

**UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE
KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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December 2022

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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DATE: 14/12/2022

DEDICATION

أطلبوا العلم من المهد إلى اللحد

(Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave. – Arabic Proverb)

I dedicate this work to the love of my life, my dearest wife, Amina, and my two adorable children, Uzair and Najma. I pray that the many sacrifices you have made for me to pursue my dream will be repaid to you with many opportunities for joy and success in your futures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of Allah (God), the most kind, the most merciful. All praises and thanks are due to Allah (God) who has afforded me the favour, the strength and ilm (knowledge) to complete this research.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation, gratitude and thanks to the following esteemed individuals, as this work would not have been possible with their assistance:

- To my parents Abdul Wahab and Zenath Bibi, (رَبِّ ارْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَانِي صَغِيرًا) for giving me the proper upbringing. I am today who I am because of your sacrifices.
- To my supervisor Professor S.P. Mokoena, for his unwavering, remarkable support, encouragement, and guidance throughout the last few years to complete this dissertation. This journey would not have started had it not been for you. I am eternally thankful.
- To my wife Amina, (جزاك الله خيرًا) for your committed support, encouragement and for standing with me through thick and thin, and to my children, (جزاك الله خيرًا) for affording me the time and space to complete this work.
- To my siblings, Summaya, Maseehullah and Asad, (جزاك الله خيرًا) for all that you have done for me throughout my life, and for always being there when I needed you guys.
- To UNISA, for being an educational partner in my studies since 2012, and the UNISA, college of graduate studies for affording me a bursary. I will forever be grateful.
- To the management of the TVET college, for giving me permission to conduct this research.
- To the parents and learners, who willingly gave up their time to participate in this research.
- To my colleagues, thank you for your time and contributions to this research.

ABSTRACT

Little is known about how parents of children in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges view and contribute to their education. The focus of this study was to investigate factors that influenced parental involvement (PI) at a selected TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal. A qualitative technique was used and interviews with parents, learners, and a focus group with lecturers, were conducted, which contributed to the understanding and perceptions of the college-parent relationship.

The study found that socio-economic factors and, in certain circumstances, a complete absence of communication with parents were the main obstacles that inhibited parental involvement in TVET colleges. Additionally, it appears that the college did not provide parents opportunities to interact with and support the college community, with distance being a major factor.

Accordingly, the study recommends that the institution create policies outlining how parents should be involved, engage in parents' meetings, organise open days, and maintain open lines of communication.

KEYWORDS: Parental involvement, TVET colleges, factors, Epstein's typology, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, benefits of parent involvement, challenges to parental involvement, strategies for parental involvement, parental social capital, KwaZulu-Natal.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DOE	Department of Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
NC(V)	National Certificate Vocational
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PI	Parental Involvement
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSET	Post School Education and Training
SCT	Social Capital Theory
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the researcher briefly discusses the background and context of the research study and explains its significance and importance. In addition, the theoretical framework that supports the study, as well as the study's aims and objectives are clarified. Furthermore, the research methodology, data collection and analysis methodologies, ethical considerations, including the underlying and core concepts, are discussed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the study.

1.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Academic studies, policy development, and public debate continue to focus on and acknowledge parental involvement (PI) as one of the key elements influencing learners' educational experiences, academic progress, and well-being (McNeal Jr., 2014; Goodall, 2017). Verily, it is an important concept and was alluded to by the former president of the Republic of South Africa Thabo Mbeki, during the 1999 State of the Nation address. Amongst other key issues, the former president highlighted the necessity of mobilising parents in an effort to reform the educational system so as to produce a skilled nation. In this regard, it can be argued that South Africa has made substantial progress, since the 'dawn of its democracy' in achieving objectives as set out in terms of the United Nations developmental goals¹. One of the key facets of South Africa achieving the fourth goal, that being *quality education*, is that of PI.

Parents have for a long time been regarded by society as playing a crucial part in their children's education. Furthermore, educators are often urged to forge relationships with families and to encourage parents to participate in the educational processes involving their children (Hill, Witherspoon & Bartz, 2018). Indeed, parents have been playing important roles in their children's education and thus parental

¹ The United Nations 2030 Agenda provides a shared blueprint for 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries. Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Date of use: 20/02/2021)

involvement is not a newly discovered phenomenon. There exists a plethora of research especially that has been carried out since the late 1980's on the notion of PI and most documents the academic successes in mainstream schooling. Take for example, the research carried out by Cotton and Savard (1982), who analysed eighteen (18) research studies in parental participation. Amongst their findings, they reported that PI was helpful, with significant gains in academic achievement, behaviour, confidence and an overall reduction in absenteeism amongst learners.

However, there is also a counter argument, that PI is not a factor in the academic success of a learner. Cook (2021), for example conducted a study and found that PI has no bearing whatsoever on learners who are deemed to be intellectually gifted and talented, also referred to as child geniuses. According to McNeal Jr. (2014), such inconsistencies and contradictions on PI in education have remained in place for several decades. Bearing that in mind, the view of this study is that a significant percentage of research, legislation and policies have shown that PI plays a crucial role in children's academic achievement. For instance, a parents' involvement in education, according to Maluleke (2014), allows parents to uncover their potentials and therefore better ways in which said parents can enhance their contribution to their children's education. Mudibo (2014) shows that when parents are involved in their children's academic endeavours, the parents cultivate the abilities and boost the self-esteem of the latter, resulting in their children's improved academic performances. Other authors, among them Vijayalakshmi and Muniappan (2016), have confirmed the direct and positive impact that PI has had on the academic progress of children.

Upon a deeper examination of the concept of PI, we find a significant degree of affirmation that PI and successful academic achievement are in unison (Arshad, Shahzadi & Mahmood, 2016; Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen & Brand-Gruwel, 2018; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein, 2009; Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Graves & Brown Wright, 2011; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016). In general, the literature has lauded PI as one of the most effective strategies that educational institutions can employ to improve the academic achievements of learners.

However, the bulk of this research is geared towards primary and secondary education. Anecdotal data seems to suggest that as 'children' grow older and more autonomous, parental participation begins to wane, particularly when learners progress to the Post School Education and Training (PSET)² sector. In addition, when the said children reach the age of eighteen (18), they are afforded adult status. Therefore, from a legal standpoint, their parents no longer become entirely responsible for them and their affairs, even when it comes to furthering their education. Furthermore, Henri, Morrell and Scott (2018:1) assert that “leaving the home and going off to college is intrinsically associated with the independence and autonomy of the adolescent learner”. They contend that this is generally viewed as a primary learning outcome of the tertiary education sector the world over. In addition to the learner's sense of independence, parents may lack confidence in assisting their children with an educational system that they may never have been exposed to (Maluleke, 2014). As a result, when these young adults enrol to study at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college, normally, they do so with some autonomy, freedom and independence.

TVET colleges in South Africa, under the directorate of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), are somewhat at a crossroad between mainstream schooling, Post School Education and Training (PSET) and the labour market. The reason being that the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) instructional offering in TVET colleges, overlaps with the General Education and Training (GET) Certificate offered through the Department of Basic Education (DBE). We find that, NC(V) shares the same band with grades ten (10), eleven (11) and twelve (12) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). From this scenario, it is evident that learners who register for the NC(V) qualification seek one of two options. They are either pursuing a qualification in a particular vocation, so as to seek employment in a particular trade or industry or they are simply pursuing a qualification due to having not completed their grade twelve (12).

² The Post School Education and Training Sector. Available at [https://www.gtac.gov.za/persummary/Post%20School%20Education%20and%20Training%20\(PSET\).pdf](https://www.gtac.gov.za/persummary/Post%20School%20Education%20and%20Training%20(PSET).pdf) (Date of use: 20/02/2021)

As a matter of conjecture, even though these learners are adolescents and young adults, and whilst their age range may afford them 'adult' status in the eyes of the law, it is the researcher's argument that there is still a need for PI to offer them support and guidance. It is at this pivotal point in their futures that there starts to exist a vacuum, as it has been proven that PI in schools has led to academic success. The same rhetoric however cannot be applied to public TVET colleges. The significant amount of research with regards to PI centers mainly around the positive academic outcomes for learners in schools. There has however been research (Esau, 2018; Gaffoor, 2018; Gaffoor & Van Der Bijl, 2019; Govindasamy, 2021; Makibinyane, 2020; Matenda, 2019; Mdluli, 2017; Mtshali, 2020; Ngubane, 2018) carried out in TVET colleges, that has either directly or indirectly centred around the notion of PI, which has revealed diverging views, results and contradictions.

Internationally, some studies have investigated the effects of parental involvement with learners at institutions of higher learning. Lewis, West, Roberts and Noden (2015) found that even though learners leave family households and embark on studying at university, there is indeed substantial involvement by the parents in the lives of these young adults. TVET education is a concept that exists globally, and as expected, the sector receives greater financial support in economically progressive countries such as Austria, Canada, Paraguay and the Philippines. In these countries, not only does technical and vocational education compete with university level education, it also sometimes outperforms it, especially in terms of enrolment numbers, academic achievement, and throughput (Legusov, Raby, Mou, Gómez-Gajardo & Zhou, 2022; Mohammad & Ismail, 2019; Wolf, 2020).

Therefore, with the above in mind, this study focused on factors that influence PI in the education of children at a TVET college in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Epstein (1987, 2005) and Maluleke (2014) congruently allude that in cases where children do not receive or receive significantly lower levels of parental participation,

they are more likely to perform poorly, both academically as well as socially. Educational researchers have been assessing PI under the South African environment (Bhekimpilo, 2015; Esau, 2018; Gaffoor & Van Der Bijl, 2019; Maluleke, 2014; Matenda, 2019; Peters, 2014; Mtshali, 2020; Ngubane, 2018, Shezi, 2012) and internationally (Boonk et al., 2018; Epstein, 2005; Kocayörük, 2016; Lewis, West, Roberts & Noden, 2015) and overall, their studies tend to focus more on primary and secondary schooling as well as universities, with the exceptions of a few studies including Esau (2018), Gaffoor and Van Der Bijl (2019), Govindasamy (2021), Makibinyane (2020), Matenda (2019), Mdluli (2017), Mtshali (2020) and Ngubane (2018) who evaluated parents' involvement in South African TVET colleges.

In South Africa, PI is a constitutional right, as mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act 84 of 1996). Harris and Plucker's (2014) study revealed that an efficient partnership between the parent, the institution and the community yield increased results in assessments, improved attitudes, attendance as well as behaviour and completion of homework. Schools that have experienced direct involvement of parent in the education of their children have reported improved results (Boonk et al., 2018). Therefore, whilst parental participation is not a mandate in TVET colleges, it is an essential component that colleges ought to foster especially through encouraging a positive relationship between parents and communities so as to better the performances and participation of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a phrase that refers to a form of an educational system that is designed to "enable practical development of skills, know-how, and understanding required for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades" (UNESCO, 1997:26). This educational sector is relatively new to South Africa, having previously been known as Further Education and Training (FET). According to Akoojee (2008), this sector was officially institutionalised in 2002 by the Further Education and Training Act, No. 98 of 1998. This initial legislation paved the way for the merger of the former 'technical colleges' into fifty (50) FET college institutions, which, as of 2014, are now officially referred to as TVET colleges, having officially been incorporated into the directorate of the

Department of Higher Education (DHET). Currently, TVET colleges are operational as a function of the DHET, under the terms of the Continuing Education and Training (CET) Act, No. 16 of 2006 (DHET, 2021).

As an educational division, TVET is geared at providing high quality education and practical skills to empower the workforce (artisans) of the country, thereby addressing the economic and skills crisis that is eluding South Africa. In 2014, the DHET published the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training³, which re-affirmed the departments' goal of making TVET colleges a preferred institution for the youth. Furthermore, the objectives set out in the document are overall in line with the government's goal to 'build a developmental state'. The structuring of TVET colleges have also provided differing educational pathways for learners.

Firstly, the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) or the National Certificate: N1 qualifications, propose an entry requirement of a grade nine (9) certificate. This, by extension also implies course eligibility for learners' who are in the possession of certificates from grades ten (10), eleven (11) and twelve (12). Secondly, learners who have completed grade twelve (12) are eligible to register for the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma qualification (NATED), also known as Report 191 (R191). According to Van der Bijl and Lawrence (2019), the purpose of the NC(V) qualification was to solve concerns that were not sufficiently addressed by the previous R190/191 technical qualifications. They contend that among other concerns, the R190/191 offered poor instructional quality and curricula that was unrelated to the country's economic needs and demands, therefore, it produced graduates with low technical and cognitive skills.

Currently, some of these technical instructional offerings (R190/R191) are in the process of being phased out (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). Statistics South Africa's Education Series Volume V report alludes to TVET colleges as having a distinct nature and as an educational institution for learners who seek marketable skills for a

³ White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. Available at https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/37229gon11.pdf (Date of use: 24/02/2021)

profession (STATSSA, 2017). A notable feature of TVET colleges, are the sheer volume of cohorts that are in the system.

