners continuous support. Not just from inside the classroom but outside the classroom."

"The only time that the college is trying to be involved is when we are approaching the exams that's where they have this exam prayers, motivation and so forth, but throughout the year err presence of the college in trying to assist students is seem non-existent.

Because of the existence of the SSS at the college the researcher deemed it necessary to find out what is it that the department is doing to support students academically. Participant GTC200 indicated that the college is currently offering life skills and study skills programmes, peer support, counselling services, HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse support programmes. However, participant GTC500 indicated that these support programmes are not adequate, and many students do not access these services due to various reasons.

Participant GTC100 shared a different view that at the college they conduct psychometric tests for all NCV level 2 students before they register for any course in order to identify their strengths, weaknesses and interest. This is done so that they can be given informed advice on the career, course or subject choices and also provide academic support once they have been registered. It is a very good strategy according to the participant (GTC100) as it is perceived to be what the DHET expects from the SSS. However, participant GTC500 pointed out that the results of the tests are not shared with the lecturers so that they can assist the students in their classes. Participant GTC500 further argued that they only receive information about a particular student who needs support mid-year and that it is too late to provide proper support to that student. In support of this view, Maimane (2016) argues that it is sometimes too late to support a student if a support need has been identified mid-year or in the final examinations. Maimane (2016) further argues that the early identification of an academic support need is significant to students, lecturers and the institution itself so that they can be able to determine where to find the required support or how to offer support.

From the responses given it is evident that the participants are of the view that students are not being supported academically. They mentioned that the SSS only relies on the referrals from the academic staff, meaning that they do not necessarily go out of their offices to do some students' academic support programmes. The researcher found that the college does not start with their academic programmes from the beginning of the year,

but they do it late in the year and fail to address students' needs or even close the gaps that might be there in classes to improve student's performance. This finding is in conflict with the study conducted by Kotze (2008:123) and Karp et al. (2008) who suggest that all student support systems, including the academic support, should always be available so that the college can be able to address the various needs of the students. This means that if the quality of support is poor then the students' academic performance is going to be affected negatively.

4.5.2. Students' access and usage of the SSS

Students' academic achievement is still a major concern because of various challenges experienced by students in the learning environment. Brock (2010) indicates that higher education enrolments have increased significantly over the years but students' academic progress is still a problem. TVET colleges attract students with different education backgrounds and ages, particularly in the NCV programme because the minimum entrance requirement is grade 9. However, the colleges find themselves enrolling students who have completed grades between 9 and 12 in this programme. The diversified student populace accessing higher education institutions is faced with varying challenges that require different stakeholders to intervene and provide the necessary support. Moreover, SSS should provide support that will counter the challenges of the students. It is imperative to create an opportunity for students to access and use an appropriate student-support system that suits their needs and enables them to achieve their academic goals.

The participants were asked about the student's access and usage of the SSS. They were not satisfied with the way the students are using or accessing the services offered by the department and here is what participant GTC400 said:

"Not in a way that one can say it is satisfactory. (Clearing throat) why am I saying that. Uhm firstly for you to use something you need to know that it exists and how can you use it to your benefit, so if you don't than you can't use it"

One of the reasons indicated by participant GTC400 is that the students are not using the SSS satisfactorily because most of them do not have adequate information about the

services that the SSS department offers. This view was also confirmed by participant GTC100 who indicated that the students are orientated only once at the beginning of the year. This means that those who could not attend the induction would not have information about the services that are offered in the SSS department. According to the SSS Framework (2008), the SSS department should ensure that all students within the college, including previously excluded or disadvantaged groups such as women and the disabled, are given every opportunity to access the institution and to succeed. It is therefore the responsibility of the SSS to create an opportunity for the students to access all the services that are provided by this vital component of the college.

4.5.3. The ineffectiveness of the SSS

In the above theme, it was discussed that students do not access or use students support services satisfactorily. The importance of the student support services cannot be over-emphasised for the obvious reason that it contributes to the well-being of the student and their holistic academic success. The SSS should not only focus on students' access to their services but they also need to look at the effectiveness of the department and their programmes as this might also have an impact on the level of students' access and usage of student support services offered by the college. Lea and Farbus (2000:23) argue that SSS is an educational necessity that can benefit all stakeholders and Fryer (2014) emphasises the importance of effective student support as it has an impact on the students' academic performance.

The participants were asked about their views, opinions or perceptions about the effectiveness of the current student support services at the college. All the participants raised their dissatisfaction with the work that is being done by the SSS staff saying that they are offering very poor service that even led to some lecturers and student losing trust in the department. The view of participant GTC400 is given below.

"So, the effectiveness of the student support services is very very low, they have got well trained people, err I'm not sure about the experience but they've got adequately trained people, but their services are not so good"

Services that are provided to students are not of a good quality and this can lead to some of them dropping out of the college because their needs cannot be met or they cannot be assisted appropriately. To confirm this view, LUMEN (2013: 163) argues that if students are not provided with effective SSS they will not have academic, social and emotional connection with the institution and they would likely give up on their studies.

4.5.4. Strategies used by other colleges to support students academically

Bevoise (1986:9) put emphasis on the importance of collaboration between education institutions with the aim of improving the way students learn. The purpose of the question that was asked about strategies used by other colleges was to identify the possibility of the existence of linkages or collaboration between the SSS staff or lecturers and other colleges. The researcher was made to believe that SSS staff and lecturers do not collaborate with other colleges or just to find out or share best practices with other colleges. This conclusion was influenced by the following response from participant GTC200:

"Like I say, I'm not in a position to fully confirm, I honestly do not know what other colleges do to improve academic support."

Further supporting the assertions above, participant GTC500 commented this way:

"I'm not informed of what other colleges are doing."

The above responses are in contrast with the social capital theory that promotes collaboration, integration and unity in the education community. This means that educational institutions must work together to find better ways to build students and prepare them for the future.

4.6.   FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The following documents were obtained and analysed:

Table 2: Document analysis

No	Emerged Theme	Document	Content analysed
1	Drop-out rates	Welkom campus subject statistics per subject and level (2018/2019)	Students enrolments
		DHET Annual Report (2018/2019)	Pass rate
		Education Series Volume V: Higher Education and Skills in South Africa 2017	Certification rate Performance overview on TVET
		Statistics on Post- School Education and Training in South Africa 2016	National examinations and assessments
		Statistics on TVET, CET and Private examination 2015	System performance (TVET) NCV graduation rate

The researcher made use of document analysis with an attempt of bringing together evidence that will breed credibility of this study (Denzin, 1970:291). Bowen (2009) describes the document analysis as a form of qualitative research whereby the researcher interprets various documents to give them meaning. The researcher scanned twenty-five documents, however, only six were chosen and analysed following the eight-step process offered by O'Leary (2014). During the process of document analysis, the researcher took

into consideration the research questions and the aims and objectives of the research. The documents that were analysed were requested and received with the college principal's permission from the Quality Assurance office. These documents entail information that is relevant to the SSS and NCV students' performance or results.

4.6.1. Emerging theme from document analysis data

4.6.1.1. Student drop-out rate

According to Seidman (2005), "dropout" refers to any individual leaving an educational institution without or before completing a qualification. Similarly, Lamb, Markussen, Tesse and Sandberg (2011) define the term "dropout" as a person who leaves school, college or university without gaining a qualification or graduating. Data collected from the above-mentioned documents revealed that 36% of NCV L2 students who wrote examinations in 2013 sat for NCV L4 examination in 2015 and 41% of students who wrote NCV L2 examinations in 2014 managed to write NVC L4 examinations in 2016. This clearly shows that around 60% of students that enrol in NCV L2 do not make it to NCV L4 at the expected time. The researcher also found that NCV students' enrolments dropped significantly from NCV L2 to NCV L4. Even though a number of students who fail each level should be taken into consideration, the researcher is of a view that NCV student dropout rates are much higher that the failure rate. This is evident in the Welkom Campus Subject Statistics per Subject and Level (2018/2019), as they show the average pass rate of 84% in all levels.

The Department of Higher Education and Training Annual Report 2018/2019 identified three factors that influence students' dropout rate, namely, (a) students' lack of foundational academic knowledge, (b) curriculum that does not respond to the labour market and (c) late payments from NSFAS. The researcher can conclude that all these factors lead to higher rates of students' dropout which is one of the factors that influence the college throughput rate. To confirm this finding, Mdluli (2017) argues that students' dropout affects the performance of the college.

4.7. RELATING THE STUDY FINDINGS TO THE SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

Social capital is a sociological terminology that can be defined as connections within and between social networks (Imandoust, 2011). There seems to be no unanimous definition of social capital as it has been given a variety of definitions that refers to its manifestation rather than the theory itself (Fakuyama, 1999). However, many of these definitions tend to share the common idea that social capital has value. The central idea of social capital is that relationships matter and social networks are valuable. When students register at the college they become part of the TVET college community and interaction amongst themselves and the college management is of value to the sector. Students' parents and their families form part of the college community. Therefore, social capital is seen as a glue that holds societies or communities together and without it there is a likelihood that they will collapse. Green and Preston (2001) state that social capital has become a flexible theoretical tool that can be used by different sectors, including education, to explain a wide variety of problems. This shows that social capital benefits the education sector as a whole, including academic success. The TVET sector is currently facing the challenge of students' underperformance and low throughput rate (DHET, 2013d). In Social Capital Theory, the factors that affect students' academic performance differ from one setting to another and there is no one specific reason why students fail (Acar, 2011). Students' performance is influenced by many factors that surround the students and the institution itself. These factors can either be positive or negative. This study also found eight factors that influence students' performance.

Putman (2000) provides four ways to get value form social connections, and they are discussed below:

- ❖ Information
    - ▪ People get information as they meet and interact with one another. This is very important in education where students get valuable information when interacting with other students, lecturers and support staff. This study found that students do not access or use available SSS satisfactorily. One of the reasons for students not accessing or using these services is a lack of information about the services offered by the SSS department or even its

existence in the college. The college is not doing enough to inform and educate students about the SSS as students are informed about the department only once a year during the induction programme. The study also found that the college does not provide the students with enough information before registration so that they can choose courses accordingly. These findings compromise social capital as it depends on the flow of information.

❖ Reciprocity or mutual aid

- People need to support each other. The college management needs to support lecturers and students by providing them with all the necessary resources that they need in order to achieve their objectives. The study found that there is a shortage of the SSS staff, physical and financial resources that impact on the functions and productivity of both the SSS and academic department. The study also found that there is a lack of academic support at the college. This shows that the lecturers and SSS staff do not support students with their academic needs and this leads to the students being frustrated and unable to succeed in their studies.

❖ Collective action

- The Social Capital Theory promotes the inclusion of everyone in education. It relies on unity amongst all those who have a role to play in education. This is also in support of the Student Services Manual (2009) that aims at closing the gaps and upholding the principle of integration of everyone in the SSS. The SSS is seen as the responsibility of those who are employed under the SSS department and academic support is seen as the responsibility of those who are employed in the academic department. The study of Francis (1998) found that voluntary participation of parent-teacher associations, school communities and other grass-roots organisations contribute significantly to the schools' infrastructure, maintenance and security and also improve the schools' enrolments and attendance. The study also found that there is a lack of collaboration between the academic and SSS staff in supporting the students and that the lecturers and SSS staff do not collaborate with other colleges or share best practices. Aslandogan and Cetin (2007) state that lecturers who are

committed to the education and success of the students tend to be selfless and offer help to students thereby attracting parents and other stakeholders. Putman (2000) shows a concern about the weakening of relationships amongst societies or communities that results in people losing benefits of social connections.

- ❖ Identity and solidarity
  - ▪ This study found that everyone that is part of the TVET college environment has a role to play in the students' academic support. It is of paramount importance for all these people to develop a mentality of "we" instead of "I". Once there is solidarity among staff members then the students will feel empowered and develop a sense of trust in the college and its staff. According to Maslow (1945), people possess a need for sense of belonging and acceptance in groups that they find themselves in. The students also need to belong, and they need to be cared for and supported so that they can stay at the college until they complete their studies. The researcher can conclude that social capital influences the students' behaviour and development. This view is supported by Israel, Beaulieu and Hartless (2001) who state that social capital reduces students' dropout rate and improves students' enrolments.

Social capital can be regarded as an important factor that influences educational outcomes. This means that education and social capital have a two-way relationship, where social capital is not only a critical input for education but is also one of its valuable by-products for success. Social capital in education depends more on multiple social networks or social connections for educational achievement. If these networks and connections are weakened, then social capital collapses.

4.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with data presentation in the form of themes that emerged from the interviews and document analysis. The experiences of the participants from the college were captured. The responses of the participants were reported verbatim, using italics. Five documents were analysed to authenticate the credibility of the study. The findings have revealed that there are various factors that influence the throughput rate at the college. Moreover, the students' support service is seen as the responsibility of the SSS staff or department which should not be the case. Students' support services should be the responsibility of all in the college, and everyone must play a role.

The findings also revealed that the college is offering few student support programmes to the students, more especially academic support. However, the college's SSS is believed to be non-effective and more still needs to be done to improve its provision of these services. As a result, the researcher is tempted to argue that the students' academic support at the college is not adequate and this has a negative influence on the throughput rate. Document analysis also demonstrate that there is more that needs to be done in terms of the students' academic support so that the throughput rate can be improved. The findings of the study are also related to social capital as a theory.

5. CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings at a different level of interpretation; to draw conclusions indicating that the research questions have been addressed in an applicable manner, with data from the semi-structured interviews, document analysis and the literature that includes books, journals and article, identify the strengths and limitations of the study together with recommendations for TVET managers and for further research. The following research questions were linked to the findings, as referred to in this chapter:

- ❖ What is the influence of students' academic support on throughput rate?
- ❖ Which strategies do TVET colleges use to support students academically?
- ❖ What are best practices of improving throughput rate?
- ❖ What guidelines could be developed to improve throughput rate

5.2. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 provided introduction with the background, rationale behind the research, problem statement, aims and objectives, research questions and scope of the research. As this chapter is the introduction of the entire study, it outlined the motivation as to why the study was undertaken.

Chapter 2 presented an extensive review of the literature regarding the students' academic support and throughput rate. Theoretical framework used in this study is social capital. It seeks to explain the value of social networks and social connections in various settings (Putman, 2000). Similarly, Rogosic and Baranovic (2016) argue that social capital explains the impact of the social role in the development of human capital, which is measured by the level of education. The rationale for incorporating this theory in this study is because education does not operate in isolation, it is connected and integrated with factors that surround it. In this chapter, literature based the NCV students' academic support and throughput rate was extensively consulted.

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology that incorporated the research design, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, and data analysis of the study. The college lecturers and SSS staff members from the three college campuses were sampled. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from the selected participants. This sampling technique assisted the researcher to derive in-depth knowledge through semi-structured interviews from relevant participants. Document analysis was also conducted.

Chapter 4 dealt with the presentation, interpretation and analyses of data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis and the findings of the study were discussed at a later stage in this chapter. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data by transcribing the interviews. This approach was used so that the researcher could look for a wider pattern from the responses or data collected from the participants, and conduct a more detailed analysis.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the entire study, followed by the main findings, recommendations, limitations and conclusion.

5.3.   SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The following subsections will be a presentation of summative reflections on the crucial findings of the empirical research through qualitative research approach. The researcher will also briefly provide a discussion of each finding. The data collected through the semi-structured interviews and document analysis revealed the following findings of this study:

5.3.1. Factors influencing students' academic performance

When it comes to the reasons for good or poor students' academic performance there is no one-size-fits-all or a blanket approach, meaning there is no one specific reason why students pass or fail. The literature analysed in chapter 2 (section 2.5) indicated that there are many factors that influence students' underperformance. This study also found that there are various factors that influence the NCV students' academic performance and the college throughput rate which are now presented in summary, namely:

5.3.1.1. Family backgrounds of the students

Students come from different families and communities with different backgrounds and circumstances. Some communities are overwhelmed by gangsterism and violence. This influences the level of interest that a child will have in education and the level of parents' participation and involvement in education. Parents who are educated tend to be more involved in their children's education than those who are not educated and this affects students' academic performance. Data indicates that the family background of the students contributes towards their willingness to study, perform at the required level and complete a qualification.

5.3.1.2. Poor class attendance

In this study, it was generally found that poor class attendance reduces students' chances to meet examination requirements and also influences students' ability to perform well in their examinations. Students do not attend classes regularly because of different reasons. Data reveal that when students are absent from classes, they lose out on the work that is being done that day and they are unable to get clarity from lecturers if they do not understand. Even though the DHET introduced a policy on attendance and punctuality in 2013 to manage students' class attendance, poor class attendance remains a challenge in the TVET sector as it also influences the throughput rate of the college.

5.3.1.3. Institutional factors: Poor infrastructure (classrooms, library, sports ground, practicum rooms)

The NCV curriculum requires students to conduct researches and have practical activities for their assessments. If students and lecturers are not provided with the environment that is conducive for them to be able to perform their functions, their overall performance gets affected and also that of the college, including the throughput rate. This study found that the college infrastructure is inadequate or poor in the sense that:

❖ Classes are overcrowded (there are more than 35 students in a class that accommodates 25 students)

❖ Lack of practicum rooms for a course where students must be assessed on practical work (e.g. Hospitality)

❖ Students do not have adequate space to study or conduct research for their assignments.

5.3.1.4. Lack of professional development opportunities

Lecturers' professional development in TVET colleges is contributory to effective delivery of educational programmes. Evidence of poor teaching is noticeable in the poor throughput rates, high dropout rates, low progression and poor completion rates among NCV students in TVET colleges. The study found that the selected college does not create enough opportunities for lecturers to be developed and enhance their knowledge and ability to provide quality education. Identifying students' needs for support and closing gaps or meeting those needs requires certain expertise or capabilities. Lecturers need to stay up to date and conversant with their profession's modern trends so that they can be able to perform their duties accordingly. The developments at TVET colleges necessitate a vital transformation on the part of the lecturers who would greatly benefit from the support of different staff development programmes. The inability to grow lecturers at TVET colleges has an adverse effect on the accomplishment of the objectives of the TVET sector.

5.3.1.5. Lack of career guidance

The data collected indicates that students are not provided with all the necessary information about different courses that the college offers prior to registration so that they can make informed decisions on which course they really want to study. Students then study courses that are available even though those courses are not what they actually wanted to study. This leads to students underperforming academically or some of them even dropping out of the college after a few months.

5.3.1.6. Shortage of SSS staff

The study also revealed that there is a shortage of the SSS staff at the college and this has a great impact on the ability of the department to successfully implement its plans and achieve its objectives.

5.3.1.7. Lack of academic support

The study found that there are no programmes at the college that are meant to support the students academically throughout their studies. The lecturers only rely on the tuition time to cover all aspects of the curriculum and closing gaps that the students may have, leaving behind those who are not on par with others. This affects the students' performance and may lead to them dropping out.

5.3.1.8. Academic difficulties

This study found that the NCV students lack a good foundation or basic subject knowledge. Students mainly struggle with English, Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy. Without adequate student academic support programmes, these students are likely not to perform well in their studies.

5.3.1.9. Students' dropout rate

It was mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.4) that students who enrol at the college have different needs and challenges. Therefore, they expect the college to support them so that they can be able to complete their qualifications. Based on data collected in this study, the NCV students' failure rate is not as high as the dropout rate. The data reveal that about 60% of the NCV students drop out of the college as they move from level 2 to level 4 when they come across challenges and receive no assistance. Students' dropout rate is a worrying factor to the TVET college community. The TVET sector is expected to play a leading role in addressing skills shortages in the country, however, the high students' dropout rate and low throughput rate make the TVET colleges to be incompetent.

5.3.2. Students' academic support strategies

The study found that SSS department has various programmes that they provide to students such as life skills, study skills, HIV/AIDS awareness, psychological assistance. However, these support programmes are provided to students late in the year as they are about to write their final examinations. Students' support should not be a once-off activity, it should be a continuous effort by the college to make sure that students' needs are

catered for. The SSS staff and lecturers are not aware of what other TVET colleges are doing to support students academically. This shows that there is lack of collaboration with other colleges to share good practices.

5.3.3. Ineffectiveness of the SSS department

Empirical data showed that the SSS department is not doing enough to identify students' academic needs early enough and provide the necessary support to students who are academically challenged throughout the year. If students' academic needs are not identified early during the year then the necessary support cannot be provided to them and they will likely not perform well academically, and this is against the aims of improving academic performance and throughput rate. This study also found that the students do not make use of the students' support services satisfactorily because of lack of information about the services offered by the SSS department. Many students are not aware of the existence of the SSS department and its functions. It engages with students once a year, during induction, and relies on referrals from the academic staff or when students voluntarily approach it or officials to seek help. The SSS is not effective in terms of executing their functions as the number of students dropping out of the college is high. The performance of the SSS department is affected by the shortage of staff.

In conclusion, it can be stated that all the research questions were answered, and all the study objectives were achieved.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study derive from the findings and conclusions mentioned above. The focus is to improve the throughput rate at Goldfields TVET College. These recommendations follow the same logical flow as the findings presented in this chapter (Creswell, 2004). Thomas (2014:55) argues that it is the responsibility of every institution to enhance its students' intentions to complete their studies. Similarly, Jensen (2011) emphasises the responsibility of the college to remove or deal with any obstacle that can hinder course completion. The following recommendations can be incorporated into the current or new TVET college policies and strategies to improve students' performance and throughput rate. According to Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda (1992), when

educational institutions are developing and implementing plans and strategies, they must always consider all variables that encourage students to be persistent and to complete their studies. The recommendations of this study focus on variables that are in direct control of the college.

5.4.1. Recommendation 1

Because of the diverse student population that enrol at the TVET college, it is of paramount importance for the college management to create opportunities for lecturers to attend workshops and courses on inclusive education. And, for lecturers who have been at the college for more than ten years to be reskilled and up-skilled.

5.4.2. Recommendation 2

It is recommended that the college should establish networks and partnerships with other stakeholders so that they can assist with specialised knowledge and services that are beyond the capacity and expertise of the college personnel. These partnerships should also be established with other TVET colleges and universities in order to share valuable information on how to administer and utilise students' academic support. Partnerships should be extended to Learner Support and Curriculum directorates at the Department of Basic Education, not only to share good practices but to see how they have been set up and to provide academic support to learners.

5.4.3. Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the college employ other qualified student support services staff members to ease the pressure on the current staff members because these shortages lead to some student support services being neglected.

5.4.4. Recommendation 4

This study recommends that the college should provide students with relevant, plentiful and timeous information on the availability of the student support services. This should not be done only during the students' orientation but it should be a continuous practice

so that all the students can be informed. This information should be shared with the lecturers so as to assist the student referral system of the college.

5.4.5. Recommendation 5

The study recommends that the SSS department should work closely with the NCV programme managers and lecturers to identify students who need academic support and to develop such programmes that can be incorporated in the academic calendar for the assistance of these students.

5.4.6. Recommendation 6

It is recommended that the current aptitude and psychometric tests be administered properly by both the SSS and academic managers prior and after students' registrations. These tests should also include programmes-specific questions in order to determine whether the potential student understands the programmes that he or she is registering for or is interested in.

5.4.7. Recommendation 7

The study's findings discovered that the college infrastructure is poor and inadequate. It is recommended that the current infrastructure be refurbished so that students' needs can be catered for.

5.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study like many other studies was not embarked without limitations. There are fifty TVET colleges in South Africa and the study was aimed at exploring information on only one. Therefore, this study's findings cannot be generalised. The other limitation was that the researcher envisioned to interview student supports services managers to get more insight into their functions. However, they were engaged in other commitments.

5.6.   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher recommends that the study be expanded to the whole province or country to acquire more insight into the implications of the NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate at TVET colleges. Because this study also used only qualitative and document analysis as data collection strategies, it can be further recommended that future research study be conducted in either both qualitative and quantitate studies or quantitative approach. The rationale behind this is that perhaps the results of these suggested studies might add more value to the solutions of the problem that was investigated.

The world is currently facing many challenges as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions are negatively affected as the majority of them had to suspend classes to curb the spread of the virus. It is for this reason that the researcher recommends that more studies be conducted to look at new ways to support TVET college students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with more emphasis being put on the effectiveness of digital or online course delivery. The aim would be to get scientific evidence that will propel TVET colleges to move from the traditional teaching and learning to the digital or online teaching and learning without leaving any student or lecturer behind.

5.7.   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The contributions of the present study are envisioned as follows:

- ❖ The findings of the study would provide insight into the TVET colleges' senior management, college governance councils, SSS and academic managers and policy makers in order to understand the role of the SSS staff and lecturers in the provisioning of students' support services, and the positive impact it may have on students' academic success.
- ❖ The findings would affirm that academic support can be successful if incorporated in the college timetable and monitored and funded accordingly.