The latest available data from the Department of Higher Education (DHET, 2019a), as shown in FIGURE 1.1 below, for the period 2010 to 2019, indicates that initially, the sector enrolled comparatively fewer learners, especially between 2010 and 2011. On the other hand, enrolment figures for the period 2012 to 2016 showed a significant upward trend. From 2017 to 2019 recorded a somewhat plateauing effect as learner enrolments hovered around six hundred thousand.

Enrolment in TVET colleges, 2010 – 2019

Qualification Category	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
NC(V)	130 039	124 658	140 575	154 960	166 433	165 459	177 261	142 373	131 212	138 912
Report 191 (N1-N6)	169 774	222 754	359 624	442 287	486 933	519 464	492 026	510 153	482 175	494 070
Occupational Qualifications	23 160	20 799	62 359	19 000	19 825	20 533	13 642	10 969	20 106	22 886
Other	35 420	32 062	95 132	23 371	29 192	32 424	22 468	24 533	23 355	14 025
PLP	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	285	3 597
Total	358 393	400 273	657 690	639 618	702 383	737 880	705 397	688 028	657 133	673 490

Sources: *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa, 2018.*
TVETMIS 2019, data extracted in December 2020.

FIGURE 1.1: TVET Enrolment data

[Source:

<https://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202019.pdf>]

Often, developing countries have experienced a definitive disconnection between TVET colleges and parents, which could be caused by the physical distances between the two entities. This is despite the fact that by and large, a college should serve the greater community in which it is located and therefore TVET colleges have a mandate and responsibility to their communities, one of which is to establish effective partnerships. To date, most TVET colleges in developing countries, including many in South Africa, have struggled to build an environment that encourages parents to participate actively in their children's educational pursuits.

Furthermore, so far, there exists a shortfall particularly in research that evaluates the interaction between the adolescent/young adult student population and TVET colleges in South Africa. Instead, most information has discussed the role of PI on younger children and primary schooling rather than adolescents/young adults and

TVET colleges. In a somewhat a similar trend to what occurs in mainstream schools, parents and TVET colleges need to be accountable to each other in order for parents to become more involved in the institution.

Therefore, given the increasing numbers of learners that TVET colleges are managing, this sector warrants an investigation, especially on the role of PI in the education of their children.

1.3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I quote Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:11) who state that “educators are always trying to make sense of educational processes and practices”, which ultimately leads to professional decision making, which in turn affects teaching and learning practices. Fundamentally, the researcher embarked on this endeavour to understand why parents do not entirely factor into the education equation of their children in the TVET college, where the researcher is employed.

The researcher has acquired fourteen years of experience as an educator at the TVET college selected for participation in the study and has always noted the criticism labelled against TVET colleges in terms of its results, progress, and the overall throughput rate of learners. According to DHET (2019b), the rate at which a cohort of learners successfully completes a qualification within the allotted time period for that qualification is known as the throughput rate. In layman’s terms, we call that a pass rate. Van der Bijl and Lawrence (2019) purport that in TVET colleges, attrition rates are high while throughput or pass rates have historically always been poor. Research by Khuluvhe and Mathibe (2021) showed that the overall throughput rate for TVET college learners who enrolled in the NC(V) qualification in 2017 and completed in 2019 was 10.4%, as depicted in FIGURE 1.2 below.

Throughput rate of NCV Level 2 students enrolled in TVET Colleges in 2017

Number of new entrants for NCV Level 2 in 2017	Number of students who completed NCV Level 4 in 2019	Throughput rate (%)
61 045	6 328	10.4

Source: TVETMIS 2017 and National Examinations Database, November 2019

Notes: The students who enrolled for NCV Level 2 in 2017 for the first time (as new entrants), were compared to those students who completed NCV Level 4 in 2019

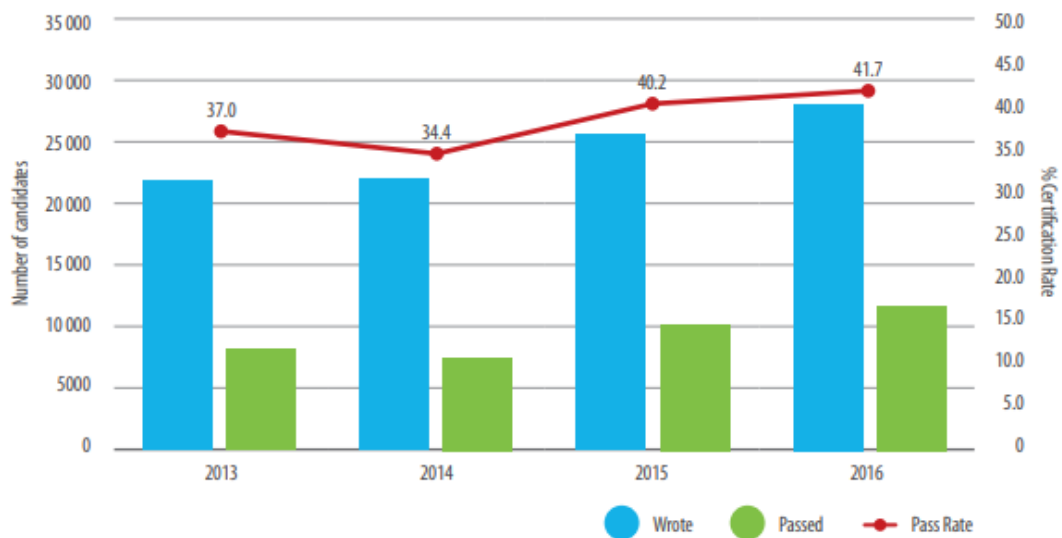
FIGURE 1.2: NC(V) Throughput rate 2017 - 2019

[Source:

[https://www.dhet.gov.za/Planning%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Coordination/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Throughput%20Rates%20for%20TVET%20College%20Students%20\(NCV\)_%20March%202022.pdf](https://www.dhet.gov.za/Planning%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Coordination/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Throughput%20Rates%20for%20TVET%20College%20Students%20(NCV)_%20March%202022.pdf)]

Furthermore, data for the period 2013 to 2016 indicate that on average, the certification rate for NC(V) level 4 (with level 4 being the exit level) ranged between 35% and 45%, as indicated in FIGURE 1.3 (STATSSA, 2017).

Figure 34 Certification Rate of NC(V) 4 programme in TVET Colleges, 2013–2016



Sources: DHET (2015c, 2016d, 2017c, 2018b); DHET (2016c)

FIGURE 1.3: NC(V) Certification Rates

[Source: https://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20Monitor%20Report_March%202019.pdf]

Globally, the Republic of Philippines' average certification rate for their TVET institutions for the period 2014 to 2016, as indicated in FIGURE 1.4 below, hovered around the 91.5% mark, whilst at the same time accommodating almost double the number of learners than in South African TVET colleges.

Table 2. Number of Assessed and Certified by Year: 2014 & 2016

Year	Assessed	Certified	Certification Rate
2014	1 232 116	1 125 273	91,3%
2015	1 424 814	1 297 927	91,1%
2016	1 521 530	1 398 780	91,9%
Total	4 178 460	3 821 980	91,5%

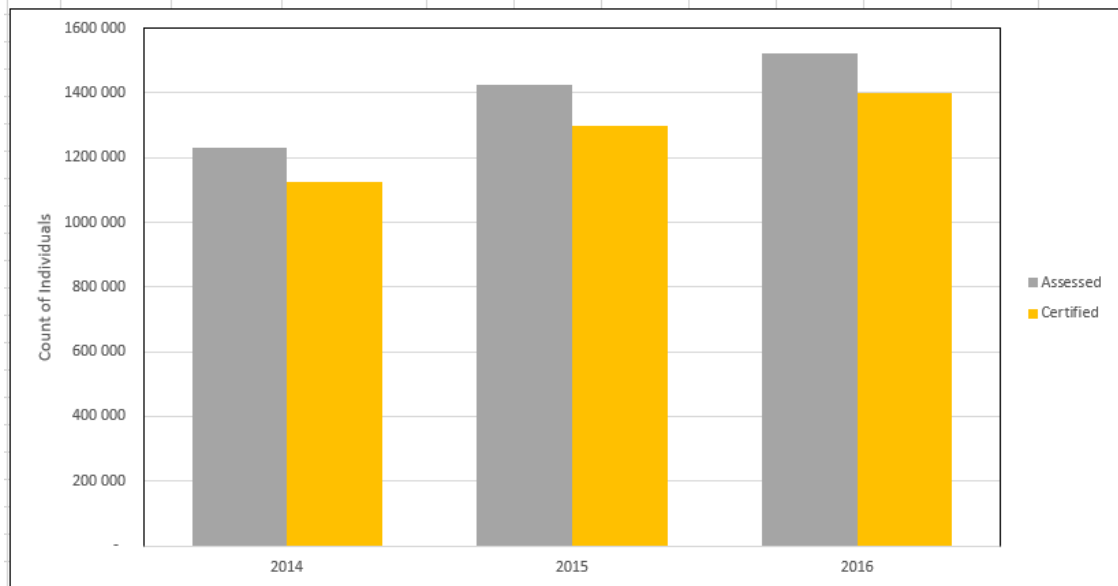


FIGURE 1.4: Philippines TVET Certification Rates

[Source: <https://intranet.tesda.gov.ph/Statsframe/TvetDownloadFile/73>]

Analysis of data on especially enrolments versus throughput rates in South African TVET colleges reveal that the sector is faced with challenges. Findings put forward by Van der Bijl and Lawrence (2019) suggest that many learners enrol and either drop out or do not pass the final examinations. Personally, over the years, the researcher has sought to understand some of the dynamics faced by both the learner and the institution that have raised these challenges, and which have led to the criticism of TVET colleges in the country.

For instance, Zulu and Mutereko (2019) argue that high student attrition (drop-out) rates are endemic to TVET colleges. As such, they believe this results in wasteful expenditure of limited taxpayer funds and other resources, on educational programmes that are not producing the required number of graduates. Anecdotally, there exists the public perception that the DHET has a sort of utopian belief regarding TVET colleges, their academic successes, and their place in South Africa's modern economy.

However, without biasness the researcher can safely contend that TVET colleges have been working hard to eliminate some of the teething issues that have lingered.

Indeed, low throughput rates and high learner dropout may not be viewed as teething issues, however the researcher, in juxtaposing the TVET college with schools (in terms of manner and function) has come to the realisation that there is absence of a distinct, salient feature termed '*parental involvement*'. According to Harris and Plucker (2014), a strong and coherent parent-educator relationship is required to have a beneficial impact on a learner's progress as well as for the institution. They found that a successful cooperation between the parent, the institution, and the community results in improved assessment scores, improved attitudes, attendance, and behaviour, and homework completion.

Data available from Statistics South Africa for the 2016 academic year indicate that 92.1% of learners registered at TVET colleges were African, 6.5% were Coloureds while Whites made up 1.1% and Indian/Asian contributed 0.3% (STATSSA, 2017). This posits that most learners who register in South African TVET colleges are from historically disadvantaged communities. Therefore, whilst parental participation is not a mandate in TVET colleges, it is essential that the sector foster a relationship with parents and their communities to address especially some disparities that have eluded particularly the majority of their student population. Every year, the TVET college education system enrolls learners in large numbers, with very few learners who successfully complete their studies. From the abundance of literature on the topic of PI, it is clear that indeed there are benefits for the learner, both inside and outside of the classroom environment (Arshad, Shahzadi & Mahmood, 2016; Boonk et al., 2018; Driessen, 2019; Epstein, 2009; Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016).

The researcher's observations in colleges have been that a handful of parents get involved during the enrolment period, with similar observations having been made by Esau (2018). Esau's study found that parents assisted their children during enrolment and course registration. However, a question that has intrigued me, is.

“Does parental involvement in the education of learners at TVET colleges simply stop because they are seen as adults?”

Moreover, the researcher's experience as a TVET educator has led to the realisation that there needs to be more PI in TVET colleges. The argument is based on the fact that TVET colleges largely exclude parents from matters such as discipline, attendance and punctuality, reports and the code of conduct of the institution. There exists the assumption that it is the learner's responsibility to communicate these aspects to their parents, based on the assumption that the learner is now of that age, and thus a responsible and like-minded adult.

This is also evident in policy documents such as the "Public Further Education and Training College Attendance and Punctuality Policy" (DHET, 2013), which although allowing the involvement of parents on attendance and punctuality, the directive is somewhat more of a general action and not as a formal consequence such as those set out in section five (5). Personally, the researcher has only met the parents of learners in a formal setting on two officially sanctioned occasions. Consequently, those meetings greatly helped in the short-term as there was a marked increase in student attendance, discipline, and resultant pass rates for that year only. It is the researcher's fervent belief that PI would greatly benefit South African TVET colleges.

The plethora of arguments provided in this section formed the basis that the following research study sought to address. In order to gain an understanding of the factors influencing the role of PI in the academic success of TVET learners, perceptions in relation to how parents are involved, reasons for the lack of PI, and strategies to improve the management of involving parents in the college. This research study focused on the issue of PI at a higher education institution, specifically a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in the uThukela district of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa.

1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In general, a slew of literature has lauded PI as one of the most effective strategies that educational institutions can employ to improve academic achievements of learners (Arshad, Shahzadi & Mahmood, 2016; Boonk et al., 2018; Driessen, 2019; Epstein, 2009; Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016). However, majority of these studies have focused on more on

primary schooling education, with very few directly addressing PI in TVET colleges. Despite the widely acknowledged significance of PI, there is a shortage of knowledge regarding the various factors that affect PI in the TVET sector. The manner and frequency in which parents are involved in the selected TVET college is a cause for concern. This research study therefore sought to understand the factors that are influencing PI in the education of their children at a selected TVET college.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Results of this investigation will have three crucial implications. Firstly, the researcher believed that conducting this study would contribute towards the understanding of how PI can be incorporated into the TVET context. Furthermore, it was envisaged that the results would help change the status quo between parents and the participant TVET college and also help foster partnerships with parents, communities and industry. Lastly, it was envisaged that the results of this study would influence policy and decision making, both at a local college management level as well as the DHET.

1.6. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research inquiry aimed to discover factors influencing parental involvement at a selected TVET college in the uThukela district municipality of the KwaZulu-Natal province, with an aim to accomplish the following objectives:

- To determine the understanding that parents, learners and lecturers had of the concept “parental involvement”.
- To establish the benefits of parents being involved in the TVET college.
- To determine how parental involvement in the TVET college was perceived by the learners, parents and lecturers.
- To identify the barriers of parental involvement at the TVET college.
- To suggest strategies that could be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college.

1.7. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The research study addressed the issue of parental involvement at a Technical Vocational Education and Training college (TVET) to answer the main research question of: What are the factors influencing parental involvement in the education of their children at a TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal?

1.7.1. Sub-questions

Thus, the research study further sought to clarify.

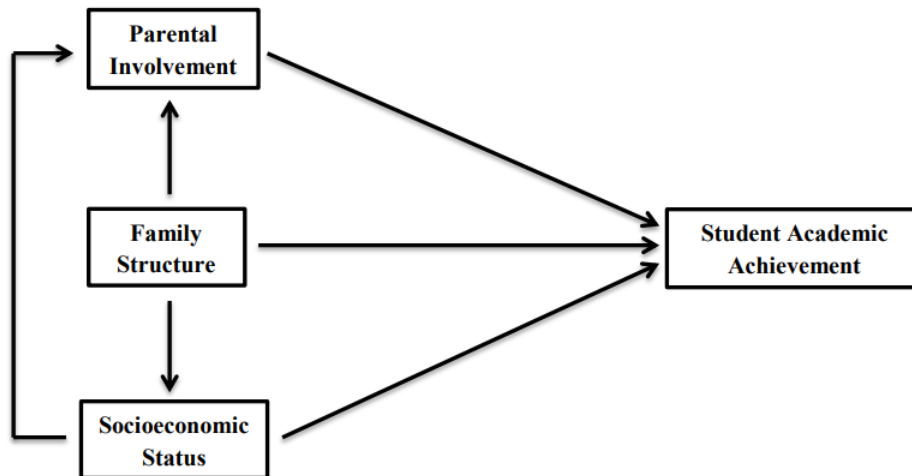
- What do learners, parents, and lecturers understand about the concept of parental involvement?
- What benefits does a TVET college gain if parents are involved?
- How is parental involvement in the TVET college perceived by learners, parents and the lecturers?
- What are the barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college?
- What strategies can be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college?

1.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework provides the basis for a researcher's arguments in a research study. According to Creswell (2013), a theory is a collection of connected ideas that generate propositions aimed at explaining how various variables relate to one another. Lederman and Lederman (2015) emphasise the importance of a theoretical or conceptual framework in almost all forms of educational research. They contend that whether the researcher is aligned to quantitative, qualitative, or even mixed methods, a framework must be used so as to justify the significance and importance of the research.

The frameworks used to guide this study are based on the theories of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of human development, Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, and Epstein's (2001) theory of the overlapping spheres of influence. The research by Goodall (2013) and LeBrun-

Martin (2013), which examined the role of parental involvement also influenced this study. The theoretical model used by LeBrun-Martin (2013:27) in their study was adapted from models proposed by Elder (1998) and Epstein (2001). The focus of the current study was on the characteristics and factors thought to affect PI in a TVET learners' education. FIGURE 1.5 illustrates the theoretical model of factors influencing parental involvement.



Adapted from LeBrun-Martin (2013:27)

FIGURE 1.5 Theoretical model of factors influencing parental involvement in learners' academic achievement.

1.8.1. Application of the theory

LeBrun-Martin's (2013) framework was modified to include traits that are important to understanding factors influencing parental involvement in academic achievement. The design of the study's objectives, literature review, and research questions followed the composition of the framework. The theoretical framework of LeBrun-Martin (2013) helped the researcher to comprehend the issue and made assumptions about PI clear. The focus of this study was to examine those external factors that are outside the 'person' and how they influenced parents being involved.

Coleman (1988) contends that parents possess social capital that can be applied to an educational organisation to produce desired outcomes (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016). Coleman's social capital theory regards social relations as containing

resources, or human capital. According to Rogošić and Baranović, the number of resources that can be devoted to improving one's degree of education is greatly influenced by their socio-economic circumstances. In addition, Urie Bronfenbrenner recognised complex social structures inherit in a child's education, and his Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development (1979) looked at the complex structure of social ties that exist between a person and their environment.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), children develop as a result of complex systems of relationships, each at different levels in their environment. Bronfenbrenner's work culminated in the bioecological model of human development and the theory explains how the relationships that children have with parents influence their development, whilst at the same time how such relationships are greatly influenced by the environment. Conceptually, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory established how important and advantageous home-school partnerships are. Bronfenbrenner's work greatly inspired, influenced and shaped Epstein's theory of the overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein's model emphasises the mutual co-operation, collaboration and communication between schools and families (Epstein, 1987, 1996).

According to Goodall (2013:134), "Parental engagement is a much larger concept than has often been understood by the term 'parental involvement'". Goodall found that there are divergent views regarding what constitutes parental involvement and found that the term was closely associated with the parent being involved in the child's schooling rather than with the child's learning. Goodall developed a six-point model as a framework that would provide for effective parental engagement with a child's learning. In chapter two, the theoretical frameworks are further discussed. Thus, the researcher envisaged similar results for TVET colleges, should the framework be applied to South Africa's TVET colleges to increase academic achievement.

1.9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used was detailed at length in chapter 3. Hereinafter follows a summary of the methodological issues of the intended study.

1.9.1. Research approach

The researcher made use of a qualitative research approach. According to Aspers and Corte (2019), a study that involves the utilisation and collection of research data through a variety of empirical materials that represent routine and difficult moments and meanings in people's lives is referred to as qualitative research. The decision to employ a qualitative approach is largely influenced by the nature of the research approach itself. Qualitative researchers, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), are primarily concerned with gathering and analysing non-numerical data such as text, audio, and video in order to comprehend the meanings and conceptions that individuals have built based on their experiences.

The most significant feature of qualitative research, according to Islam and Faruque (2016), is its exploratory aspect, which allows the finding of thoughts, opinions, and feelings of human behaviour and what governs it. Islam and Faruque contend that this feature allows the researcher to study a problem in greater depth. Therefore, using a qualitative approach allowed this researcher to explore the phenomenon of PI in its natural setting, that being a TVET college. The researcher's choice of using a qualitative approach was based on Creswell's (2007) explanation of qualitative research, as cited in Macmillan and Schumacher (2014). According to Macmillan and Schumacher, Creswell contends that "qualitative research begins with assumptions, qualitative researchers use an emerging approach to inquiry, collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and with data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes", (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2014:344). Furthermore, Macmillan and Schumacher assert that such research concludes with a report that incorporates the voices of the participants, the researcher's reflection, and a detailed description and analysis of the problem.

The researcher is of the assumption that, based on the assertions that since TVET college learners are young adults, parents need not be involved in their educational matters, thus, in using a qualitative approach, he envisaged that the perceptions of learners, parents, and lecturers would describe a different narrative.

1.9.2. Research Design

The design used in this research was a case study. A case study, according to Yin (2014), is a research method used in several contexts to improve our “knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political, and related phenomena” (Yin, 2014:4). The proposed methodology allowed the researcher to seek answers to “how and what” in relation to the topic, which produced rich narrative data about the perception(s) of the phenomena under investigation. The study utilised interviews to explore and understand the research questions.

1.10. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:143), “a population is a group of elements or cases, which can be individuals or objects or events that meet a specific criterion”. The population identified for this research study were parents, learners, and lecturers of a selected campus of a TVET college in the uThukela District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, all of whom were either enrolled, lecturing in or parents of learners enrolled in the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) qualification. The researcher selected this site as it was within relative proximity to the researcher, thereby reducing cost and time. The researcher believed that the learners, parents and lecturers represented the best selection of participants to share their personal experiences and perceptions about PI and its influencing factors.

Furthermore, parents were directly able to provide data on what roles they played and how they supported their children in TVET colleges in terms of academic achievement. Lecturers were selected in order to assist in answering the main research and sub-questions of the study. Due to time constraints, the reactive nature of rules and regulations aimed at managing the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant changes made to the college’s academic year, the research study purposively sampled five (5) parents, eleven (11) learners and five (5) lecturers, representing a total sample of twenty-one (21) participants.

1.11. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This research study made use of interviews to collect data from the group of participants, namely semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. According to Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2015), semi-structured interviews are appropriate and beneficial when the researcher plans to use open-ended questioning and when some of the open-ended questions necessitate follow-up questions that probe and extract more information. This method is primarily used to gain data from participants in a one-on-one setting. Furthermore, Newcomer et al. (2015:367) assert that if the researcher also wants to determine the “independent thoughts of each individual”, then semi-structured interviews are especially advantageous. Oplatka (2021) cautions novice and emerging researchers to avoid some common mistakes when undertaking qualitative research. Some of these mistakes include having too little or too much irrelevant data. In this regard, the researcher utilised a digital recording device in conjunction with hand-written notes that were taken during interviews and the focus group session.

Gundumogula (2020) describes a focus group interview as a more specific in-depth group interview with a discussion where selected themes are explored in a disciplined and organised manner with the assistance of a facilitator or moderator. Generally, researchers try to keep focus group interviews limited to five (5) participants so as to be able to direct the interview more efficiently. The researcher used this method to gain insights into perceptions that normally emanate from a group dynamic. Focus groups, according to Richard, Sivo, Orlowski, Ford, Murphy, Boote and Witta (2021) have long been used across a variety of disciplines to investigate, solve problems, formulate hypotheses, and investigate opinions and qualities. Furthermore, Richard et al., posit that the benefit of having a focus group is that it allows the researcher to obtain information from multiple participants, all regarding the same issue or topic, in one sitting.

The above-mentioned data collection methods were selected by the researcher, as it this study was guided by the qualitative research approach. Using open-ended questioning provided the researcher the opportunity to obtain quality and trustworthy data on how the participants perceived their experiences in relation to the topic. Furthermore, it afforded the researcher an opportunity to understand how the

participants made sense of their reality, whilst also affording them an opportunity to respond in their own way.

1.12. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is one of important aspects of any research as is the process of analysing, transforming, and drawing conclusions. Qualitative research attempts to narrate some meaning through the analysis of data. Through careful analysis, data can be utilised to shed light on the intricacies of human behaviour, to guide actions, and to give people's lived experiences a voice (Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith & Kegler, 2019).

All interview sessions held with this study's participants were digitally recorded, in preparation for later data analysis. Prior to the data being analysed, the researcher transcribed all interviews and focus group interviews. The researcher created Microsoft Word documents for the interviews and focus group interviews, which were transcribed verbatim. Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that the process of transcription entails recording information and thereafter transforming the information into a suitable format that allow for analysis and understanding. Thereafter, a thematic analysis was applied, whereby the data was coded and labelled to identify common aspects and themes, which stood out.

1.13. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) contend that for qualitative research to be 'believable', there needs to be some resemblance between the explanation of the phenomena and what experiences really occur. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:1) assert that in qualitative research, in order for a researcher's work to be accepted as valid and credible, they must prove that "data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematising, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail". In view of the above, the researcher was guided by the four-criterion posited by Lincoln and Guba (1995) cited in Korstjens and Moser (2018), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

However, with caution, the researcher was cognisant to the issue of context. Im, Page, Lin, Tsai, and Cheng (2004) cited in Mazonde and Carmichael (2018:53) assert that contextuality is the “sensitivity to structural conditions that contribute to a participant’s responses and the interpretations of situations informed by experiences, by validation of perceptions, and by a careful review of existing knowledge”. Mazonde and Carmichael (2018) argue that most research strategies are usually based on principles from a western context, which held weight for the researcher. In order for the issue of context to be realised, the researcher had to possess the prerequisite knowledge and at the same time appreciate the research environment in order to “access participants and gather information that is more precise and sensitive” (Mazonde and Carmichael, 2018:53).