❖ The findings would provide the necessary information and advice to the curriculum developers in the TVET sector on the implementation of academic support, who will thus be able to effect improvements that address any problem uncovered.

❖ The findings would also assist the DHET and TVET colleges to see the need to strengthen SSS personnel and ensure that they are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their respective duties.

❖ The findings of the study would further assist the TVET colleges with first-hand information on strategies to support students to succeed academically, enable them to understand factors which contribute to academic success from the students' point of view and find ways of coping with college life.

5.8. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to understand the implications of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rate at Goldfields TVET College in Free State, South Africa and to develop strategies that maximises the NCV students' throughput rate. The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews, which permitted the students support services and academic staff members to relate their encounters and the substances of their experiences inside this TVET college setting. This research provided an understanding into the participants' reality within their role. This permitted the researcher to clearly understand the challenges that they are confronted with, as well as their proposals for a successful student academic support. The findings of this study answered the research questions stated in chapter 1 (section 1.3). Zungu and Munakandafa (2014) maintain that the TVET colleges have been overwhelmed by low pass rates, poor retention and low throughput. Further, Hayter (2015) posits that the expanding awareness of the need for a TVET college qualification has led to the continuous assessment of how to improve in keeping students at the college and also increase the completion rate.

It was found that the low throughput rate at the TVET college is due to changing components. There have been a lot of developments within the TVET segment, and challenges are thus inevitable. State finances and bursaries being utilised without real return on investments as the unemployment rate and poverty keep on increasing. This

could be a genuine and current challenge that the government has with the TVET sector. Adequate support to the college staff can assist in limiting this. According to SSS framework (2008) and SSS manual (2009), there must be a pre-entry, on-course and exit-level support at every TVET college in South Africa. In order for a college to be able to provide these services, a clear vision has to be developed, which would make it conceivable to reply to the desires of its clients. The mission of the SSS plan is to serve a diverse student population with an enabling learning environment.

The lecturers, together with the students support services staff, interact with the students daily and they can see what happens with students and their perspectives are therefore invaluable. They both have a significant role to play in supporting and inspiring the students to successfully complete their studies. They can impact on the students from a variety of diverse backgrounds. It is an unquestionable truth that the students are likely to succeed in their studies when the colleges constantly support them to make the right career choices that are in line with their interests, capacities and capabilities. Proper students' orientation and support lead to academic success (SSS Framework, 2008). Career choices made correctly can contribute to students' scholastic victory.

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APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION

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   2233

        MAKIBINYANE J M MR                        STUDENT NUMBER : 64068277
        18 BUNTING STREET
        FLAMINGO PARK                             ENQUIRIES  TEL : 0861670411
        9459                                              FAX : (012)429-4150
                                                  eMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za


                                                  2020-03-26



Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification:    MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT)        (98420)

                                                         PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION
   CODE      PAPER    S NAME OF STUDY UNIT          NQF crdts  LANG.  EXAM.DATE   CENTRE(PLACE)
   ----      -------- - ---------------------       ---------  -----  ----------- ---------------
Study units registered without formal exams:
@ DFEDU95            MEd - Education Management          **        E
  DFEDU95            MEd - Education Management          **        E
@ Exam transferred from previous academic year

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.


  #  Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register).
     Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that
     students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study,
     and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year.
     Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOnLine for study material and other
     important information.
     Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be
     demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement
     in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating
     academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express
     approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must
     be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be
     allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same
     College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any
     such qualification.
     Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's
     qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a
     candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate
     must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the
     Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT:        0.00


Yours faithfully,


Dr F Goolam
Registrar                                              0108 O 00 0
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APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE COLLEGE

The Principal

Goldfields TVET College

P.O Box 95

Welkom

9460

JM Makibinyane

18 Bunting street

Flamingo Park

Welkom

9459

29 August 2019

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GOLDFIELDS TVET COLLEGE

Dear sir

I am a registered student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and I wish to conduct a research at the college entitled: *Implications of National Certificate Vocational students' academic support on the throughput rate*. The purpose of the research study is to potentially contribute to the field of knowledge and extension of conceptual understanding regarding the following key factors: (a) Understanding the implication of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rates at Goldfields TVET college. (b) Develop student's academic support strategies to maximize throughput rate.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. The research will be purely academic, and it will be conducted according to all stipulated research ethics of the university. The broader society, students and TVET college sector will potentially benefit from the findings of the study that could enhance the college throughput rate. The Executive Management of the college will be informed about the developments of the research and the findings of the research will be made available to them.

Yours sincerely

Mr JM Makibinyane

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE COLLEGE

higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GOLDFIELDS TVET COLLEGE

Enquiries: DR RS Radile
Email: dobsradile@goldfieldstvet.edu.za
Contact No: 057 910 6000

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FAX: 057 392 1082

TOSA CAMPUS
14107 NDAKI ROAD
THABONG
WELKOM
9463

TEL: 057 910 6700
FAX: 057 395 1304

WELKOM CAMPUS
CNR PETRUS BOSCH &
TORONTO ROAD
JAN CILLIERS PARK
WELKOM
9459

TEL: 057 910 1600
FAX: 057 353 2298

By email: juliusmakibinyane@gmail.com

28 October 2019

Mr JM Makibinyane
18 Bunting Street
Flamingopark
WELKOM
9459

Dear Mr Makibinyane

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GOLDFIELDS TVET COLLEGE

Kindly be advised that permission has been granted for you to conduct research at Goldfields TVET College under the topic "*Implications of National Certificate Vocational Students' Academic Support on the throughput rate*".

The condition of this permission is subject to your compliance with ethical research considerations as stipulated in your application (Section 6) as well as non-interference with teaching and learning time/activities at the college.

Goldfields TVET College wishes you success in you studies and would eagerly await to be informed of the outcome of your research.

Yours faithfully

MR FS MAHLANGU
PRINCIPAL: GOLDFIELDS TVET COLLEGE

GTVETC-02-2069-09-01	2009/10/04	Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CERTIFICATE

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/10/16

Ref: **2019/10/16/64068277/22/MC**

Name: Mr JM Makibinyane

Student No.: 64068277

Dear Mr Makibinyane

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2019/10/16 to 2022/10/16

Researcher(s): Name: Mr JM Makibinyane
E-mail address: 64068277@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27 73 389 0182

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr SS Khumalo
E-mail address: ekhumass@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27 12 429 8854

Title of research:

Implications of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rate at Goldfields TVET College

Qualification: M. Ed in Educational Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/10/16 to 2022/10/16.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/10/16 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2022/10/16**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2019/10/16/64068277/22/MC** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof PM Sebate
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

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APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANTS INVITATION TO PARTAKE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW

To: …………... (Goldfields TVET College Head of Department: Student Support Services)

From: Mr JM Makibinyane (UNISA Masters student)

RE: INVITATION TO PARTAKE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by JM Makibinyane who is currently studying towards Master's Education Degree (MED) at the University of South Africa. The results of the study will be contributed towards the completion of the dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your position in the identified college.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research study is to potentially contribute to the field of knowledge and extension of conceptual understanding regarding the following key factors:

- Understanding the implication of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) students' academic support on the throughput rates at the selected TVET college in the Free State.

- Develop student's academic support strategies to maximize throughput rates

PROCEDURES

The venue will be in proximity of your classes/office. The interview will take place after or during college hours depending on your availability, but it should not interfere with your duties. The date for the interview will be communicated two weeks in advance to ensure maximum availability of participants. The interview will be tape-recorded for ease of transcribing and accurate reporting of results. The total length of the group interview will not exceed 1 hour.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There will therefore be no personal risk or discomfort whatsoever to individual participants in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The information shared in the interview will potentially enhance participants' understanding of and growth in the TVET college sector. The broader society, students and TVET college sector will potentially benefit from the findings of the study that could enhance the college throughput rate.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive any remuneration for participation in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with personal permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of scanning all documents and saving them on the external hard-drive with high security password and it will be locked in a fire proof safe together with the audio digital recording machine. The researcher will be the only person with access to the safe. The transcription notes and questionnaires will be destroyed once they are scanned and safely stored.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The participant has the right to be in the study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kinds. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

DECLARATION

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to _____. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me questions pertaining to the study. This was conducted in English

_____

Signature of the Researcher

APPENDIX F: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTAKE IN A RESEARCH INTERVIEW

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Employee Number: _____

Date: _____

Consent to partake in a research entitled:

Implications of National Certificate Vocational students' academic support on the throughput rate at the selected TVET college in the Free State

This letter serves to confirm that I, _____ have voluntarily agreed to partake in the research interview for the above-mentioned study. My decision to voluntarily participate in this research was informed by clear understanding of data collection procedure and all the possible implications of my involvement in the study. I have also been informed of my right to withdraw from the study any time I feel I can no longer continue for any reason (or whatsoever the case it may be) and such a decision will not have negative outcomes on myself as a participant.

Yours faithfully,

_____

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- ❖ Which factors influence the throughput rate at the selected college?
- ❖ What is the role of students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?
- ❖ How does the college support students?
- ❖ In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples
- ❖ What is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?
- ❖ How do you perceive the effectiveness of current Student Support Services offered by the college?
- ❖ What are the implications of students' academic support on throughput rates?
- ❖ Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?
- ❖ Which strategies do the selected TVET college in the Free State use to support students academically?

APPENDIX H: RESEARCH INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Student Support Services Staff member – Participant GTC100

1.1. Researcher: Question number one says which factors influence the throughput rate at the college?

❖ *Respondent: Number one it's financial problems, personal problems, academic difficulties, and wrong choices of course. Yes*

1.2. Researcher: Alright, and then you are done? Ok, when you are done please say thank you. The second question will be what is the role of the students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?

❖ *Respondent: Can I start with lecturers neh, to identify students and refer them to relevant professionals like student counsellors neh. We are here to assist them with the academic support, psychological support, yes like counselling.*

1.2.1. Researcher: And the students and college management, what is their role?

❖ *Respondent: The students at the college we have the peer educators. Those students are here to assist other students because sometimes we cannot identify the students who are struggling. Some of them are maybe shy to talk about their problems though they feel comfortable to talk to their peers and then they will refer then to us because we are Student Support Services (SSS) we assist students with whatever problem or the challenges that they are having.*

1.2.2. Researcher: And the college management, what is their role in addressing the low throughput rate?

❖ *Management we communicate with each other; we are working together to assist our students. We would have meetings on how to strategize and how to assist our students with throughput rates.*

1.2.3. Researcher: Are you fine with question number three?

❖ *Respondent: Yes, I'm fine and I will give you the answer-sheet*

1.3. Researcher: How does the college support students?

❖ *Respondent: Like I've mentioned, we have student support services and we are working together with lecturers, campus management and executive to support our students. So, we support them holistically. Do you want me to mention them again?*

1.3.1. Researcher: If you have the specific activities or programmes that you use to support students.

❖ *Respondent: We have err, you know these things they are affected by our challenges as the human beings. Our backgrounds, as a human being we do skills programmes, life skills programmes, there we talk about how to manage stress, anger management. We also have the bereavement programmes. Another thing is that we are working with the NGOs, external stakeholders for students who are struggling with health like HIV/AIDS. Maybe they are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, so we are working with Lesedi le Chabile for HIV, Life line and Wits. Then we also work with FALCA, they specialize in alcohol and drug abuse. We have house of Hope they do how to prevent pregnancy. They also do screen STIs and TB. So that's how we support the students.*

1.4. Researcher: In your opinion, do you think that students are using available students support services at the college?

❖ *Respondent: they do*

1.4.1. Researcher: How do they use it? Which ones are they accessing or using more often?

❖ *Respondents: According to their programmes or?*

❖ Researcher: No all the students. Which support programmes are they normally using or accessing. For example; ….

❖ *Respondent: Counselling. More of them will come to my office for counselling. Others are struggling with academic performance so they will come to my office and we will do study skills programmes and those who needs counselling will provide counselling to them.*

1.5. Researcher: What is it that the college is doing to improve access to and the usage of the student support services?