1.14. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:338) assert that credible research involve “selecting informants and effective research strategies but also adhering to research ethics”. The researcher embarked on this study in the utmost professional and ethical manner in conjunction with ethical principles and prescripts as set out by the University of South Africa. Additionally, all regulations, as set out in Government Gazette No.39583 of 8 January 2016, by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training in respect of conducting research in post school education and training institutions were adhered to. Therefore, all the participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of South Africa and the Department of Higher Education and Training.

To ensure that none of the participants were adversely affected in any way or manner, permission to conduct research on college property was sought from the principal of the designated TVET college as well as the campus manager of the chosen campus, in addition to the requirements outlined by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The researcher requested voluntary participation from all respondents. To gain informed consent, the researcher conducted an information briefing session with potential participants wherein they were assured of the following:

- Voluntary participation in the study for research purposes only.
- Their right to confidentiality and anonymity.
- Their right to privacy.
- Their right to safety and preservation of life, given the Covid-19 pandemic.

The researcher also drafted consent forms for willing participants to sign.

1.15. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study was limited as it solely focused on only one campus of the selected TVET college in the uThukela District, and to a maximum of twenty-one (21) purposively selected participants. Furthermore, there was insufficient available literature on parental involvement in TVET colleges in South Africa, therefore it was not possible to generalise the study's results to all TVET institutions in the country. Time was also envisaged to be a factor in two ways. Firstly, in light of the government measures created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic under the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002. Secondly, because the majority of the participants resided in remote rural areas, time availability due to transport was a factor and thus interview sessions needed to be scheduled/rescheduled around their availability and or the researcher's ability to access the participants.

1.16. KEY TERMS

Parent – In this study, a parent was deemed as a mature adult individual who takes care of a child's welfare. The term was used beyond the scope of ones' own and/or biological parents. Furthermore, the term "Parent is a generic category of caregiving provided to a child in a stable, intimate, and caring relationship—not restricted to biological parents" (USAID, 2013: xiii).

Learner - Male or female participants in this study who were registered or enrolled in an academic program at a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College qualified as a learner.

Parental involvement - typically described as a fair exchange of information between parents and teachers about how their children are developing academically

(Epstein, 1991). Involves parents giving support and encouragement to their children, such as applauding their accomplishments and efforts, and letting them know that their parents care about their performances in school (Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019).

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) - Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) refers to “comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods” (UNESCO, 2015).

1.17. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This research inquiry comprises five chapters which are organised as follows:

Chapter one: This chapter served as an introduction to the research study. The researcher provided a background of the study, rationale for the study, statement of problem, research methodology and design.

Chapter two: This chapter presented a review of available and relevant literature on parental involvement in education and is used to contextualise the study and bolster the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter three: This chapter presented the researcher’s motivation for the research design and methodology used in the study. It follows a concise discussion of the qualitative approach used, as well as the methods used for data collection and analysis.

Chapter four: Chapter four presented an account of the data that was collected in terms of interpretation, discussion, and analysis.

Chapter five: Chapter 5 presented the summary of findings of the study and provided recommendations by the researcher for putting into practice ways to enhance parental involvement at a TVET college in the uThukela District.

1.18. SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the background and context of the research study and explained its significance and importance. Furthermore, the theoretical framework that underpinned the study, aims and objectives of the study and research methodology used were discussed. The methods used for data collection and data analysis, ethical considerations and the underlying and core concepts were also explained. The next chapter explores relevant literature related to the study on the topic of parental involvement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of literature on parental involvement (PI) that is relevant and related to this study. First, the chapter sought to find a succinct academic definition of the term PI. This was followed by sections describing the importance of the role that parents play, examining the context to which PI has evolved over the years in the South African education system. The chapter also includes a brief overview of how PI is practised in TVET colleges. Furthermore, it accentuates the main argument as set out in the first chapter viz; the importance of PI. A discussion on the theorems applied is also included to understand the frameworks that underpins the study. The chapter concludes by examining some of the challenges that are hamper PI as well as strategies that can be used to enhance it.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is an important part of research as it helps to provide a description, a summary, and a critical evaluation of existing literary works on a topic or area to ascertain established, accepted, and discredited information. According to Paul and Criado (2020:1) “a literature review provides a comprehensive overview of literature related to a theme/theory/method and synthesises prior studies to strengthen the foundation of knowledge”. Their main point is that effective research enables the academic community along stakeholders to increase overall understanding. What this means is that when previous research is logically synthesised, it provides for the advancement of the topic under investigations.

The foundation of all academic research, across disciplines, is to build on and connect to existing knowledge (Snyder, 2019). However, the kind of literature that a researcher reviews depends on the field of study that the researcher are interested and/or involved in, as well as whether their study is at the undergraduate or postgraduate level (Paul & Criado, 2020), among other factors. There are many

different types of literature reviews that have developed over time, of these, the narrative, systematic, meta-analytical, and meta-synthesis are the most common (Danson & Arshad, 2014).

The traditional or narrative literature review analyses and summarises literature related to a particular topic at hand (Koutsos, Menexes & Dordas, 2019). According to Koutsos, Menexes and Dordas, narrative reviews use literature that are carefully chosen by the researcher and are based on the author's perspective and experience. In comparison, a systematic literature review necessitates a stricter and more defined approach (Snyder, 2019). Snyder alludes to the comprehensiveness of a systematic review as it includes information on the time period from which the material was chosen.

According to Danson and Arshad (2014:38), “the meta-analysis literature review involves taking the findings from the chosen literature and analysing these findings by using standardised statistical procedures”. They further contend that the meta-synthesis, “is a non-statistical procedure that evaluates and analyses findings from qualitative studies and aims to build on previous conceptualisations and interpretations” (Danson & Arshad, 2014:38). The focus of this study is one of PI and how it is viewed by learners enrolled in TVET colleges, the parents, and lecturers as well as factors influencing said involvement. In reviewing literature, the meta-synthesis approach was utilised by the researcher.

The researcher determined that a meta-synthesis was a suitable review for use when closely examining the PI from the perspectives of the affected and its context as well as the extrapolations of other researchers' who investigated this concept. Also, the researcher felt it pertinent to engage and understand that which transpired over the years through reviewing relevant literature before being able to perform significant research. Numerous primary and secondary sources including books, journals, masters, and doctoral dissertations were reviewed. In order to have a broad access to information that was relevant to the topic, search terms such as parental involvement, parental involvement in TVET, importance of parental involvement in education, benefits of parental involvement in education, and factors influencing parental involvement in TVET were used amongst the sources to gather literature.

Such topics that were researched so as to better comprehend the issues are presented in the next section. The researcher believed it was initially important to develop an understanding of how PI is defined.

2.3 DEFINING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Anecdotal evidence suggests that when one speaks of PI, there is a clear understanding of the concept. However, upon searching literature, the researcher found that it is defined varyingly, meaning, it has no single concise definition. Over the past decade and more researchers have tried to definitively define this term, however their attempts further fragmented the available literature.

For example, Vandergrift and Greene (1992:57) assert the notion that PI is made up of two elements. The first involve a scenario where parents are supportive primarily through offering encouragement and are sympathetic and empathetic in that they re-assure their children in all matters pertaining to their education. The second element involves a case where the parents are very much active and committed in their children's education such that their actions are observable. To make their point Vandergrift and Greene state, "This combination of level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent" (Vandergrift & Greene, 1992:57). Boonk et al., (2018) acknowledges the multiple descriptions of parental involvement but posit that in the main, there is rarely agreement amongst the research community as to its definition.

Of the variety of existing definitions of PI acknowledged by Boonk et al., is that by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:238) cited in Boonk et al., (2018:4) who offered one that is broadly inclusive in that it refers to PI as "the dedication of resources by the parent to the child". Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011:116) offered a slightly more precise definition cited in Boonk et al., (2018:4) when they indicated that PI refers to "the parents' or caregivers' investment in the education of their children". Another aspect that was discovered, to which Walker (2017) as well as Boonk et al., (2018) also agree to is that many researchers, instead of defining PI, concentrate on certain and specific types of involvement. Boonk et al., and Walker assert that

researchers tend to frequently reference Comer (1995) and Epstein (1987, 1995) with regards to school and family partnerships and the typology of PI.

Fisher (2009) reported that while the term conveyed different things, its interpretation could be left up to groups of individuals seeking to understand it. Such individuals could include educators, principals, parents and even the upper echelons of the ministry of education. Recently however, Antipkina and Ludlow (2020:856) offered a more comprehensive definition of PI when they referred to it as a "continuum of parenting behaviours ranging from those signifying lower degrees of involvement to those showing higher levels of involvement". According to Antipkina and Ludlow, as complex as the definition of PI is, its definition should include aspects of it being a holistic approach aimed at improving the overall aspect of a child's education. From the above arguments, the researcher explores the notion of PI as the collaboration between the parent, educator, and the institution, which for the learner, provides enhanced motivation, encouragement, and participation in educational activities.

2.4 ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PARENT

According to Epstein (2001) and Boonk et al., (2018), involving parents in educational systems is intrinsically linked to an improvement in academic performance, attendance, behaviour, discipline, and the quality of school programs. The role(s) that parents perform and the importance of PI cannot be overlooked as parents are the primary teachers for their children and without engaging with them, students' outcomes are likely to be lower than they ought to be (Juwariyah, Slamet & Kustiono, 2019). Juwariyah, et al., assert that since it is where children receive their earliest educational experiences, the idea of early childhood education originates from the home and family life. One of the simplest ways in which parents can show their children that they value education, is by simply talking to them about their day.

Psychologists shown that normally, children have a tendency to model adult behaviours. Therefore, it stands to reason that when parents are actively involved with their children's education, the children in turn learn, understand, and value the importance of education and try to emulate learned behaviours. Skaliotis (2014) cited

in Walker (2017) asserts that of late, parents display higher levels of involvement in their children's education as these parents understand the importance of their parental responsibility with regards to their child's education.

Klepfer (n.d) suggests that a parent's role can be divided into three (3) categories. In describing the first category, she asserts that the role of parents should be to show support for a child's education through the following ways:

- Time and attendance: Klepfer contends that this is one aspect where parents have the most control and it is understood that regular attendance leads to better academic results. With regards to time, given that in many instances, parents are the ones responsible for either getting the child ready for school or providing transport (to and from the school), this can be done timeously so that the child is always punctual.
- Parental attitude towards the school: Klepfer cautions parents that their display of a negative attitude towards an educational institution more likely displays a similar discord. Thus, she implores parents to always show a positive attitude towards a school, irrespective of one's own personal feelings.
- Priority: Klepfer asserts that in relation to all other activities (school related or not), education must be given priority.
- Support: Klepfer is of the view that all children naturally seek help and assistance from their parents and as such, parents should provide help and support in many ways such as assisting with homework or providing extra tutorial lessons.
- Influential role model: Klepfer asserts that parents need to be positive role models in order to positively influence a child's attitude towards education.
- Communication: Klepfer once again implores parents to establish a rapport with their children's educators which she believes would open the lines for more open, honest, and helpful communication on all educational matters.

The second category suggested by Klepfer involves creating an atmosphere of learning at home. The simplest way, she believes, that this can be accomplished is when parents read books to their children, at an early age. Another important aspect in this category that is conveyed is the importance of a structured routine such as play time, reading time, chore time, mealtime, and bedtime. Given that the most parts

of the world have embraced technology and are going through a digital age, she cautions on the importance of limiting the amount of screen time that children are afforded as well as selectively choosing the type of content to which they are exposed.

The last category that Klepfer states is that of assistance with homework. Within this category, she explains that first and foremost, a parent must provide a reasonable place for the child to complete educational activities, which should be quiet, organised and away from typical distractions such as a television or home appliances. She also asserts that parents need to communicate to their children about their homework, check on their progress in homework and lastly, provide praise and recognition based on effort.

2.5 TYPOLOGY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have always been involved in a child's education throughout human history and therefore the concept of parents being involved is as old as civilisation itself. Drawing on personal experience, from a child's very first beginnings, children ultimately look to their parents in order for them to make sense of their world. At the outset, PI is an evolving process, moving from stage where its activities are informal to one where the involvement is formal as parents initially provide nurturing and security and provide an example model for which behaviour and language are ultimately based on.

2.5.1 Informal parental involvement

Van Der Wal (2020) claims that even before written records could account for this, parents have always been considered as a child's first teacher where their laps have always been the first classroom. Furthermore, Van Der Wal contends that these informal lessons included societal rules, culture, and internal family dynamics that were ultimately taught to children, through a process of socialisation. This type of socialisation involved the child learning the vernacular spoken by their family, all of which was taught primarily by the parents and extended communities.

Irrespective of how informal the teaching was, these values and norms were considered extremely important for survival and progression to adulthood. Therefore, it can be said that children learn from their parents, 'knowledge' which they would someday pass on to the next generation. As societies started to modernise, education moved from an informal to a more formal environment.

2.5.2 Formal parental involvement

Fast-forward a few centuries, and an individual by the name of Horace Mann is credited with the formation of the formal mainstream public schooling system, as what we know today. Hiatt-Michael (2001) asserts that from the sixteenth (16th) century schools were initially created as a means of religious education. She also contends that many of these initial schools were formed along the lines of social and race class, and that many schools developed as a response of "catering to the demands of parents" (Hiatt-Michael, 2001:248). According to Hiatt-Michael, early American elementary schools were characterised by a locus of parental control with regards to governance, curriculum, teachers, and religious teachings of the school. However, she also contends that as the public school system started to grow and develop, the status quo shifted, and a usurpation of parents' rights ensued, in which these public institutions took more and ultimately complete control in a manner that somewhat undermined the nature, importance and relationship of the parent.

2.5.3 In Loco Parentis

The doctrine of *in loco parentis* is Latin and stands for "in the place of a parent" refers to a common law principle in which the parent delegates some or all of their responsibilities to another individual or entity (Erdmanis & Mihailovs, 2022:293). In education, the term invokes some controversy as this principle was historically used as a means of protection for educators that meted out corporal punishment under the guise of the educator who would be enforcing parental discipline (Burchell, 2018). Similarly, Efeotor and Kpee (2021) assert that the doctrine of *in loco parentis* was used as a smokescreen for corporal punishment. They contend that the commonly held belief regarding the discipline of a child was that children are naive and unlikely

to behave well without training. Therefore, this principle was used to shape a child's behaviour based on a particular school's code of conduct and education regulations.

Mampane (2018) argues that the principle of *in loco parentis* has increased the responsibilities of educators whilst at the same time diminishing that of the home and community. Both Burchell (2018) as well as Efeotor and Kpee (2021) were of the opinion that the principle allowed for strict control with regards to student behaviour on the part of school administrators, however it accomplished very little in the way of support and growth outside the classroom and in very little ways resembled the type of support and assistance one would have normally received by a parent. Of recent, Taylor (2018) asserts that the principle of *in loco parentis* gradually declines as learners progress from primary education to institutions of higher learning.

2.5.4 Transition to higher education

Transitioning from a highly structured scholastic environment into the world of higher education is typically seen as the first step in the life of a young adult towards greater independence. According to Lewis, West, Roberts, and Noden (2015), being away from the typical family home seem to afford a student greater freedom and independence, which is what most learners experience at institutions of higher learning. However, Lewis et al., also question the true nature of this independence and autonomy. They argue that even though a child is not in the home, the parent is still somewhat involved. To argue their point, they allude to the description of the term 'helicopter parent', which they describe as a parent who although not in any proximity to the student child, still closely monitors their child and should there be any signs of difficulty being experienced by said child, these parents are ever ready to intervene (Lewis et al., 2015).

According to Hong and Cui (2020), the adjustment and functioning of developing young adults were found to be negatively impacted by this parenting style that on the surface appeared to be affectionate. Hong and Cui found that helicopter parenting was associated with higher levels of anxiety amongst learners. However, they suggest that this indicates a new emerging trend where parents take an active interest in their children's educational life, beyond their schooling years.

Furthermore, Lewis et al., (2015) maintains that being fully independent for a learner at tertiary level is typically unrealistic, as being fully independent means being totally self-reliant and being able to look after oneself from an economic standpoint.

Realistically, very few learners can find themselves in such a position as the very reason they are studying is to receive an education which would eventually open financial doors for them. Patrikakou (2016) contends that technology in this digital age has played an enabling part for the parent, facilitating much easier contact between them and a student-child. Wartman et al., (2008) cited in Lewis et al., (2015:1) refer to this as a “new level of family involvement”, as it is different from the way in which parents used to experience university.

However, Lewis et al., (2015:1) express concern over this level of involvement and cite Hofer and Moore (2010) who contend that “significant dependence on parents may threaten educational achievement”. Lewis et al., are however firmly of the opinion that higher levels of parent-to-student interaction can result in the student adjusting to campus life much easier. Their study examined the emotional forms of parental support, such as giving advice, either calling/texting and or video calling their children. The study by Lewis et al., also looked at forms of physical help such as reading through assignments and essays, as well as aiding in various forms of administrative help such as contacting the university authorities.

2.6 AN OVERVIEW OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

So far, South Africa’s general educational system is intrinsically linked and derived from its history of colonialism and apartheid, which has made it both unique and challenging. As some may argue, the extent to which parents are involved still mirrors the trend during the colonial/pre 1994 era in that it is based on race, power, and inequality. According to Booyse, Le Roux, Seroto and Wolhuter (2011), the educational dispensation prior to 1994 was characterised as authoritarian, and the establishment of the new government based on democratic principles meant that, in principle, parents (as one of the important stakeholders in education) would be

allowed to participate more actively in education. The following sections examine and explore the nature of PI in schools from a historical perspective.

2.6.1 Parental Involvement prior to liberation

Prior to the colonisation of South Africa, education in the country was largely informal (see section 2.5.1) and later a more formal system took gradual control. The chronological timeline during this period is quite extensive, thus this study focusses on events where parental involvement had a direct bearing. Booyse et al., (2011) assert that historically, the influences of the Dutch and English shaped the early foundations of schools. During the rule of the Dutch, PI by and large was linked to Christian missionary schools and since the parents of the children were themselves religious adherents of the Christian faith, they supported, encouraged, and were actively involved. Lugtenburg (1925) cited in Oliver (2005) asserts that the influence of the church on parents was made succinctly clear, as shown in article 4 written by Hendrik Van der Linden that, a schoolmaster's salary was to be paid by parents. According to Booyse et al., (2011:75) "parents would bear the cost – either in cash or in goods" of the proposed educational system, indicating the level of involvement that early Dutch parents had in terms of education.

However, according to Booyse et al., (2011) many amongst the indigenous societies felt threatened by the invasion of a foreign culture, which was thrust upon them. Some embraced the new culture, and as the colonial powers spread further into the country, the system of education grew, which encouraged parents to participate more in their children's education. In the then provinces that made up the English colonies, namely the Cape and Natal provinces, juxtaposed with the Dutch/Afrikaaner states of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, the respective controlling powers formalised the education system(s) through legislation which, mandated PI. Squelch (1997:22) for example asserts that in the Cape colony as well "parents were directly responsible for hiring a schoolmaster" to provide tuition for the community.

In the then Natal province, parents had a far greater level of involvement in their children's education, which as Booyse et al., (2011) points out, parents took it upon themselves and established private schools, and that these schools were "entirely

maintained by funds made available by affluent families” (Booyse et al., 2011:207). In the Dutch/Afrikaaner provinces, there was continued PI, as a result of the efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church. However, there was a shift to a higher degree of state control and a removal of the church’s control which, by extension implied less parental influence. According to Booysen et al., (2011:153), in 1866, legislation was passed which “completely did away with parental control”. Booyse et al., contend that the church was rather instructed to “encourage parents to send their children to school” (Booyse et al., 2011:153).

The latter part of the twentieth century was defined by a clear shift to state control of education, and the subsequent division of schooling along racial lines. However, the system made provisions for parents in terms of governance of school boards and school committees and with regards to this Van Schalkwyk (1988) cited in Charamba (2016:20) states that “all members serving on these bodies were elected by parents”. In 1948, the then National Party took control, and appointed the Eiselen Commission to investigate the education system in the country. According to Booyse et al., (2011), the result of the commission was the Eiselen report in 1951 which provided the basis for the racially divisive Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953.

The legislation had such an impact on education that author and anti-apartheid activist Norman Levy (Levy, 2012) asserted that African parents were ultimately faced with a cruel dilemma of either accepting such sub-standard education or nothing at all. As discriminatory as the piece of legislation was, it formulated the groundwork for how African parents were allowed to participate in schools, to which Gezani (2003:23) contends, that “the Act allowed African parents to participate actively in the management of Government Bantu schools such as regional, local and domestic councils as well as other boards”, and that “their role was to participate in the teaching and learning activity of the education of their children”. Furthermore, Gezani points out that the National Education Act 39 of 1967, in terms of section 2 (h), gave parents the right to participate through school boards, management councils and management boards. Although these statutes promoted greater PI, they were also holistically detrimental to the country and the education system and ultimately culminated in the 1976 Soweto uprisings. The resistance finally came to an end when a new government was democratically elected in 1994.

2.6.2 Parental Involvement post liberation

The subsequent release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of prominent political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), ushered in a new era of change in the educational landscape of South Africa. Many of the changes that came about were in part based on the ideological beliefs of the ANC. The previous racially segregated departments of education were merged into one co-operative National Department of Education (DoE). The principle of decentralisation was also followed at a local level by provincial departments of education, which afforded them a degree of autonomy.

According to Booyse et al., (2011), a number of Green and White Papers which specified guidelines for future education policy were created. The goal of these papers was educational reform, which once again affirmed the rights and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children. Of particular importance to parental involvement, was Education White Paper 2: The organisation, governance, and funding of schools (DoE, 1996:12), which in section 1.11 affirms: “The Ministry's proposals include a major role for parents in school governance, to be exercised in the spirit of a partnership between the provincial education department and a local community”.

Booyse et al., (2011) contends that a few educational legislations were based on the white papers, of which the promulgation of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) officially afforded parents the right to be directly involved in school decision making activities. According to SASA, all public schools were required to democratically elect a School Governing Body (SGB) which, consisted of relevant and important stakeholders, of which parents were/are one. In July of 2001, the DoE officially released The National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation⁴, and one of the key areas for evaluation was parents and the community. A key process indicator (to

⁴ National Policy on Whole-school Evaluation. Available at <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/National%20Policy%20on%20WSE.pdf?ver=2012-07-04-152050-000> (Date of use: 20/05/2021)

indicate a schools' performance) is to determine the extent or degree to which the school is encouraging the involvement and support of parents and the community.

From an ideological perspective, the foundations for PI were enshrined in legislation, however this does not guarantee active parent participation. Thus far, this review has provided a contextual overview of the history of PI in the South African education system which conveys the importance of the relationship between parent and student. Given that this research study was aimed at the TVET sector, an examination of this sector and the aforementioned relationship(s) were needed.

2.7 AN OVERVIEW OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INTERNATIONALLY

On a global scale, parental participation in education has long been hailed as a crucial and advantageous factor in children's academic and socio-emotional growth (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). Governments in many nations, including the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), and New Zealand, have long acknowledged the function of PI in enhancing educational outcomes (Clinton & Hattie, 2013). According to Lara and Saracostti, the positive impact of parental participation on academic success has also received strong support from international research. Among these are meta-analyses performed across various population groups and educational levels by Castro, Expósito-Casas, López-Martín, Lizasoain, Navarro-Asencio and Gaviria (2015); Jeynes (2012) as well as Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, and Yuan (2016).

Furthermore, according to research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development⁵, (OECD)'s Programme for International Student

⁵ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/about/> (Date of use: 23/03/2023)

Assessment⁶ (PISA), parental participation in children's education is essential to their success throughout all phases of their educational journeys. The participation of parents in their children's education in the school setting is a reality and a right in international schools. In a similar manner to the South African Schools Act (SASA), PI is recognised and facilitated by legislation and particular organs of those states. The following sections explored PI in some schools in other countries in the globe.

2.7.1 Parental Involvement in American Schools

Amongst initiatives employed by especially the USA has been the introduction of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The act lists a number of strategies that school districts can use to support their students' academic growth, including professional development for teachers, educational technology, and parental participation initiatives, among others. The USA has led the way in promulgating PI in education. The Family and Schools Together (FAST) programme was developed in 1988 by Dr. L McDonald at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Its aim is to strengthen connections between communities, schools, and parents to guarantee that children receive the help they require to succeed in school (Vaez, Zargar, Naami, Doostgharin & Mehrabizadeh Honarmand, 2019). To date, the FAST programme was adopted and is utilised in eleven (11) countries across the world including New Zealand.

2.7.2 Parental Involvement in New Zealand Schools

According to Garbacz, McDowall, Schaughency, Sheridan and Welch (2015), quantitative research in New Zealand found that teachers' and principals' family-involvement methods were consistent with Epstein's parent-involvement framework. Tabata-Sandom (2020) in their study based in New Zealand found that for children to grow and maintain their bilingualism, parental support is essential. Clinton and Hattie (2013) took a somewhat different angle by investigating how learners

⁶ PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/> (Date of use: 23/03/2023)

perceived their parents' involvement. Their results highlighted particular beneficial influences that children believed their parents could have on their academic performance, such as parents discussing their children's academic progress and maintaining high standards and aspirations while also sharing these with their kids.