❖ *Respondent: In the begging of the year, we have the induction programme and the orientation programme. It works as if we are marketing the SSS department so that the students can be aware of the services that the college can assist them with.*

1.6. Researcher: How do you perceive the effectiveness of the current SSS offered at the college?

❖ *Respondent: Currently the SSS department is not that effective because we are understaffed, we only have one student counsellor for all four campuses. If you check the ratio is 1:5000 which is not normal so I think that the executive management should hire more student counsellors so that we can be effective. But though we are not that effective we are still providing services to our students.*

1.7. Researcher: What are the implications of students' academic support on the throughput rate? Like what is the link between the students' academic support and the throughput rate? Is there any possibility that if there is no academic support the performance of the students would be affected or not? Do they go together?

❖ *Respondent: Yeh, sometimes, let me say yeh. I think so because some of the students are not aware on how to study, they just study. They just gram the notes or the book but after attending academic support programme. They will be enlightened on how to study.*

1.8. Researcher: Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?

❖ *Respondent: Am I allowed to talk about to say the name of the college?*

❖ Researcher: Yes, but I won't mention it on my paper

❖ *Respondent: Previously or currently, Motheo TVET college was using PLATO as an electronic academic support programme. And us here, must I talk about other colleges?*

1.8.1. Researcher: Yes, for now you can talk about other colleges, will come to your college. Can you explain what is PLATO?

❖ *Respondent: PLATO is something like a software that trains students how to read, to take notes and how to concentrate whilst reading. It is something like that.*

1.9. Researcher: Which strategies does Goldfields TVET College use to support students academically?

❖ *Respondent: At the college most of the time we would communicate with the HODs when we are planning to do the study skills programmes. We start with the management plan whereby we are going to unfold how are we going to conduct our programme. And our programme consists of note taking, discipline, time management and in some instances, we will provide counselling because some of the students they don't perform because they don't know how to read. They don't perform because of their personal issues.*

1.10. Researcher: What are the best practices of improving the throughput rate?

❖ *Respondent: I think here we need to focus on career guidance because some of them just register here because they don't want to be at the location. They will come to my office for career development or career guidance and them when they want to study business management when it is full, they would say "Just register me I will study Management Assistance or Human Resources". They just choose the career not because they have passion, they choose it because the one that they initially wanted to study is full. So, I think that we need to focus more on registration and induction before they enter.*

1.11. Researcher: Which guidelines need to be developed to improve the throughput rate? Is there any document that needs to be developed as a guideline to improve the throughput rate? Do you have it already?

❖ *Respondent: Student Support Services Framework that is a guideline for us. So, on that manual we have Pre-entry, on-course and exit. We focus on that. I think that it should be reviewed annually because the cases are not the same.*

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES STAFF - PARTICIPANT GFC200

1.1. Which factors influence the throughput rate at the college?

❖ *Respondent: Trained, qualified and dedicated lecturers have a very important and imperative role to play. I also believe that trained, qualified and dedicated student support services personnel also have value to add with that regard and staff member across all colleges need to have an attitude of going an extra mile for our students. Financial constrains can also be a barrier. If NSFAS can pay the tuition and allowances in time or as expected can also hinder students to come to the college and to finish their courses and in a record time. We cannot be oblivious to the fact that life sometimes happens and will just disappear in the middle of the year at some point much attention is needed and the student may lead to a major life change. Maybe a loss of parents and maybe unable to get back to the college because of the accident or the illness and making it impossible to finish at a record time. We also have to look at the fact that lack of commitment plays a role. Sometimes we come from families where we are being forced to become academics and it's not in line with what we have planned in our lives. Some of the students have just been told to come here by their parents or guardians and they are not committed as should be or diminished interest in the course or in the subject. So, you would find that gradually there is a loss of interest towards the course. And also, questionable time management skills, not being able to manage the workload can also play a part in the throughput rate at the college.*

1.2. What is the role of the students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?

❖ *Once in a quarter we do the analysis where we look at how the students are performing up to so far. And a dialog can also be organized, questionnaires be distributed to students to find out what is it that they come across as a challenge in most cases throughput rate is accessed at the end of the academic period in the case of NCV let's say three years. Is it a little too late at this time? Maybe if we have found ways to curb or overcome some of the contributing factors, we would be in a better position to lessen or decrease the low throughput rate. Management has to collaborate with the lecturers to remind students of the importance of finishing a*

course in a record time. And also, students need to know that they need to consult with the relevant people when the concern arise. Students go through a lot and do not always know where to go and how to even approach the situation. They need to know that whatever challenges they may encounter there are relevant people at the college who can assist and try to intervene in this situation.

1.3. How does the college support students?

❖ *(Laughing). They do have NSFAS to assist students with financial constrains. There is a feeding scheme for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Every morning and at lunch time they are given a decent meal, they are also given food parcels to take home, but this depends on the contribution that come mainly from staff members. In terms of creating a conducive environment for studying, we have a media centre or media centres in two of our campuses. Where students can enjoy a quiet place to do assignments and projects and to study. Skills development centre has many classes, so they do the above in any of the quite classes and the same also applies for our satellite campuses in Virginia. We have a sports officers who is responsible for sports and cultural activities and helps to nature students' unique talents. And that improve the confidence of the students. We also have a student counsellor who is responsible for students counselling and offering therapeutic intervention to students experiencing personal difficulties in different levels and students are able to see her for help. Just recently in September a hire health campus coordinator has been employed and she is responsible for students' health and wellness. Amongst other things she must organize dialogs on any kind of topic. Hire health mainly focus on gender-based violence so any topic. She must find ways to create a platform for students to come together and speak on certain life issues. Amongst other things she is responsible to offer pre and post counselling for HIV, TB STIs and should provide linkages to treatment if need be. Having said all the above there is always a room for improvement so things can always be done better and can always improve.*

1.4. In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples.

❖ *My answer for that will be NO.*

1.5. **If you answered "NO" to the above question. Why are the students not making use of the student support services that are available at the college?**

❖ *They are not using student support services as effectively as they should. The reason is that SSS is being advertised or marketed at the beginning of the year at the induction. So, if for any reason students did not attend the induction then they wouldn't have known about our services. We should invest more in making sure that every registered student knows about us. They can be done by making sure that there are full time notices of our services in the notice boards and in media centres across all campuses. Currently we rely on referrals from lecturers and HODs and those who are fortunate enough. Who have either had or know quite a lot about the SSS? One other reason could be that they know about SSS but they are just not bold enough to come forward and seek for assistance so they are not using it to their best of advantage and hopefully it will improve in the following year.*

1.6. **What is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?**

❖ *What are we doing to improve access to the SSS? I will not touch on that. But how do we improve the usage of the SSS. Currently SSS is situated in the administration block and every student who is registered has to make a turn at the administration block quite a number of times in their journey. That is where they find their proof of registrations, that is where they find their results and everything else that they need. I think in that case whilst the student is looking for results, they see office and they will actually be interested to find out what is happening in that office, what are people doing in that office and that is when they can find out about SSS. Improving usage thereof, we try from time to time to have academic support programmes and when results are being assessed we try and come in and assist with study skills tips and academic related issues. From there they will just want to find out about what is it that we are responsible for. I think that is when they will find more about us and what we do in the SSS. Of course, proper strategies need to be in place as to the improvement of the access to and the usage of the SSS. Hopefully meeting will happen where all the relevant employees or officials will come together and come*

up with ways to ensure that the department is fully functional and very effective for the students.

1.7. How do you perceive the effectiveness of current Student Support Services offered by the college?

❖ *We are effective to a certain extent but like I have said earlier that there is always a room for improvement. Better can be done, more can be done, extra miles can be taken but to a certain level, to a certain degree will have been effective as the department. There are some of those students you meet on campus and they are just filled with joy. Unbelievable joy because this is the student that you met earlier on and they had a challenge of some sort, they had an issue that they felt was very overwhelming but because of dedicated staff members who were there to assist and to see how they can come in. Students now feel like they can continue, they can face days, they can face months, they can face years, they can face challenges. And when you come across a case where student felt hopeless at some point and feels or look hopeful at this point there is nothing as rewarding as that. It's just amazing. Sports we have had few trips, very few but students were involved in sports. And we had a debate competition across all colleges and even in Cape Town the students were there. And really the few live that SSS has managed to touch and influence it is a great reward, a great achievement. We cannot say we have not been effective at all and we cannot say that we have been 110% effective but there is a level of effectiveness that has arisen from the department or from the encounter of the department to the students. So, we have been effective on a certain level.*

1.8. What are the implications of students' academic support on throughput rates?

❖ *Well, we cannot really separate the two from each other, we cannot separate the academic support from that throughout rate. Because it plays a vital role, it is a core. We must remember that in NCV we have quite a lot of students who have not been to matric. Many of them are actually from grade 9 or grade 10 and really, they are not disciplined. Just as yet they still need guidance on how to study, how to have time management skills, how to priorities. And really academic support is very important because if there is none happening then the throughput rate will always be low. So, we need that platform where students from time to time are given study*

skills tips. They attend extra classes, lecturers avail themselves to assist students outside of class time and we find out from them on what is it that we can do to assist them to perform to their optimal best academically so really the implications are quite big, we cannot isolate academic support and the throughput rate. There is a high coloration between the two.

1.9. Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?

❖ *Well, I wouldn't know. I have not enquired and honestly, I cannot speak on their behalf. But I would also like to believe that they also offer extra classes, they do have the support programmes where students get a platform to know more about the subject. A platform where they can ask questions and receive positive response. Like I say, I'm not in a position to fully confirm, I honestly do not know what other colleges do to improve academic support.*

1.10. Which strategies does Goldfields TVET College use to support students academically?

❖ *We have Saturday classes; those are peer mentoring programmes. So, you would find that on Saturday students would then come in the mornings. They are being tutored by their peers. The selection for a peer mentor is that the student should have had a distinction in that particular subject, and they must be willing and able to speak well. Actually, they must be strong, they must have good communication skills, they must be dedicated and willing to do their research and prepare for classes and be willing to answer questions from students. We have peer tutoring programme. And at break time around ten o'clock they are given a meal to eat by the college and they get to the class. This one has yielded a positive result. This came about as an indication in the analysis of the results or after students have written their exams, we look at the low performing subject and then we offer subjects of that calibre to those students and there has been a massive improvement. Media centre at Welkom campus and Tosa campus that have classes where students can study in and at Virginia and our skills development centre. So, offering them a media centre at the campus or a place to study assist them academically because there are just many disturbances but when the student is here, they are able to enjoy quiet*

time to study and because they are in the college environment and their minds are still open to learning. So, we do try. There is study skills programmes that happen and there are study skills tip would happen or study skills tips that come about during the year. So, that also plays a part in assisting them with their academics

1.11. What are the best practices of improving the throughput rate?

❖ *Well I think, we need to be open to understanding what really is contributing to a low throughput rate and we addressed them I think in question two. So, the best strategies would be to ensure that we are very dedicated to our jobs as personnel because we really here to better the lives of the students. We are here to improve their quality of life. We are here to, we are here to improve how they see themselves and what they can become. So, some of the best practices would be to ensure that constant study skills tip and exam tips and management time tips are being given to them. We need to have dialogs often where we can speak about what are their challenges and how do they want their challenges to be handled. And really their advices to us is something that is doable, and we must try by all means to do it. Because we have here to serve our students. Really best practices would be to always make sure that there is a good communication between students and staff, between staff and management and between management and students. An open communication creates a platform where concerns and issues are being raised and addressed.*

1.12. Which guidelines need to be developed to improve throughput rate?

❖ *I want to believe that DHET has guidelines that are addressed to colleges on how to improve the throughput rate. Maybe the guidelines are just not being followed, maybe we are not taking them as seriously as we should, but I cannot confirm this. What we can do is to however is to ensure that as the department as different department within a college we meet on another and we come up with ways and strategies to help students so that we enforce commitment. Whatever guidelines that are being put on a table to better the lives of our students they need to be constantly evaluated and monitored and will ensure that they are in practice and they are enforced.*

Researcher: Thank you very much for your time.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - PARTICIPANT GTC300