2.8 TVET COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Owing to the previously explored historical legacies of the South African education system, TVET colleges in the country, who were previously referred to as *Technical Colleges*, owe their inception to the rapid process of industrialisation that the country underwent, in part due to the discovery of gold and diamonds (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). Consequently, as a response to this process, the country required critical infrastructure such as mines, railway networks and harbour ports together with its associated human capital.

According to Lutaaya (2017), technical colleges were formed because of a partnership (apprenticeship system) between colleges and industry, to serve the industrialist economic sector of the country. Thus, the colleges provided the theory while industry provided context specific work experience. TVET colleges were initially conceptualised because of the Further Education and Training Act 98 of 1998 (which has since been repealed) and were directly under the control of the former DoE. In 2009, because of presidential proclamation No. 44 of 2009, DoE was separated into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Thus, currently, TVET colleges are under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Higher Education and Training. In addition to this, the legislative policy that establishes and governs TVET colleges is the Continuing Education and Training (CET) Act (previously known as Further Education and Training Colleges Act) 16 of 2006, together with its amendments namely, the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act 1 of 2013 and the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act 3 of 2012 (GOV.ZA, 2021). TVET colleges offer a diverse range of courses/programmes and or qualifications, which for the sake of cohesiveness the researcher refers to as instructional offerings.

According to the TVET colleges' website⁷, instructional offerings at colleges fall into the following broad categories:

- The National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)): A three (3) year qualification which focuses on skills acquisition, practical education, and workplace education.
- The National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) / Report 191: A qualification aimed at training learners for the workplace, also three (3) years in duration, with eighteen (18) months of theoretical study at a college and eighteen (18) months of practical in-service training at a relevant workplace.
- The National Higher Certificate: Higher Education programmes offered in partnership with Higher Education Institutions, the duration of which is programme specific.
- Learnerships: A work-based learning offering that offers complete qualifications that are directly registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) offered in conjunction with the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).
- Skills Programmes: Various skills courses aligned to clusters of NQF unit standards also offered in conjunction with the SETA's.
- NQF Qualifications: NQF aligned qualifications accessible by full time private learners in conjunction with the SETA's.
- Non-formal offerings: Various enrichment offerings aimed at a specific demand, for example presentation skills.
- Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET): Instructional offering for basic literacy skills such as reading, writing and basic problem solving.

According to the DHET, the above-mentioned qualifications cater to the needs of just over half a million learners annually. Statistics by the DHET reported that 673 490 learners enrolled in 2019, spread over the fifty (50) TVET colleges and two hundred and fifty-three (253) campuses, as indicated in FIGURE 2.1 (DHET, 2019).

⁷ TVET Colleges South Africa Course types. Available at <https://www.tvetcolleges.co.za/pages/collegecoursetypes>. (Date of use: 12/08/2021)

Qualification Category	<15 years	15 – 19 years	20 – 24 years	25 – 29 years	30 – 34 years	35 – 39 years	≥40 years	Total
NC(V)	3	13 281	88 102	29 394	6 140	1 474	518	138 912
Report 191 (N1-N6)	0	60 600	292 281	88 296	30 515	13 257	9 121	494 070
Occupational Qualifications	0	1 741	7 348	5 939	3 208	1 838	2 812	22 886
Other	1	1 258	5 206	3 586	1 735	898	1 341	14 025
PLP	0	987	2 127	343	95	25	20	3 597
Total	4	77 867	395 064	127 558	41 693	17 492	13 812	673 490

FIGURE 2.1: 2019 TVET enrolment by qualification and age
 [Source: Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2019 (DHET, 2019)]

The record reveal that of the 2019 TVET enrolments, 58.7% of learners were between the ages of 20 - 24, followed by 18.9% of learners who were aged between 25 – 29, with 11.6% in the 15 -19 category, 6.2% aged 30 – 34, 2.6% aged 35 – 39, and 2% in the 40 plus category. When one interprets the data, it is evident that a large number of the TVET student population are in the young adulthood stage. In this regard, the researcher contends that involving parents concerning guiding and supporting these young adults could yield positive outcomes in TVET colleges. The next section investigates just how closely parents and TVET colleges are intertwined.

2.9 PARENTS AND TVET COLLEGES

Nzembe (2019) asserts that in the TVET college setting, PI can include, but is not limited to, motivation, encouragement, coaching and mentoring their children in their respective learning programmes. However, Nzembe (2019:25) contends that “a lack of parental involvement in the student-college education and training equation is a major problem facing South African TVET colleges”. Consequently, there appears to be somewhat differences in opinion specifically with regards to how parents participate with TVET colleges. The next section addresses how parents participate in TVET colleges.

2.9.1 Parental understanding of TVET

Msibi (2021) reported that when the TVET curricula were planned, there was a lack of data input from the communities which the colleges are meant to serve. According to Msibi, the lack of community input is what has primarily led to a misunderstanding of what vocational education entails. Msibi also argues that this oversight has

contributed to TVET education being considered inferior. Mahuyu and Makochekanwa (2020) allude that parents themselves have differing views, understandings, and misconceptions of TVET. Their study revealed that, although the parents' understandings were in no way incorrect, their understandings were partly fragmented.

Mahuyu and Makochekanwa's (2020) study found that sixty percent (60%) of participants indicated that TVET referred to skills training, twenty-one (21%) of parents indicated that TVET was about teaching practical subjects such as metal fabrication, woodwork, building and construction etc. The remaining nineteen percent (19%) indicated that TVET was about providing on-the-job training (Mahuyu & Makochekanwa, 2020:6). Msibi (2021) as well as Mahuyu and Makochekanwa assert that owing to these uncertainties and misunderstandings, parents, often were unsure how to help their child choose a vocational career. This also led to parents being unaware of what programmes and courses their child might be best suited to be enrolled in, given the lack of guidance.

2.9.2 Decisions about enrolment

Lutaaya (2017) asserts that parents were quite influential in deciding that their children should study at a TVET institution and argues that this is due partly to the fact that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) offers an "elaborate bursary scheme" (Lutaaya, 2017:32). Once again, Mahuyu and Makochekanwa's (2020) study found that eighty-three percent (83%) of parents indicated the decision to enrol rested solely on the shoulder of the parent. Powell and McGrath (2013) also allude to parental/family's influence about enrolment decisions. Their study discovered that some learners' decisions in relation to the choice of enrolling in a TVET college were largely influenced by parents and or grandparents.

2.9.3 Participation in TVET Colleges

According to Lewis et al., (2015), studies conducted at higher education institutions in the United States have shown that learners actually welcomed parental involvement. Also, their study revealed that learners perceived their parents'

participation and involvement as supporting their independence as well as valuing the fact that they had a shoulder of support, as and when needed. Locally however, the reality appears somewhat in contrast, complex and optimistic, as the literature seemed divided as to whether parents are involved or not.

Esau's (2018) study for instance found that parents supported TVET learners during enrolment and in many other ways outside of the typical classroom environment. The author is of the view that it was such support that facilitated successful academic achievement for the participants in her study. Esau concluded that parents were indeed involved in the education of their children and the social and cultural capital that the said parents possessed which enabled their children to achieve better outcomes. This view was contradicted by Nzembe (2019) who dejectedly expressed concern and alluded that the status quo of PI in TVET colleges was extremely limited. According to Nzembe (2019:24), "within the TVET sector parents play a peripheral role in the education and training needs of their children".

However, Esau and Daniels (2022) argue that the contributions that adults from the community made to the achievement of TVET learners were not accurately acknowledged in parental support literature. Their study found that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds participated because these parents were in the possession of "aspirational, emotional and navigational wealth" (Esau & Daniels, 2022:24). With research findings that echoed those by Esau (2018), Gaffoor and Van Der Bijl (2019) reported that active parental participation was a factor of influence in a learners choice to study at a TVET college. According to Gaffoor and Van Der Bijl, the support that a TVET learner had from family resulted in learners successfully completing a TVET course.

The more the researcher analysed literature, it was clear that a pattern was emerging whereby some studies reported involvement of parents while some showed a complete lack of parental involvement. For instance, Govindasamy (2021) in her study involving participants linked to a TVET college, found that PI was non-existent, citing factors such as parent education level and socio-economic status. According to Govindasamy (2021:81), "parental inconsistency, such as frequent changes of

primary caregivers, lack of supervision, and poor role modelling, impacts educational goals”, which was the case in the TVET college assessed in her study.

These sentiments were also echoed by Makibinyane’s (2020) study, which reported a lack of PI in their children’s education. To the contrary, Matenda (2019), for example found that parents were quite involved. Similar to Gaffoor and Van Der Bijl (2019), Matenda’s study found that parents had a great deal of influence which factored greatly in learners opting to study at a TVET college, in addition to their choice of course. Mdluli (2017) in his study reported that a lack of involvement by parents was a contributing factor to learners dropping out of college. Mtshali (2020) found that learners’ poor academic achievement at a TVET college was a result of a lack of parental or family support. Likewise, Ngubane (2018) found that parental support for their children’s academics at the TVET college was insufficient.

In light of this, Nzembe (2019) contends that perhaps parents of learners studying TVET colleges are not involved or involved to a lesser degree when compared to that of learners in schools. Nzembe contends that such is in part due to the commonly held opinion in literature, that these learners are eighteen (18) years and above and are thus adults. Groener and Andrews (2019) argue that TVET learners, because of their age, are more self-efficient, resilient, and self-directed. Their study revealed that TVET college learners exercised their capacity as adults to make informed and rational decisions with regards to their academic pursuits, outcomes, and career aspirations. However, this did not mean that parents were not involved at all, as some of their respondents indicated that they were in fact encouraged to pursue an academic qualification and/or a certain course by their parents.

However, the researcher is reminded by the optimistic rhetoric of Esau (2018) who recaps that the TVET sector is cognisant of the importance of parents and their roles in successful academic outcomes, when she draws our attention to the TVET colleges Student Support Manual⁸ for the Student Support Services Division of TVET colleges. Page six (6) of the manual explicitly identifies the direct link between

⁸ Student Support Services Manual for TVET Colleges. Available at <http://www.saide.org.za/resources/Library/DoE%20-%20FET%20Student%20Support%20Services%20Manual.pdf> (Date of use: 28/06/2021)

parental involvement and academic success and contains an entire chapter (Topic 12) dedicated to parental involvement. The chapter highlights four key steps all the way from involving parents in enrolment and orientation, involvement in academic processes, involvement in college activities as well as communication between the institution and parent, with an aim for effective parental involvement.

The manual also goes a step further and provides an assessment rubric for colleges to be able to gauge the level of parental involvement in the college. What this indicates is that the National Department of Higher Education and Training recognises the need for parental involvement in TVET colleges. Furthermore, the *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges 2020 Students Support Services Annual Plan*⁹, states that parental and/or guardian involvement is critical to learners' performance and conduct in TVET colleges.

Likewise, Ali (2017) asserts that recently, there has been a mind shift concerning the topic of PI at institutions of higher learning. According to Ali, there has been a significant increase of programmes and initiatives aimed at educating and involving parents, as research has suggested that family dynamics in the home are changing to become more learner centred. The crux of the argument is based on the ever-increasing cost(s) of tertiary education, and thus Ali asserts that parents have realised that they are education consumers. As such, these parents typically feel they need and have a fundamental right to be involved in and express their opinions of the education they are paying for their child.

In closing, Kennedy (2009) cited in Ali (2017) highlights that, parents have begun communicating more often with their children and in some cases more than once in a day, and that in most of those instances, it is the student-child that initiates the conversation, reaching out to parents for advice on academic matters, rather than engaging with their peers.

⁹ Student Support Services Plan. Available at <https://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Technical%20and%20Vocational%20Education%20and%20Training%20Colleges%202020%20Student%20Support%20Services%20Annual%20Plan.pdf>. (Date of use: 28/06/2021)

2.10 FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TVET COLLEGES

The central theme present in this study is that there are noticeable benefits that increased PI results in. Despite the overwhelming literary evidence in this area, there are still clearly deficiencies between what PI is and how it is realised and should be realised in TVET colleges. This is because of factors and instances where there exist challenges that either hamper and prevent PI or in some situations, completely negates the benefits of PI. However, there are also factors that are driving some sort of reform and actually encouraging parents to participate. As shall be evidenced in section 2.11 below, with regards to the benefits of PI, there exists a need within the TVET sphere to identify and either eliminate or enhance and further develop upon these factors. These factors are categorised according to socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-political, and institutional, and are investigated in the next sections.

2.10.1 Socio-economic factors

2.10.1.1 Parent educational level

According to Obiora (2021), the intelligence level of a child is thought to be as a result of the educational level of a parent. Obiora argues that parents who have achieved more formal qualifications in their lives tend to aspire and want the same for their offspring. Meaning that the more educated a parent is, the more likely they are to be involved. Erdener and Knoeppel, (2018) have a similar assertion in that they contend that parents who have achieved more in the way of educational qualifications are more involved in choosing their children's post-secondary educational and employment paths.

Seemingly, the reverse is also true. George (2010) found that a low educational level of a parent hampered learning. In his study, "sixty percent (60%) of parents found they had confused their children using different teaching techniques" (George,

2010:8). According to George, these parents used the same learning techniques which they were familiar with from their time in school, particularly when teaching complex subjects such as Mathematics and Science. This resulted in them not wanting to continue to engage, especially if the parents perceived their involvement as being a barrier. Bailey (2017) also contends that the language of education, in other words, the jargon, words, phrases and terms used in the sector as well as with some subjects/learning areas are somewhat intimidating to parents who do not fully understand them or who are experiencing such material for the first time.

Lehohla (2016) posits that the educational level of a parent directly correlates with an increased likelihood that their child will attend a post-schooling educational institution. According to Lehohla, such parents are more than likely to play a more involved role in their children's education. Lehohla contends that educated parents are more likely to understand the importance of education and that they are of the view that "participation in post-secondary educational institutions by first-generation post-secondary-education entrants is considered upper educational mobility for such families" (Lehohla, 2016:80). The argument is based on his study which found that "more than a quarter of parents with children aged twenty (20) and twenty-one (21) who were currently enrolled in post-secondary education also had a post-secondary educational level attainment" (Lehohla, 2016:81). This asserts the view that, children whose parents have attended college or university, are indeed more likely to attend a college or university and successfully graduate. This aspect was also investigated and reported by Statistics South Africa's 2016 community survey.

FIGURE 2.2 illustrates the results of the survey and compares the educational achievement of parents compared to their adult children between the ages of twenty (20) to thirty-four (34).

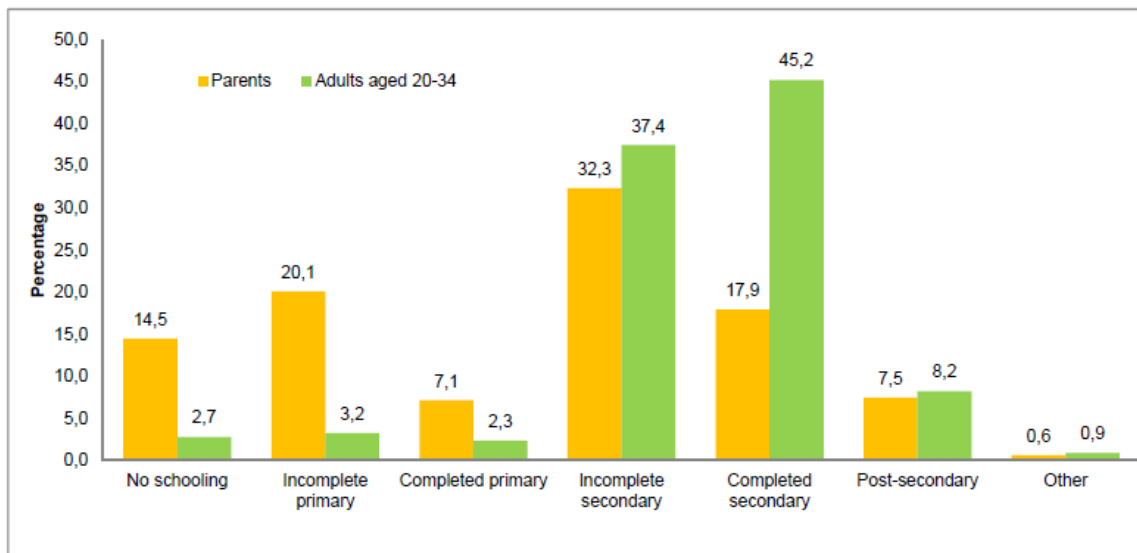


FIGURE 2.2: Highest level of education by educational phase of parents and of adults aged 20–34.

[Source: Community Survey 2016 Statistical release: STATS SA]

An aspect that is particularly important in FIGURE 2.2 is the improvement levels depicted between the two generations (parent and adult learner) who completed secondary and post-secondary education. One may indeed argue that at the post-secondary level, there is a minimal difference of 0.7%, however of the generations who did not complete secondary education, that which completed secondary education, and that which completed post-secondary, it becomes apparent that there is a significant increase in the educational achievement of the next generation in comparison to the parents' educational attainment.

2.10.1.2 *Level of Income*

According to Nthako (2020), there exists a substantial number of TVET entrants who come from impoverished backgrounds, and as such, such households usually experience a shift in the focus of priorities. Nthako argues that given the high cost of living and the high unemployment rate in the country, parents are forced to prioritise 'putting food on the table' above everything else. Unfortunately, this prioritisation results in educational inferiority and therefore less parental engagement in their child's education.

When investigated from another angle, Hosseinpour, Yazdani, and Yarahmadi (2015) found a very high degree of correlation between a learner's assessment results and their family's level of income. Their study, based on affluent families, found that the participant parents exhibited a high degree of involvement, which ultimately led to higher assessment results by their children. Hosseinpour et al., attributed this to the family's higher socio-economic status. However, Ntekane (2018) concurs with Nthako (2020) and argues that "parents in low-income households tend to be less involved as the bulk of their time is spent earning a living" (Ntekane, 2018:3). Thus, in some extreme cases, parents have to either seek employment far away from the family home or have to work multiple low paying jobs to make ends meet. As a result, these parents simply do not have as much time to be able to help their children when it concerns their educational needs.

However, researchers have long since cautioned that low income ought not be automatically linked to low or no educational interest and involvement (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Boonk et al., 2018; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). All of the aforementioned studies came to the same conclusions, which are that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds did not lack interest in their children's education. In some situations, low-income parents significantly valued their involvement in their children's learning and were quite involved. Boonk et al., (2018) contend that low income is only significant since it can be used as a sort of litmus test for the degree or amount of parental participation.

2.10.1.3 *Cost of vocational education*

According to Dahal (2020), there is a direct correlation between socio-economic status and an improvement of educational qualifications. Meaning that individuals from a high socio-economic background are more likely to improve their educational qualifications. Therefore, the assertion stands that a high cost of education likely hampers equitable educational access and achievement. Kingombe (2011) asserts that one of the main criticisms of TVET has been the exceptionally high costs, especially in developing nations. Dahal attributes these high costs of TVET to the development of technical facilities, consumable training materials, dependence on

technology as well as maintenance. The cost of TVET education is high because in addition to tuition costs, there are other costs relating to transportation, accommodation, and other living expenses, as a result of the child/learner not residing in or near the family/parental home.

FIGURE 2.3 below illustrates an example of the NC(V) course costs for a selected sample of programmes. Annual program delivery costs, as alluded to in FIGURE 2.3, are determined by the DHET, and eighty percent (80%) of these costs are covered by DHET’s budget allocations. The remaining twenty percent (20%) is covered by student fees, which may or may not come from bursary fees. However, many parents and by extension learners, given their socio-economic position, are simply unable to cover those costs.

PROGRAMME	Level 2 - 4
Civil Engineering & Building Construction	R74 022.00
Electrical Infrastructure Construction	R73 031.00
Engineering & Related Design	R95 561.00
Information Technology & Computer Science	R72 214.00
Mechatronics	R96 840.00
Finance, Economics & Accounting	R52 749.00
Management	R55 208.00
Marketing	R47 310.00
Office Administration	R47 157.00
Transport and Logistics	R50 030.00
Tourism	R68 487.00
Hospitality	R89 622.00
Education and Development	R51 301.00

FIGURE 2.3: 2022 NC(V) PROGRAMME FEE STRUCTURE

[Source :

https://www.orbitcollege.co.za/2022%20NCV%20FEE%20STRUCTURE_Final_Web.pdf]

These parents thus rely on the bursary to provide financial assistance. However, from all the instructional offerings at TVET colleges listed in section 2.6 above, NSFAS only funds the (NC(V)) and the Report 191 (NATED) programmes, as they typically contain the largest number of learners. The bursary scheme, NSFAS has greatly assisted and reduced the financial implications for parents to cover the cost

of vocational education. According to NSFAS (2019:26), “the total average cost (including fees and other allowances) of a TVET student in the 2019 academic year was R49.350”. What is important to note is that of the large number of learners that enrol in TVET colleges, NSFAS is only able to fund twenty percent (20%) and therefore that overreliance on this financial aid mean that not every learner registered in a TVET college is covered.

Thus, the TVET sector’s operational expenditure is easily running into billions of Rand. With such high costs, it stands to reason that parents are thus reluctant to become involved and would rather have their child seek employment. This is based on the logical presumption that being employed is seen as being directly able to improve their socio-economic standing as opposed to education, which can be construed as enlarging their debts. Furthermore, Myataza (2019) points out that the costs are also evident at a micro level, as learners themselves need money to pay for accommodation, purchase food, clothes, and other personal items. Winch (2013) also points out that in certain TVET programmes, class numbers have to be limited, for example from thirty (30) down to fifteen (15). This is partly as a result of logistical and technical issues where TVET colleges simply do not have the infrastructure, thus further raising the costs.

2.10.1.4 *Parental occupational influences*

According to Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, and Shamshad (2014), the career choices made by some adolescents, is as a result of parental influence. Saleem et al., contend that the like and or dislike for certain courses and occupations have significant impact. Obiora (2021) posits that children whose parents have taken up a certain profession are more likely to gravitate towards the same profession. Furthermore, Obiora contends that better educated parents are able to secure higher paying occupations, thus creating better opportunities for their children. Dery (2020) shares similar sentiments and asserts that the most influential contributing factor to career choices, prospective employment aspirations and expectations are indeed the parents.

According to Gaffoor (2018), one of the reasons that also positively influenced learner retention and successful academic course completion at a TVET college, was parents having a professional occupation and or qualification. Having parents who are well educated and in particular professions is viewed as increasing children's ability to move up the educational ladder. In this regard, Assari (2018) argue this result is most likely attributable to the parents providing a frame of occupational reference for their children as well as the education-focused mentality and value system of these families. Viola and Daniel's (2019) study of vocational education in Zambia found that the occupation a parent influences the career development of their child through a process of positive role modelling.

Viola and Daniel (2019) cite Eccles (2009) and remind us that there exists a reciprocal relationship, as the occupation of the parent, influences beliefs, values, and careers outcomes that the parent envisages (for their child), which in turn influences the way the parent behaves. Furthermore, they argue that if a parent's occupation affords the entire family a comfortable life, and if the parents are satisfied with their occupation(s) and exhibit high morale, and if they (the children) are able to see the privileges that being in such an occupation brings, they (the children) are more likely to choose those very careers for themselves.

2.10.2 Socio-cultural factors

2.10.2.1 *Parental belief regarding participation*

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), the thinking that parents exhibit about what constitutes involvement, is in itself a barrier. Hornby and Lafaele contend that parents who are of the opinion that their involvement is primarily about transporting their child to and from; to attend an educational institution, and that it is the responsibility of the said institution to educate, are more likely to not be involved with the institution as well as with educational activities at home.

Fray's (2017) study into learner integration at TVET colleges overwhelmingly found that many parents had an indifferent attitude towards their child's education in TVET colleges. Alarming, and which Fray also found to be a matter of grave concern, is

that “some parents were even unaware that their child was a registered student of a TVET college” (Fray, 2017: 179). Fray asserts that a similar trend was noticeable when it came to matters regarding discipline whereby parents simply were not interested. Oosthuizen (2018), likewise paints a similar view that parents of TVET college learners came across as being less involved in comparison with schools and argued that this was as a result of TVET colleges having a more adult cohort.

Oosthuizen (2018) investigated learner misconduct at TVET colleges and among their findings they showed that since learners at times resided far from the family home and environment, attendance or lack thereof was a factor. They noted that such was not necessarily brought to the attention of the parent and neither did parents actively enquire about attendance of their children from said colleges. Bearing in mind that being away from home was not a causative factor in absenteeism (on the part of the student), it was the lack of accountability and concern of parents that informed Oosthuizen’s argument.

According to George (2010), self-perception (on the part of the parent) also manifests as a barrier, and when those educational memories are re-activated, these assert an undue influence on how the parent participates in the child’s educational experience. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) also assert that a parent’s view about what they perceive as their child’s level of intelligence, level of dedication and commitment “will not see the point in getting too involved in their children’s education”, (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:40). Hornby and Lafaele are of the view that if the parent believes that their child is academically gifted and endowed, parents likely view getting involved as unnecessary.

2.10.2.2 *Parental gender differences*

The gender of a learner’s parent has an influence on the role parents play in education. Normally, McDonnell, Luke and Short (2019) concluded that on average, mothers tend to spend more time caring for their children than fathers do and there are considerable differences between the types of care that mothers and fathers give

and the situations in which they give it. It is to be expected therefore that mothers of children are more likely to play a more active role in being involved in a child's education as opposed to the father (Walker, 2017). The researcher believes that this is as a result of the inherent nurturing instinct of mothers towards their children. Hornby and Blackwell's (2018) study found that one school noted that the majority of parents they encountered were mothers and not fathers. Similarly, Zaidman-Zait, Most, Tarrasch and Haddad (2018) found that mothers were significantly more involved in learning interventions with their children. However, Walker (2017:30) reminds us that fathers can play important roles in their child's education and cites Nelson's (2011) study which found "that children performed better when their fathers were involved".