1.1. Which factors influence the throughput rate at the college?

❖ *Alright uhm, I think in a TVET sector there is a lot of common factors that are influencing but also specific factors too in our area or region. Err one of the things that affect our throughput rates is definitely attendance, err students. We have the 80% policy at colleges but, we have seen again with the examination this semester that students do not attend. Err they don't even get to, there is a correlation between attendance and achievement in other words. Especially when it comes to the ICASS mark, now if you can't attend and get an ICASS mark to write exams, already your throughput rate is going down the drain, so I think getting students to come and attend classes' number one is the biggest thing that affects us through put rate. Err there's many factors why students are not attending and I'm not sure if you want me to go into them but that is, sitting in my office as an HOD you deal with, we have to follow up on attendance and students come to our offices. This is one of the pressing matters were a lot of students come through as NSFAS payments, students claim that they struggle to get to college because they get a bursary but then their NSFAS payments are delayed and that they did not have money to support them to come right from the beginning of the year to attend classes. So NSFAS itself it's already not assisting the throughput rates, because there's really some students that does not have money. Thy want to come to college but they cannot be in class, if they cannot be in class they miss out on work, they miss out on tasks and eventually they end up not err, if they qualify for the exam. They qualify with a very poor mark which does not help them in the examination. Err socio economic circumstances also which is link to NSFAS is a major problem. Err than another thing that is sticking out its peer pressure where we find err this year especially where a lot of students come to college, their parents even subsidize or guardians or something but they pay for them to come here but then they sit around and don't attend classes or a trend that we have seen. A lot of students come and they will only attend maybe two or three classes during the day then they will disappear or they will arrive late, so there is a lot of parents that's been to my office to say but they dropped their students, their learners or their kids off or their paid them taxi money but when we look at the*

absenteeism you can clearly see that the students for some classes are they 90% of the times for others they not. If you interview those students, we find many factors where their get mixed up with wrong groups. There is drug abuse, there is a pressure not to attend and in class they play games at the back, it's a serious problem we are sitting with so I think in order to address number one the throughput rate we need to firstly get our learners in class, once they are in class we can start addressing other aspects that can result in a poor throughput rate. So let's say for example we have now our learners in class, other things that we experience in class with the throughput rate if we look first we concentrate on the learners so from a learner perspective, our learners are, the type of learner that we having at the college come, has still the mentality where the colleges are seen as the second choice or the third choice, so we are not getting the cream we are getting learners who are struggling in schools, that struggling learner is coming from a school environment where if we look at the results and also our placement tests they struggle with English , they struggle with mathematics. They cannot have, they do not have the basic foundation. All of a sudden they come in to a NCV course where it is actually not easier than a school, but they think it's easier and the they sit with this multitude of problems where they have to all of a sudden be at a higher level, also in NCV for example have now practical's in which they don't even have in schools which put more of a burden on them. So, it's not a mind-set, where you come here and it's easier actually in sense more difficult. So, our learners do not have the right foundation when they come into our classes at a level 2 level. That automatically creates problems for the learners because we can see it in our, when we register. We take in a hundred learners in a program for example hospitality. After two, three months, 40% of them drop out, 30% of them drop out, so they don't even get half way in the first semester. When you try and engage with those learners then talk about, they are still struggling, they don't see themselves passing English, maths, life orientation especially the vocational subjects and they just give up. Another problem that we can find more now if I look at the perspective of the college is career guidance, or if I talk about career guidance, program guidance which is I think where we are lacking as colleges, because many of our students register, sometimes they

register because it's the only space they can get in a particular program without receiving the correct guide dance in the system. Now they sit in a program and all of a sudden after two, or three months thy realise this is not what I want to do then what happens? They drop out. Err if learners, if we can attract the right learners and give them the right guidance, put them in the right program where they are interested in which they like and prefer, they would stay around. They won't fall out. Err inside the classroom environment the factors that affect our throughput rate obviously qualified lecturers, err we can clearly draw distinction between lecturers with years of experience and that are qualified and lecturers that are not up to the plate. So, we need to invest more in getting our lecturers to come to the party in some cases because it is highly unlikely that you can have 10 life orientation classes and then out of a code of five lecturers. Three will be top performing and two will have a pass rate of ten or twenty percent, so somewhere is a problem. Err I mean you can go into reasons why there is problems, but the bottom line is the lecturer also has a large role to play in the through put rate. And then I think academic support throughout the years crucial, we honestly as a college have been lacking to give especially the NCV learners continuous support. Not just from inside the classroom but outside the classroom. There are various factors that make it difficult because we are under tremendous time frames stressors. We have to deliver output and If there's not this interruption which further delays the submission of marks and to produce. So, if the can be time made available to for more interaction, maybe to deal with issues as studies skills or you know how to deal with other issues like group pressure if they can have talks about it, if the learners can be engaged. It will solve a lot of these other problems, but because of the way the NCV course is actually designed, it does not leave us a week or even two weeks to take those learners outside the classroom environment and put them in an environment and say to them, listen we going to deal with you. It's very difficult to take also one particular group out. To give you an example, I wanted to do intervention with the hospitality students, I have done actually but now because you are taking the hospitality students out for a week, those students have common classes in English, math and in life orientation so they lose out. Actually the whole college must come

to a standstill, because one department is moved out, so the common subjects actually breaks proper intervention, because you cannot identify a group of, it is very difficult to get the whole cohort of NCV learners together, but if you want to take one group it's also impossible because they write common tasks. One lecturer will have six periods and he can't wait for the other five periods to catch up with the one that he had lost. So, the whole timetable, the whole system actually needs to be looked at in order to address this.

1.2. What are the roles of students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?

❖ *I think I have covered a lot of it in the first question. Uhmm I think if you talk about the role of students, students obviously need to come with a mindset to the college to study and uhmm the student needs to, I think that's where we are lacking some students, they come here, and they feel they are not in a school anymore so they can do what they want. So, number one role of a student is academic excellence, so they need to have the right attitude, they need to be given the right induction in order to orientate them. So that they have that uhmm you know that mentality that I am here to study, I'm not here to play around. I think if a student understands that role in the college setup where he is here to study, his here to develop himself, his here to seek a better future for himself and it's not just going to be given to him on a plate. He has to work for it, then if he understands that role then already it will assist with the problems that we have. Because I think students sometimes are confused what they role are here, because they come to the college, they think because education is free that the diploma or certificate will come free to you and that is not how it works, they are going to have to work for it. So that is important for the role of the student. The role of a lecturer, lecturers need to go back and look at their uhmm what they are appointed for, they need to go look at their job description, they need to go and look at various guiding documents and policies which guides a lecturer to what they duties are and what they supposed to do. Uhmmm lecturers need to go back to the basics in terms of teaching and learning where they need to focus on the role of the lecturers to play that role model in a class to focus on the learner. To focus on how to bring the curriculum and how to*

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achieve academic excellence not some of our lectures unfortunately are also taught up where they are here for their first important thing is their salary and then they have got many other things before the core focus of what they are here for. The role of the lecturer is to go back to where the lecturer needs to be in class, they need to be a role model for learners from arriving on time to offering professional teaching and learning, dressing appropriately everything, because that role model that we have, learners see it and they follow it. If a lecturer arrives late learners arrive late, if a lecturer doesn't dress accordingly than learners will also be fine in dressing inappropriately in a classroom and it is very important because you can see the difference if you monitor as a HOD you see lecturers who have those attributes and you see how the learners react in that class. That's the same group you can put in the next class and they will behave completely different because they will nomic and they will see how the lecturer behaves in that environment. Uhmm management obviously is there for support, management needs to look for support for students which is a number one priority and also support for lecturers. Support can be various things, it can be from training it can be from err initiatives where I think where we are lacking at this stage like team building and you know just err support, we talking now about wellness because our staff unfortunately are also under a lot of pressure and that is some of the reasons why the staff is not performing so if management is not giving that structure from the top everything downwards would fall flat. You will see it also how some managers manage their departments; some departments will be very structured they will run smoothly. other departments have got no vision or goal and people will just do whatever they want, so if there's no support from management people will take advantage very quickly of that and they will just basically do what they want in that department. okay.

1.3. How does the college support students?

❖ *Okay uhmm, basically we have got our SSS department, which is the dedicated department that is supposed to look after our students in terms of academic support and wellness if you want to call it wellness and also activities like sport sort of things which is very important to have on a campus, it's not just about academics but uhmm the SSS department is not just a stand-alone entity they need to be also form part*

of the wheel where lecturers need to be involved in that support structure. Management needs to be involved in that support structure as well so you can't, it's wrong to say from a college, err this student is not performing just dumping him with SSS, SSS will sort him out. It will not happen; everyone needs to be part of that process. SSS is there to basically guide the process and they will engage with the students but a lot of times the lecturer needs to be involved in that link, whatever is done in SSS needs to fault trough the classroom and management needs to monitor the whole process, so I think we have a long way to go. You have a different, there's different. I can see changes coming through our college where there were new people in SSS were appointed, they are energetic they follow up, they give feedback to management that was something that was lacking. Because management cannot support if they do not get feedback, if you just refer somebody and that person disappears there's nothing that you can do but once SSS is doing their job properly and feedback is given and one of the outcomes might be that a learner must attend more anger management sessions or whatever. Management they can monitor that it happens, and they can also call the learner and then find out if there is progress or whatever has been discussed, or what's happening. So, through the SSS department the college support is very important. But there are other things as well that we are doing, I can give you an example or that we have done recently in hospitality department we had a hospitality seminar which is linked to academic support for students, where we have cancelled two days of class with hospitality students and we had a fundraising where we raised funds / Students registered as delegates and we had different subject experts doing demonstrations and talks. We invited guest speakers where they took the whole day and the students were divided into groups and everything was focused on the syllabus with areas where there are shortcomings and those people were invited to talk about or to demonstrate or to do whatever to fill those gaps and that is what I mean about additional academic support. The feedback from the students afterwards was excellent. Sometimes you need to take the learner out of a classroom environment and let somebody else talk to him or her or a group before they actually realise what it is about and I'm sure that

will have, we will see now at the end of the year the results but that will definitely have a positive outcome.

1.4. In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples.

❖ *No, students are not making use, when I say students. I find many times as a HOD I must have courage and sometimes I don't want to use the word force but sometimes take a student to SSS because it's a place where they feel they cannot go on their own to open up and to talk about their problems easily. So when you say do students take advantage of SSS, I don't think they taking fully advantage of SSS, I think there's very few students that go on their own to SSS err the once that I refer are really first need to have a discussion with them and to explain to them the benefits if they go there, what they can do for them. And then even than they are reluctant because of maybe past experiences or what they have heard from other students or you know whatever with word that might go around. But uhmm you know I think it's all depending on the SSS department, well if there's proper structure and there's proper interaction with students and other students see that this department can help you than more students will go there out of their own. But if students feel you just go there and nothing happens, they won't go out of their own to the SSS department. Unfortunately.*

1.5. If you answered "NO" to the above question. Why are the students not making use of the student support services that are available at the college?

❖ *Well then some of them just to elaborate number five. Some of them feel that, they don't want to open up to another person about their problems. Their problems sometimes are very personal; some students feel that our SSS officers are not trained enough to deal with their issues. They see them as unfortunately sometimes they don't see them as people in a management position or whatever because they constantly deal with the students. I think sometimes they think they are friends and how can you help me if you are my friend as well, which is the wrong attitude to have and others feel that they might be victimized or if they discus their problems it might get out in the open, which will be embarrassing to them. So, they don't want those sorts of things happening to them, which in some cases might make their current*

situation even worse. So, they very scared to go there and something bad might actually happen where it's supposed to be a safe place. A lot of them feel they cannot go there and open up to those people because they are not sure if the information is going to be confidential or if it's going to be discussed on the stoep somewhere if they going to be embarrassed about it or whatever.

1.6. What is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?

❖ *Okay I can tell you from a HOD perspective, it's very difficult because you are dealing with a different department that is not directly reporting to you. But something that I have done this year is, and it works very well. We used to have a referral template, but it was a very compassing template to complete so let's say for example a lecturer wants to refer a student, they have to complete five pages of six pages and some people might find it very compassing. They won't go through the effort to refer a person, so one of the things I've said prior is attendance. So we have developed a referral form for individual attendance only and group attendance where you can actually refer a whole class as a group if they are dealing with certain problems or and it's a simplified form that's a one pager. So, all of a sudden we have seen that many lecturers they don't have a problem to refer if the paper work is not a lot to complete. So that alone has led to many more referrals coming through than what I've seen in the last couple of years that I have been in the office. So I think you need to make access easy, when I say access easy, our lecturers are over worked thy don't have the time to sit with a lot of paperwork, with a lot of writing, with a lot of things to do, so if you can make the process simple, it will be easier for them to say alright, identify people and refer those people. Also I think uhmm SSS with us has expanded in terms of employing CDO's (career development officers) but are also qualified psychologists or psychiatrist or I am not sure what exactly what the word is, and already by have qualified people that are energetic and want to help students. You can see that there is a positive movement towards students you know that they, if they see that they are being helped. What happens in the past maybe you refer a student then they will talk to an SSS officer and then they will say ag, this is no use I'm not going back there again because nothing, the feedback I'm*

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seeing now is they actually find the interactions positive and they will go back. So that word will get around and then it will improve the support there, but I think it realize heavily on that department and uhhhmm the way they deal with the students to build up a good name, so that when they realise, they are actually helping students then more students with problems will go there. Because many of our students, it is very difficult because a lot of our students have got problems and as a HOD I'm not a trained psychologist, if a student is saying to me, I want to commit suicide, I don't know if his talking the truth or if his really going to walk out the door at commit suicide. So, it's very important that we realise that this people are playing with the lives of our students, because we are getting a lot of students that are coming with stories like that now. And we have to take each case seriously even if it sounds like it's something that is maybe to me not serious. They might have underlying issues that I'm not trained with to deal with. So, you know to improve I as well think education with lecturers, our lecturers a lot of them if I may use the word are old, they have been in the system for a long time, they haven't been developed in how to identify learners with problems. They stand in front of a class and out of the lack of knowledge they can't identify learners with problems and that in itself is an issue because if we can't identify learners with problems how can we refer them. So that cycle will just keep continuing and it won't help.

1.7. How do you perceive the effectiveness of the current Student Support Services offered by the college?

❖ *Err maybe I must answer this in two ways. In general, personally I think the services were lacking in the last couple of years. However, like I said earlier, I think there is a sort of a new energy in the department, with new people coming in and lately if I do referrals, I'm getting very quickly feedback, I'm getting more detailed feedback. I can see that there is definitely more interaction with students although I think there's a lot of shortcomings still, but I think it comes with men power because SSS is not about dealing with students and problems. we still have a long way to go with other support, in terms of academic support, study skills, you know how to help students prepare for examinations, all sorts of things. But also, you know SSS has got wide discord in terms of dealing with social aspects of students, you know these sorts of*

things that happens on campus as well that makes a campus a campus. And I think the SSS department are currently trying to deal focus on the core business which is dealing directly with the students with problems and currently we are lacking a little bit about all the other supporting aspects that are around. You at the end of the day if something for example, if a lecturer is sick the SSS department can go into a class and take over for about an hour and teach study skills, those are the things that are additional support that can happen but because of man power and those things, it is not happening at this stage.

1.8. What are the implications of students' academic support on throughput rates?

❖ *I think It's like of you listened to me earlier, I think it's one of the most important aspect of dealing with through put rates. Because SSS doesn't just deal with the students but it also, we talked about attendance. A lot of times, SSS needs to be the partner in ensuring that students are attending activities on campus. And like I said if they are not doing that than students are not attending, it automatically affects the throughput rates. So, I think SSS is vital in that particular role when it comes to throughput rates, they really need to play a leading role and lead by example. But they need to be a department that is seen as a value department where they can, students go out of their own with their problems to them, because that already will, to give you an example. A lot of students come to us at the end of the year, saying that they've been away from college because they had these troubles or problems at home, but I had these problems from February, March, April, but it's now November. I can't help a student in November because he had the whole year, but if SSS was there and did they job properly they would have identified or the lecturer would have identified in conjunction with the SSS and already solved that problem or assisted that learner in February or march and at least you will have a database of that learner and you can monitor her to follow progress. And as a HOD, I can see fine this learning is attending or his doing well or his falling off the bus again. So, they really playing an important role when it comes to throughput rates.*

1.9. Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?

❖ *Other TVET colleges? Now you are asking a question that, look I mean if go from different areas, I've travelled from Cape Town, I've travelled to, and we have been to Johannesburg, Pretoria. I know the colleges in <u>berdfling</u> these once. I think a lot of it relies on funding. Its chop and cheese if you go to colleges in Cape Town where there is a lot of money available and the activities they can do for their students, which will make the through put rates better, but everything costs a lot of money to give you an example. Our college has got one kitchen , and we need to in our hospitality department we need to run practical's up to five o clock just to fit in the practical's, so we cannot do functions , we cannot do coffee shops, we cannot cater for outside things because we don't have a second kitchen, where if you go to cape town , those students there is three to four kitchens and it's just in the NCV department so they get exposed and supported in many different ways where every time there is a function or something they will prepare the food they will do the things because they have the facilities , they have the people that are employed to do that. So, I think if you look at how they support their students. There's if money was available and I know for example in Cape Town, they send they students on short courses even, were we can't. There is no money to send students to, I use a specific department as an example to the wine and food course. It is part of the syllabus; it should actually be done. With us our students we try and demonstrated to them how to open a bottle of wine, we try and show them but we are not experts in that, that is a, if you can have money to send your students or to get somebody from Stellenbosch to come and a presentation here it will add so much value to these students, unfortunately other colleges with funds can do those sort of things and their students benefit through that. Where we are sort of on the back foot, with that if I want to show my learners in Welkom our proper industrial kitchen looks like, the closest place is Bloemfontein or Johannesburg because in Welkom there isn't a place that is operating or functional correctly and we have the same problem in other departments like EDU-care for example we have our community is so poor, our crèche's are all non-compliant, now we are placing students in a non- compliant*

crèche for a practical environment. Where if you go to Cape Town, they got a twenty million ECDP centre, that's running as a function business. So if you take a learner and compare with learners who are academically at the same level but if one learner has got opportunities to see so much more and to experience so much more after three years his going to be streets ahead of a learner that is seating in our environment and they do not have those opportunities to see what is out of the rest of the world, unfortunately. And that is the reality.

1.10. Which strategies does Goldfields TVET College use to support students academically?

❖ *Respondent: Okay, something that we do every year is we try to involve SSS as well towards or just before every examination we try and do a study skills seminar if I want to call it like that. We check were there are open days just before the examination and then we will get people from SSS and we will get the learners in the hall or different venues and we prepare them better for the examination on how to study, how to prepare yourself, how to manage your time this sort of things. I think that's very important, but I think that it's something that should be done throughout the semester not just before the exams because you need to. Some of our learners do not know how to study so there is no use to tell them how to study for the exam but then already task one they are struggling. It is really something that must be done in the beginning but normally when we start our time table is so full that we don't have time to take from class because the first task must be done already after two weeks when we start so everybody is pushing time. Then we have various like I said we trying to use SSS, we are trying as HODs with the senior lecturers to go to the learners and have talks with them. I personally have this semester two meetings, one with the Hospitality learners one with Edu-care learners. We talked about the academic matters and we talked about the academic support, problems that we experienced, just a conversation with learners in terms to getting touch with what is the academic progress. Sometimes good things have come up out of that because each stuff come up as an HOD you can act on it and then you can act on it and you can prevent certain problems. Sometimes won't come to your office out of their own with a problem but if they are in a group environment and you start engaging with*

them about academic matters one or two of them will start mentioning things that you can start persuing and find out that this is the problem in the department and you can fix it. So, I think if we can also provide more of that type of support were you go into an individual class. When it comes to attendance is linked with the academic support because if students are not there and you can't do anything. If you see a particular group is not performing, as the HOD or a senior lecturer you go and close the door, talk to that group and find out what might be wrong in this group. And you will very quickly find out that there are many factions in this class and there are different issues that are playing why this one group that is attending, 10 out of 30 learners is attending and the next group all 30 students are attending. So, there is always an issue that you will try to identify, and you can deal with them. But then if you are just sitting there in your office and you don't go there and talk to learners and engage with them then you won't find out these problems. So, I think that is one positive thing that we have done at our college, we really tried from the HODs offices to go and talk to our learners. Being more visible in classes, sometimes you need to reprimand learners, you need to show them what they are doing is not right and the consequences of what they are doing. Then I find that pool backing line a little bit for couple of weeks and then if you follow up and you do your job properly and get reports from your lecturers, sometimes the problem is sorted sometimes they fall back into the old routine. Then it means that you need to follow up again and go back there again and say to the 'Hy listen, remember last week, two weeks ago we had this talk it went well and now it's not going well so what's the problem?". So, I think that we need to talk more to our learners and engage with them like that and Yea I've mentioned were we had in Hospitality an academic seminar where we try and identify problems in the syllabus and it's one department if I'm honest. If all departments can do it, it will help everywhere but it needs to be driven from the various offices and the various departments. But I must be honest also, if you work with people that are willing in the department and lecturers that are willing it makes the job of the HOD easier if those people are passionate about what they are doing. If you sit with people in the department and they've got no interest in the development of learners and you want them to keep a seminar or whatever it is very

difficult. So, some people find that thing much more difficult to do than others because of the people that they are working for them. That is unfortunately the reality. You are going to have staff that are passionate and willing, and you are going to have staff that is unfortunately not interested at all. And unfortunately, sometimes you have out of 10 staff members 7 in a particular department that is not interested then the whole department becomes, that old say "One rotten potato will spoil the batch of potatoes". If one or two people are negative it feeds to the others. If everybody is positive even those one or two people eventually become positive as well. So, it really depends on the group that one has in the department.

1.11. What are the best practices of improving the throughput rate?

❖ *I think really if I can say best practices, something that we have started at our college I'm not sure if other colleges are doing it but it is really exam preparation and study skills, and then this year one of the best practices definitely was hosting those seminars and I think that if we can have it on a yearly basis or semester for NATED courses and expand on it, it will add to students' throughput rate because students are there because it's a fun day. So, students that are normally not even in class attended. And if you focus on the correct areas in the curriculum or the syllabus indirectly without being even realizing it, they are preparing for the examination so if you structure it correctly it will definitely have an impact on the results and the throughput rates.*

1.12. Which guidelines need to be developed to improve throughput rate?

❖ *I don't think that guidelines need to be developed. I that the guidelines are there. If we talk about 80% attendance policy, if we talk about student support, if we talk about all of our attendance and punctuality policies they are there. I think what needs to be done is that they need to be implemented properly. It's no use to have wonderful policies but there is no implementation and no follow up after the implementation. So, I wouldn't change, I think if you look at guideline that basically I think our college have a role in developing a national policy on that attendance and punctuality. It is a very good policy, there is not a shortcoming for me in that particular policy. But the way we implement it and the way it is put into your establishment that is what is important. Similarly, if you look at staff development*

and career development in this sort of thing because that's got an impact as well on staff and indirectly the throughput rates. There are wonderful policies about staff development and IQMS are there, but things are done in the TVET sector lot of the time is a paper exercise. So, with IQMS for example is a policy and guideline that is very good but if it is not done in the right manner it is not going to be of any use for that particular lecturer. And lectures get frustrated once again when it comes to funding. If they put in on the IQMS that they need training, they need development and they need to go on to this course, this is new in the industry. But we don't have money to send people on this new course and this sort of things. It really makes them negative and they feel after a while, why must I in a classroom try excelling but I'm not being developed. I'm still siting with my 20 years old certificate of diploma and I haven't been refreshed after that. I think that is something that we need to look at. Not so much to develop new guidelines or new policy but rather to take what we have and just to fine-tune it and just make sure that it is implemented properly.

Thank you very much. That was the last question. Thank you once more for you time.

SENIOR LECTURER – PARTICIPANT GTC400

1.1. Which factors influence the throughput rate at the college?

❖ *Okay meneer. (clearing throat) among others ne, you have students' attendance, second one you will have your student finances ne, because if they don't have money, if they are not well financed and they can't come, we can't attend, if they don't attend they miss some of the lessons and they fail because of some policies, they fail some subjects, then at the end thy won't make it. (Clearing throat) Then we've got among others, we have got some other social factors (thole hore- you will find that) some of the students they come from backgrounds (mo holing hore- where you will find) the is always violence of the area itself is violent, the area itself is not supportive to education you know, so they find it harder, you know, to come to school. Then you, we've got family factors as well, there were learners (mo eleng fore- where) from the family itself they are not supported or encouraged or motivated anyhow, when it comes to education. So to them studying is just something that happens by magic. So it's not something which they are being driven from their homes. So among others you have those factors, then the institution itself is also a factor, if you look at the policies, the processes, the type of staff they have, you know, the infrastructure they have, they also play a role there, in the throughput rates, I can mention those few.*

➢ **Follow up question (Clearing throat) Okay. Err, just for follow up on the type of staff, can you please elaborate on that, the type of staff that the institution has.**

❖ *If you have, as an institution, if you have got staff which is not motivated, staff which is not adequately trained, staff err, how can I put it, (pause) err, the type off people who are not taking things serious, if you have such people as your staff as an institution, who you intrust to teach your students, then definitely what they are going to do in class is not going to motivate the students to attend classes. So you will find that students are registered but they are coming to the college just because they are forced by the policies to come to attend but actually there is nothing in the class that actually motivate them to come and to learn. So the staff qualification, I mean to training the staff morale, you know, staff behaviour, that's, those are some of the*

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things I'm referring to (hare buwa ka – when we speak of) the types of staff. Thanks, meneer.

1.2. What are the roles of students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?

❖ *Clearing throat, (hare start ka – when we start with) students. One – if students could understand or their the once who are registered, they are the once who are studying, ultimately they are the once who are to benefit therefore they need to put an effort and commitment, if they can understand that role, then I believe they can ignore some others factors, if somehow challenges them, then they enjoy throughout the whole learning process ignoring. The role of lectures, look, lecturers when they come to institutions, to the college, employed to teach or to lecturer, whatever the case may be, I , my understanding ,I believe that they know what is expected of them in as far as teaching and learning is concerned, in as far as teaching like is concerned, in as far as everything that relates to their work is concerned, so if they can be committed and remain selfless to that, you know, students can gain a lot from them, students can gain motivation from that, students can gain support from that if lecturers could also understand (hore-that) they are not just lecturers because they are employed to lecturer, but they are also playing a parental role, you know. So if lecturers could understand that (hore-that) our role here is to teach these students transform them into better citizens of the future and also in that whole process, we should treat them as our own children. That can, that has the potential to impact how the way the students think and ultimately that will improve the throughputs of the college, the throughputs rates of the college. The management, college management, and well it's something you cannot run away from. The college, for the college to function efficiently, that relies on management. You can have highly qualified staff, highly motivated staff, you know, but if management is not like them, then all that which lecturers are, is going to change within a second. Remember (hore-that) managements role is to formulate policies, is to monitor the formulated processes and procedures and those should not in any how hinder the function or the reason of existence of the college, but if they don't realise that, that is when you will end up having a college having policies which are, or which*

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someone can label as counter college policies if I may use that term. That is why you may find that here is a college, it has to address, I am making an example, objective one, two, three, four which is err academically related. But we've got policy one, two, three, four which are not supportive to any of those objectives and those coming from management. So the role that management has to play, is to create an environment which is highly conducive, which is highly positive for both the students and for the lecturers you know. For lecturers and for students to feel welcomed, to feel motivated err to have a feeling you know, that really, we need education. That is the role of management. It's like in your family, you can't expect your children you know, to know (hore-that) they are your children and what is it that you expect from them, if you are not showing it to them so it's almost the same. So, the students, the lectures and the management, they all have a role, I love this question. They all have a role which they must play but if one of them, miss their role than the whole throughput rate of the college is compromised. It is like having a three-legged pot, if on leg is broken than the pot cannot stand, so you can improvise that somehow (hore-that) it should stand but it will keep on presenting with challenges. So, it's the same when it comes to the lecturers, the students and the management.

1.3. How does the college support students?

❖ *This college, errr it supports students in many ways, on paper I must say, err but the many ways that I'm referring to, I can say they are not enough. It supports students by providing them with infrastructure to study, support students by having psychologist's uhm, provides them with err staff to teach them you know that limited support, yah if I can just mention those few.*

1.4. In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples.

❖ *Not in a way that one can say it is satisfactory. (clearing throat) why am I saying that. Uhm firstly for you to use something you need to know that it exists and how can you use it to you benefit, so if you don't than you can't use it. So, at the college, at this campus that is the case you know, you engage with these students in classes, ask them, maybe you identify problems somewhere in the class than you ask these*

students, why are they not using the SSS the student support, for them to address that challenge. Then you realise that they don't know that such a thing exists, so they are not using the student support services thy way they should. And I wouldn't blame them, like a said earlier on. For you to use something to your benefit, you must that it exits, you must know that how can you use it to your benefit. That is the case.

1.5. **If you answered "NO" to the above question. Why are the students not making use of the student support services that are available at the college?**

❖ *It's a lack of information*

1.6. **What is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?**

❖ *Err to be honest, the college is doing very little. (Clearing throat) The college is too focussed on teaching and learning, academic support there is little being done, very little. Why am I saying that (clearing throat) If you can spend say maybe a week, I will speak now for this campus, because I'm based here. I am not sure about the other campuses, but if you can spend a week here, and try to assess err thee, where is the focus directed mostly, you will see that its teaching and learning and if you can engage I with some of the lecturers, you will hear a number of complains in as far as students support is concerned. Err so, (laughter) the college is doing very little.*

1.7. **How do you perceive the effectiveness of the current Student Support Services offered by the college?**

❖ *Errr (laughter) hey ntate, it's not effective. Let me tell you this, part of the services that the student support is offering neh, according to the policy of the college right. If you identify a student or a group of students in a class, I'm making an example, who are always absent. Err the college policy instructs you, directs you to use the students support services to address whatever challenge the student or the group of students has. And according to the policy you know, you need to refer the student, then after some time you need to receive some feedback, but you will refer ten students, you will never receive any feedback. And if you try to make a follow-up, you will be disappointed to realise that none of those, none of those ten students*

ever got any support of any kind. At this campus as I mentioned earlier on, I am not sure about the other campuses. So the effectiveness of the student support services is very very low, they have got well trained people, err I'm not sure about the experience but they've got adequately trained people, but their services are not so good. Let me make another example, during registrations, we are placed in a township and most of our students come from townships. Even from the surrounding areas from this district. Now not all of them knows these types of courses which are there to be offered by public colleges. Not all of them know what they themselves want to study, or what they are capable of studying, what they can handle. Not all of them do. I believe that, that where the students support services comes in, before the registrations. They come in at that point you know, to bring to the attention of these students. That if you want to choose a career, be aware of one, two, three, four. (Clearing throat) But that is not being done. If you'd compare, if I compare this college with the college I was previously at, I was very disappointed to realise that the type of services the student support is offering, If you'd look at that college, I won't mention it. If you look at that college within the registration process, the first step that any new student or allow me to rephrase. For any new student to be enrolled at the college, the first step during registration is to go to the student support services department and they are kept there for plus or minus sixty minutes. You know, the student support services are briefing them on what is happening at TVET colleges, what can they do at TVET colleges, what can they gain from TVET colleges and even err test their (hane keng- what is it) IQ just to show them that what is it they can do. And when those students leave that step of registration, they know exactly where to go. They know what is it they want, but come here, you will find a student who used to be captured, still confused of the course they want to enrol for and my understanding is that should not be the case if you are having student support services at the college. So the effectiveness ntate is not effective.

1.8. What are the implications of the students' academic support on throughput rates?

❖ *Look, you've got. At the college you've got, lecturers who are working with students in classes on issues of teaching and learning. These lecturers are, they may be trained teachers or trained artisans as it is on our case on this campus. There are not trained on dealing with other academic issues other than teaching. So that where student support services come in, because the officials of the student support services are not, they may not be necessarily being educators by qualification, I believe. So, the lecturers will teach us in class themselves, they, how may I put it, they are not enough. Or it is not enough to have them only to work with the student in as far as the throughputs is concerned. The lecturer will only be fixated on teaching and assessing students and if the student is there or whether the students is there or not, or whether students are having challenges or not. Some of the lecturers they may not necessarily paying attention to that, and if that prolongs, that one student, or two or three, that group of students who are presented with whatever challenge they may be presented with at that time. They would at a certain point feel discouraged to continue with their studies, that's where you will then start to have students de-registering from the college. And immediately when students start to de-register, already the throughput rate is compromised already, so you need student support services which is highly effective and motivated to maintain or to have a better throughput rate, if you don't. Teachers or lecturers by themselves they cannot and given the environment, the working environment they are exposed to be guaranteed that if you don't have the student support services your throughput will be very low. So the implications are that, if the SSS is not there the college cannot do anything to maximize their throughput rate.*

1.9. Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?

❖ *If you look at other few colleges, because I will be very honest. It is only a few, my observation is that only few colleges understand the need of student support services to academically assist their students. Only few, but if you look at the few that are using the student support services, they have programmes or sporting*

programmes if I may put it that way. One may not necessarily see a sporting program be any type of a program which can be of any benefit academically, but it does. They have got other programs such as participation in activities such as debate, spelling bees you know, those types of programs. It is such programs that motivates some of these learners to excel in certain subjects, it may not be all the subjects. If you may look at students who are participating actively in events such as debates, their performance in English is very good. Other colleges their SSS is running, what they call it, maths olimpaints, I'm not sure of the exact terminology but it's sort of mathematic activities meant only for students, you know. They are using or they are taking advantage of initiatives like, the science weeks, the SASOL techno acts you know. So other colleges are taking advantage of those events and activities. One may not necessarily see them as been the beneficiary to academics, but for example if you take you can take a group of students, take them to the SASOL TECHNO acts. There they are not being taught anything that they do at the college, they are just being briefed of the types of careers there is in an industrial world and how one can be you know, one of the officials in those careers and they not just doing that in a classroom type of setting, they are doing it in a setting whereby if, there is a chemical engineer , a chemistry expert, they've got their equipment and materials which they use in their field just to demonstrate to these students what they talking of err about and when those student leave there , they are highly motivated to be in one of the fields that they saw there. That in itself has the potential to motivate the student to excel academic, you know, also such things they may not be, when one looks at them from a distance, one may not necessarily see the benefit but if one can engage in them, one will start to realise the benefit that there is, and that is what some other colleges are doing. If you look at other colleges, err I'm sure north link is one of the colleges err that is participating in this initiatives I'm talking of and if you look at their performance, it's very good and one of the things which most colleges, I don't know for which reasons, they just decide to ignore, specially the engineering campuses. They have full functional workshops, if you go inside a workshop you will find that equipment is fully functional and which is accessible to everyone. I'm talking now the students; the lecturers you know. The

reason being if you were to take an engineering student and say maybe an NCV L2 student who is enrolled for fitting and turning, I'm making an example. That student err comes from Thabong, Wesselsbron or Bultfontein, that student has no idea of what is fitting and turning that student only hears of the word fitting and turning. If you enrol such a student and then you don't have a fully functional workshop to train and to teach that student, you are milking into the sand. You are talking to a stone, basically. You need to have something which will demonstrate what you are talking to that student, what you talking about then that student can fully comprehend what you are teaching them, if you don't you are just wasting your time. It's like singing a song which no one has ever heard of, so these are some of the strategies that most of the, few of the colleges that are excelling, have I place.

1.10. Which strategies does Goldfields TVET College use to support students academically?

❖ *I have already mentioned those strategies in the previous question*

1.11. What are the best practices of improving the throughput rate?

❖ *Are you referring now to the once we have currently or the once, we can come up with?*

➢ **The once you can come up with**

❖ *All which I have just mentioned*

➢ **Or that exists, maybe you can add on those once that exists or you can come up with something new.**

❖ *Err (laughter) there's a few that exists as we speak Ntate but one may say they exists on paper. One err management also encourage the lecturing staff to be, what the correct English, to follow to the latter. The policy on punctuality and attendance with the hope that the throughput will then be improved, because part of usage of that policy is to identify students who are always late and students who are always absent then you can refer them to the student support services hoping that the student support services will be able to assist them, then the student will always be attending. That is one of the few we have but it exists on paper because it is sad but it's not monitored. I am talking now, you know if you tell someone to do something and then you turn your back away from them, they may, they may not do it. Hence,*

I say it exists on paper, because someone just says it because It's written and then that's it. The monitoring thereof it's very poor. I think that's the only strategy we have now to improve throughput rates. Yah that's the only strategy we have

1.12. Which guidelines need to be developed to improve throughput rate?

❖ *Well the student policy on punctuality itself needs to be amended itself, because somehow, I feel that it is one of the minor contributing factors. Because it has some fewer loopholes which have a very great impact the college throughput rates. If I may elaborate why am I saying that. Err the policy says that from the beginning of the period, a student may be considered late if he or she arrives within the first 15 minutes and when you administer the attendance register, you should only mark that student being late. And then that late mark on the register is going to be captured as present. No no no I'm confusing this. The policy says when the student is 15 minutes late all the way to the end of the period, the student can be considered late, and the student can be marked late on the register. That late mark on the register is going to be captured as present which means the student can be, if we are now running a 60 minutes' period. The student can be 55 minutes late and that student is going to be considered present. So, the attendance policy If then it says no matter how late the student is, as long as the student shows up for class you can capture them as present for that class. That student does that for a number of periods, that student is going to miss on certain concepts which were covered in class. The implication is that the student is going to perform poorly on the tests and thee assessments that would ultimately lead to the student failing that subject come the final exam and if that was only in one subject. Say maybe it's the subject which of err, I wanted to say it is the subject of which its period is always the first period every day. At end of the year that student is going to fail that subject and perhaps pass the other subjects. And if that student already has a subject which is dragging behind already that is affected in the throughput rate of that programme for that college. So that policy for attendance and punctuality needs to be amended, because we have the types of students who register err knowing that if they are registered the subjects which will qualify them to receive financial aids, that's all they want for receiving of financial aid, this monthly allowance err story. So, they don't*

care of what happen then with their studies, but if the financial aid policies for students could also be amended. Say maybe to an extend that the policy provides for the cutting of financial support, if a student has been late for a number of certain times or if a student err during the year on the ICASS task or students' performance is not so good, you know such things could be cooperated than I believe they could improve the throughput rates then it would mean the students would know that. Say maybe by mid-year if my performance is not at that level, I'm going to lose the financial aid support, and if I lose the financial aid support then I'm already out before the year could even end. I believe that one of the things that need to, one of the guidelines that needs to be amended. Also, the admission policy as well of the college and the department as well, somehow it needs to, it should not be the type of policy we have that caters for everyone. You know that err the constitution err you know does not allow any form of discrimination and b any means, but if you are a college you know you can't work with everyone, when I am saying everyone I am referring now to the different types of students. We have got students who are from normal schools if I may use the word, we have got students who are from schools with special learning needs you know. We have got disabled students and so on, so if you are a college you can't work with all those students at once, unless you are somehow capacitated to a certain extend that you can. But with the current status core that is not the case. So, the admission policy needs to be re-looked into or if it can be amended somehow you know. So that we know that this college like it happens in basic education, you know that this school deals only with deaf and dumb students or learners only. You can't take them anywhere you want, if your child is either deaf or dumb err you take them to that school. You know if it can also be the case with TVET colleges that could improve the throughput rates, because you come, you bring a student to my class who is deaf I'm making an example. And I have to engage with that student during the lesson, how am I going to be able to reach that students level of expectance in as far as teaching and learning is concerned. It is going to be a challenge to me and if it's a challenge to me depending or whether I'm willing to take the challenge and try to device means to respond to the student positively or not. That will determine whether that student continues with

that subject in my class or thinks otherwise, so those are some of the things which needs to, that needs to be re-looked into if I may mention those few.

Thank you very much. That was the last question. Thank you once more for you time.

LECTURER - PARTICIPANT GTC500

1.1. **Eke (right) mmm, thank you very much to be with me here. My topic is, the Implications of NCV students' academic support on the throughput rate at Goldfields TVET College. So, I'm going to ask you twelve questions. And I need you to answer, eh, to give me answers and be free. And as we have gone through the procedure, the purpose of the study, the confidentiality and all those processes then we can start. The first question is which factors influence the throughput rate at the college?**

❖ *Respondent: mmm, emm, I, Yaa I don't, maybe influencing them negatively or positively, let me say in terms of err influencing them positively I would say students' attendance, it's err simplifying err the content within the textbook, err it's a probably motivating students in term of attending classes and assisting them to study. Negatively would say we have a very high err poor attendance with the NCV and that also influence it negatively. That how I would answer it.*

1.2. **Researcher: And then (clearing throat), the second question will be, what is the role of students, lecturers and college management in addressing low throughput rate?**

❖ *Respondent: mmm, I would say with the management, do you want me to be honest?*

❖ *Researcher: Yes*

❖ *Respondent: I haven't, I cannot really identify the role of err management in terms of err attending to low throughput with the NCVs, I cannot really say they are doing 1,2,3,4,5 because I haven't seen it, instead you know they always give everything to the lecturers. Err with the lecturers err most of the time even when we meet and discuss each other's challenges in class you know err we discuss how it can be ensured that students attend, like for instance err you have to always err give a lot of work sometime you need to just err create some form of games whilst studying so that they kept encouraged so that we try to avoid that low throughput. I believe with the students, unfortunately we have a poor student support services that I think they can play a role as well in trying to avoid low throughput we recently have a media centre which I haven't really seen playing a role with students going and*

attend. So, I think lecturers and student themselves rely on themselves most lecturers rely on themselves in terms of helping other lecturers in terms of trying to avoid this low throughput but with the management I wouldn't say really unless really there is something behind the curtains that I'm not aware of but I haven't seen anything (Laughing)

1.3. Researcher: Err (clearing throat) How does the college support students?

❖ *Respondent: Mmm, when you say the college, you mean management and the lecturers*

❖ *Researcher: Yes*

❖ *Respondent: I think it goes back to what we discussed previously, elm, that lecturers I think they are the ones who are trying by all means to support the students. But when it comes to the management I mean really. Now when you say the college, I cannot answer that one truthfully no not truthfully, I can answer it truthfully but with a limited knowledge of what is it that is in place to assist students as a college cos what I know is that they go to study and they go back. The only time that the college is trying to be involved is when we are approaching the exams that's where they have this exam prayers, motivation and so forth, but throughout the year err presence of the college in trying to assist students is seem non-existent.*

1.4. Researcher: Thank you. And the fourth question is that, in your opinion, do you think the students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples

❖ *Respondent: Repeat that (laughing)*

❖ *Researcher: In your opinion, do you think students are making use of the available student support services (SSS) at the college? Elaborate more by giving examples*

❖ *Respondent: (Clearing throat) I have students that I have taken to SSS err to be assisted they had their own personal problems some of them have been assisted and so forth but we have had also a situation where students are complaining that when they go to see err students counsellors they are always with their friends in the offices so they can't be open which err you know would influence students not going to them to be assisted so that's what I would say because we have had strikes students saying that the office of the SSS is not used to assist students but for the*

counsellors to have tea and so forth with their friends from the SRC and all those things. So, I wouldn't say really err students are using it because there is a lack of trust between students and the SSS staff.

1.5. Researcher: Okay. If you answered "NO" to the above question. Why are the students not making use of the student support services that are available at the college?

❖ **Researcher: Err, what is it that the college is doing to improve access to, and the usage of the students support services?**

❖ *Respondent: I don't want to contradict myself to what I've said previously because the question I think it relates to what the college is doing to assist students, Err, I don't know if I should say this is the assistance of the college or it's the assistance of the government in terms of paying their fees with the NSFAS. Err, we used to have what we call concession that they were able to register for free of which it has been scrapped for now. Err in terms of study skills, maybe if I had to come to that one if I'm relevant, err we have heard those Saturday classes where students will tutor their peers, but it didn't really bring us fruitful results apparently due to financial challenges of the college and the students as well. So, I would say the assistance is very minimal, it's not really useful or used fully. It is really minimal therefore one cannot say it has some impact on the students.*

1.6. Researcher: Okay. How do you perceive the effectiveness of the current Student Support Services offered by the college?

❖ *Respondent: It is very poor. As I've said earlier students were complaining that (coughing) the offices are used to sit around with friends and then students can't be free when they have to discuss err their challenges from home or in terms of studies, so I don't think it is that much effective.*

1.7. Researcher: Alright. Err, what are the implications of students' academic support on throughput rates?

❖ *Respondent: Say that again*

❖ *Researcher: What are the implications of students' academic support on throughput rates?*

❖ *Respondent: Mm, I'm mmm, Yoh. Your questions are challenging (Laughing). You want me to think very deep. Err, Yah. Err, I'm trying to answer you honestly and truthfully, but I don't want to bad-mouth the employer at the same time. I would only say Yes there are implications ne in terms of the academic support but the academic support I would say it is class-based, it is lecturer-based. Each and every lecturer err has to ensure that they support their students academically, students those who cannot. Not only that (clearing throat), the other problem that we would have it's, I wouldn't say in terms of the implications of the academic support from lecturers, it's a bit challenging for lecturers to support the students who are slow learners, or with special needs as some of them are not well trained on how assist slow learners or students with special needs and therefore most of the time, here I'm talking from my own experience. You would focus more on those who are able because we have a problem of not wanting to waste time because if you would focus on who are battling in terms of err learning in class it means you are not going to be able to do your admin work which might also result in one being charged for not doing it. So, because of lot of admin work we find it difficult also for really give that full support, full academic support to students. So, we do things with the intension to be careful that we don't find ourselves being charged, at the same time to have at least a number of students who will be able to pass. So, I only say really the implications in my own view they are not that much err high if I must have heard the question very well.*

1.8. Researcher: Okay. And then err. Which strategies do other TVET colleges use to support students academically?

❖ *Respondent: I'm not informed of what other colleges are doing. It's just information from students that Flavius Mareka they are doing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 but to sit and with probably the colleagues from other colleges so that we are able to sit down and say how can we assist each other in terms of assisting students for their academic achievements that has never happened so it's just a hear-say from students who are told by their friends in other colleges so I would not really want to say more on that one.*

1.9. Researcher: Okay. Which strategies does Goldfields TVET College use to support students academically?

❖ *Respondent: It's on paper but in terms of implementing you would say it's non-existent. We have SSS where they say when students are faced, coz the thing is that academic staff must work hand in hand with the SSS therefore so that when there are such challenges there is that communication. For instance, I will make an example, mmm every, the period of every year we would have err students going to write err what is this err psychometric test, something like that. And they also try to check which students are slow learners and which ones are fast learners and so forth. So, after that we are expecting that the SSS must report that you have this type of student in your class that you are able to deal with them, but we never get the report. So, we only become aware that there is a battling student in your class almost around September and October they are writing exams. So, it's a bit err challenging hence I've said it's on paper but in terms of implementing these strategies it is not happening. On paper it's good that lecturers must work hand in hand with SSS and they must sit with them. They must have sessions where SSS must come and give students study skills and all those things. They are just on paper, but they don't happen so the strategies are there, but they are not being implemented.*

1.10. Researcher: What are the best practices of improving the throughput rate?

❖ *Respondent: I think this one is also my views. Err, I've always said one of best is that now we have NCV. Err, lecturers must move you know from, I don't know what you call that, from level 2, level 3 and level 4 you must move with the students because already you understand their challenges and so forth. You must move with your students. And also err, I said that is also I think one the best practices that can happen err to improve students' performance and throughput rate. Is that if lecturers who teach the same group could at least once or twice a month meet and you know discuss the challenges that the students have. Because maybe I might be having a student that is having 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 problems he is able to open up with me but can't open up with other lecturers. At least if we can the same clarity, the same view and the same picture of the student and we are also able to guide each other on how to*

help the same said students. I think that could also assist in terms of improving err the throughput rate. And also, I would suggest that err I would say maybe the lecturers if they could also meet with the SSS you know just to have a session where we discuss some of the ways because SSS have done these things, they are trained on how to deal with students who are battling. Maybe they can also assist lecturers which have this type of students to can do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I think those are the things that could be used as the best practices to improve throughput rate.

1.11. Researcher: Okay, err which guidelines need to be developed to improve throughput rate?

❖ *Respondent: Mmm, I don't know when you say guidelines how relevant will I be. Err I have this thing that, also to improve throughput rate in terms of final exams. Sometimes I think colleges use different books in terms of delivering the lesson. And the examiner might be using a different book, so most of the time lecturers are not aware which book is being used by the examiners. So that they are able to assist their students. I think, coz sometimes these books even if they are of the same programme, they use different terms and now this book instead of using err a component they are using the word elements. Now students are used maybe to the elements of marketing mix and the questions says give us the components of the marketing mix. Now that slight difference in terms of the words kind of err confuse the students. So I think if we could also have been able to use the same book all over the colleges and also maybe as I've said earlier that err working together between lecturer in class and other lecturers who are teaching the same group of students as well as the SSS and probably involve the Deputy Director: Academic also to come up with some ideas and assist. I think that could be guidelines that can be used to improve the throughput rate.*

☞ **Researcher: Thank you very much. This is the end of our interview. Anything that you want to add?**

❖ *Respondent: Nah. But your questions were very challenging and very difficult (Laughing)*

Researcher: Alright (laughing). Thank you

APPENDIX I: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

PROMOL LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

LANGUAGE EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that a professionally-qualified language editor has thoroughly reviewed this Master of Education (MEd) degree document for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, overall style, and readability. Microsoft Word's *Track Changes* feature was used.
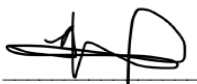
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Author:
JULIUS MOTALA MAKIBINYANE
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