2.10.2.3 *Parental control*

Boonk et al., (2018) posit that excessive parental control and influence can however have a negative impact on educational achievement and in some extreme cases, a negative impact on emotional and psychological well-being of a student. In this context, control refers to the use of authority and rank in exerting unnecessary influence and or by performing everything by themselves. Likewise, Wilder (2014) found that parents who controlled how homework was done and/or who completed the homework, resulted in a negative impact of achievement.

2.10.2.4 *Cultural disparity*

Culture (the combined ideas, customs, beliefs, and social behaviour) is considered to be one of the most important factors that steers a change of parental involvement in higher education (Ali, 2017). Ali (2017) cites Alnabhan, Al-Zegoul, and Harwell (2001) whose study at a university in Jordan found a direct correlation between family involvement, support, and assessment results. Ali, furthermore, cites Yoon and Lau (2008) whose study at an American university found that parental support served as a buffer against high expectations, anxiety, depression, and distress.

According to Egun and Tibi (2010), the technical aspect of TVET has also added to culturally reinforced gender stereotype views, where male children are favoured over

female children, in accessing education as well as accessing technical and vocational educational programmes that are seen as generally being reserved for patriarchy. Egun and Tibi also argue that these stereotypes are further manifesting in the class, creating a wide gender gap in vocational education. Ali (2017) cites Brannan (2012) whose comparative study of university going learners in America, Iran and Jordan found that high levels of family support correlated with high student achievement as well as high levels of emotional well-being. The one factor that links all aforesaid three (3) studies is that all the learners came from Asian families, and according to Ali (2017), Asian parents play a much more supportive and influential role, by not only providing learning opportunities, but by also setting high expectations on academic achievement.

2.10.2.5 *Perceptions about TVET colleges*

Historically, TVET as an educational institution has catered for sectors of society where physical and artisanal skills are required, which has created a stereotypical perception about the educational institution. According to Azeem, Omar, Rashid, Abdullah and Zaremohzzabieh (2021), previous research revealed that parents and learners believed that a career in TVET was unstable, involved long hours and low-paying work, and had a low social standing.

Akhuemonkhan and Raimi (2013) assert that there is a lingering perception that TVET is second class, and not as advantageous as university and a degree education. In critiquing these perceptions, Badenhorst and Radile (2018) contend that the NC(V) programme actually offered by TVET colleges is quite challenging and requires much higher level of cognition. According to Badenhorst and Radile “students admitted to the NC(V) programme are generally not sufficiently equipped at school to make the transition to the programme successfully” (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018:12). Furthermore, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) purport that the attitudes displayed by educators and parents alike are also further hampering parental involvement. They caution parents and educators alike to refrain from expressing negative attitudes and advise both to rather foster optimistic viewpoints which can counter negative attitudes so that the communities view TVET colleges as places of excellence.

Mahuyu and Makochekekanwa (2020) share a similar view and contend that “the negative attitudes of parents towards TVET are implied by several factors including, very low rate of learners’ enrolment in TVET institutions, poor infrastructure and limited resources devoted to activities of TVET institutions, limited competitiveness of TVET graduates in the labour market, and the mismatching between TVET curriculum and industry requirements” (Mahuyu & Makochekekanwa, 2020:4).

2.10.2.6 *Family structure*

Esau (2018) reminds the researcher of the African proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child”. Esau contends that in many African communities, community members or even extended family members often provide the family support structure and assist or in some cases, take the place of the biological parent in providing safety, nurture, and education. This was found to negate the impact of single-parent, female parent, and child-headed households. Kazue (2017) points out that the family structure functions as employment insurance and security as they transition from TVET into the world of work. Sapungan and Sapungan (2014:45) state that a student from a typical nuclear family structure with “two parents in supporting roles are fifty-two percent (52%) more likely to attain distinctions” in their results in comparison to those learners whose parents are not engaged in their education. They argue that a robust collaborative effort between the institution and parent directly results in the improved performance, of not only the student but also of the school.

2.10.2.7 *Learner differences*

Ali (2017) highlights the differences in learners themselves by describing them as new millennials, having been born between 1982 and 2000. Accordingly, she asserts that in her view, these millennials are quite special and gifted learners, and quite rightly points out that they are characterised as being “confident, team oriented, high achievers and pressured individuals who seemingly want to appear independent in their thinking and in their life”.

2.10.2.8 *Generational differences*

According to Ali (2017), parents of the current student populations at higher education institutions were most probably born between 1960 and 1970. They came from large families and sometimes with limited resources however, these were the youth of an era that challenged the education system on a number of levels, all the way from oppression to the principle of *in loco parentis*. Ali (2017:2) describes the features of these parents as “highly educated, demanding, savvy and affluent”. In contrast, they have fewer children, have had children quite late in their adulthood, and have a significant sum of various resources at their disposal (Ali, 2017).

Ali’s (2017) argument is that these parents have very different parenting styles compared to the previous generation as a result of them trying to give to their children, everything which they never had. Furthermore, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) allude to the current and modern 21st century lifestyle with all its demands and distractions. They contend that some parents work long and flexible hours which may or may not afford them time to participate in educational activities during and after tuition time. Ngwato (2020) shares similar sentiments regarding parents of TVET learners and asserts that parents “do not assist in personal problems or even give them emotional support” Ngwato (2020:9). She ascribes poor parenting styles as a causative factor in poor TVET academic achievement, owing to the fact that parents give TVET learners complete control over their studies.

2.10.3 Socio-political factors

2.10.3.1 *National policy*

Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) assert that when parents are involved on a regular basis, they become more aware and involved in policy matters with regards to their children’s education. Section 2.9.3 alluded to the Student Support Services Manual for TVET colleges. As a policy document, an entire chapter is dedicated to and addresses parental involvement. Esau (2018:26) contends that this policy “attempts to involve parents during the enrolment and registration process, academic progress of the child, creating opportunities for parents in (extra curriculum) college activities

and also finding ways to effectively communicate with parents and families on issues that keep them informed about their child's progress". However, as also noted in section 2.9.3, regarding the status quo of parental involvement, it seems to indicate that the policy document has largely fallen out of use.

2.10.3.2 Governance

One of the purposes of the Continuing Education and Training (CET) Act 16 of 2006 relates to the governance and management of public TVET colleges. This Act is somewhat similar to the South African Schools Act (SASA) which also addresses (amongst others) governance and management issues of public schools. Both pieces of legislation are common in a way that they provide for the establishment of a governance structure which, in schools are referred to as School Governing Bodies (SGB) and in TVET colleges they are referred to as college councils.

According to section 10(4) of the CET Act 16 of 2006 (Gov.za, 2021:20) a TVET college council should consist of:

- the principal.
- five external individuals appointed by the Minister of education.
- one member of the Academic Board elected by the Academic Board.
- one lecturer elected by the lecturers at the college.
- two learners of the college elected by the Student Representative Council.
- one member of the support staff elected by the support staff of the college.
- one external member representing donors; and
- four members contemplated in section 10(6) of the Act with a broad spectrum of competencies in the fields of education, business, finance, law, marketing information technology and human resource management appointed by the council in consultation with the Minister.

However, they also differ in that as discussed in section 2.5.2 above, the SASA Act explicitly provides for parents to be a formal part of the governance structure whereas the CET Act is overwhelmingly silent on parental inclusion in the governance structure. The researcher notes that the CET Act is far too centralised in its powers in that it affords the ministry of education more control over selection of members,

with parents being largely excluded from being involved in governing what is essentially a community educational institution.

2.10.4 Institutional factors

2.10.4.1 *Lack of communication*

The management and governance of TVET colleges, may or may not be aware of the need to involve and enhance the involvement of parents, and thus it is not given the proper attention it deserves. Little and Saunders (2015) cite O'Connor (2008) who highlight the consequences of a lack of communication between various important stakeholders in a child's educational life. In general, in order to aid students in achieving their educational goals, parents and educational institutions are expected to interact much more frequently. This is usually the case in schools as evidenced by school generated circulars and communiques, none of which exists at the TVET college level. This is suggestive of a situation in which the communication is somewhat unidirectional and reactive as opposed to it being proactive.

A study by Paul, Rashmi, and Srivastava (2021) found that active communication between parents and the educational institutions with regards to educational matters resulted in lower chances of students dropping out. Similarly, Mbatha (2018) found that a lack of communication made parents afraid even if they were willing to engage with the institution. Furthermore, Mchunu (2012) found that a lack of communication was a major stumbling block if an educational institution wanted to foster a working relationship with parents.

2.10.4.2 *Workload and lack of professional development of lecturers*

Boonk, Ritzen, Gijssels and Brand-Gruwel (2021) argue that educators themselves also create barriers, owing to increased teaching loads and a lack of assistance for administrative matters, educators simply "keep parents at a distance" (Boonk et al., 2021:3) because they firmly believe they do not have the time. Boonk et al., also assert that many educators feel unprepared and inadequate to be able to deal with parents, as it is an aspect where very little information is provided for in

teacher-training programmes. In this regard, Smith, and Sheridan (2019) assert that educators who have received formal training in family engagement frequently feel more informed and comfortable working with families, which enhances the ways in which they communicate and consult with families.

2.10.4.3 *Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on institutions*

In March of 2020 TVET colleges, along with most educational institutions in South Africa were forced to close the doors of learning in order to address the Covid-19 pandemic. These closures resulted in a move to remote or online learning as an attempt to mitigate the spread of the corona virus (Viner, Russell, Croker, Packer, Ward, Stansfield, Mytton, Bonell & Booy, 2020). In general, educational institutions that previously welcomed and enjoyed large amounts of parental participation found themselves in a situation of limitations, given the restrictions of social distancing.

The ministry of higher education pledged its support for TVET colleges which the minister, Dr. Nzimande, described as being a multimodal approach to teaching and learning. However, according to Viner et al., (2020), the move to online teaching and learning was hampered by a lack of access to technology (given the socio-economic status of the household), together with parents feeling unsure how to participate (given the plethora of computer applications being used) in this new and unfamiliar role.

Zulu (2018) argues that TVET colleges should embrace digital technologies to facilitate easier communication between parents and institutions. Furthermore, the author asserts that when TVET-registered learners persist to continue studying irrespective of the various challenges they encounter, it is the parents and extended families that provide the mental and emotional capital that is required.

2.11 BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The researcher has an ardent belief in the positive impact that PI has on children's education. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) assert that while involving parents might not be realistic in all situations, it provides the framework from which benefits can be

realised. Magwa and Mugari (2017) contend that some of the benefits that can be realised when the involvement of parents can be improved, include improved learner academic achievement, motivated educators and generally, a well-functioning institution. The following sections detail the benefits, for important stakeholders viz, the learners, the parents, the institution, and the educators.

2.11.1 Benefits for the learners

According to Ntekane (2018), learners whose parents are involved in their education, largely display eagerness and become active participants in teaching and learning. Ntekane characterises these learners as being punctual, persistent, organised, and responsible, as they are aware that their parents enquire about their progress in school and thus, they are not inclined to disappoint them. The following sections delves into the benefits to learners that parental involvement has in terms of academic success and behaviour.

2.11.1.1 *Improved academic achievement.*

Many studies have found a relationship between PI and improved academic achievement (Boonk et al., 2018; Epstein, 2009; Graves & Brown Wright, 2011; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016). However, Boonk et al., (2018) alert stakeholders to that the fact that literature and current studies are yet to pinpoint the specific type of involvement that can be regarded as a direct predictor of academic achievement. Nonetheless, both sets of researchers found that PI facilitated improved assessment grades and improved completion rates of either homework or assignments.

2.11.1.2 *Improved classroom behaviour*

Boonk et al., (2018) contend that greater PI is associated with reduced absenteeism and truancy. They assert that the more a child and parent communicate and discuss the child's education, the less likely the child will absent themselves from teaching and learning. Similarly, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) contend that the benefits of PI manifest as behaviour and the learners' display higher self-esteem, confidence,

self-reliance, self-discipline as well as displaying higher career and goal aspirations for themselves.

2.11.2 Benefits for the parents

Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) also argue that there are benefits for the parent too and hold the view that parents are more adept to their children's social, emotional, intellectual and development needs. They assert that parents tend to show more affection and would rather use positive (instead of negative) reinforcement in matters of discipline. Liu, Sulaimani and Henning (2020) believe that it also affords parents an opportunity to exactly understand and comprehend a teacher's job and function as well as the school's curriculum.

2.11.3 Benefits for the institution

Llamas and Tuazon (2016:64) assert that when parents volunteer their time and expertise in an educational institution on a regular basis, they "express greater confidence" in the school's ability to realise effective academic achievement. Furthermore, they contend that in educational institutions where parents are provided with decision making capacity, the said institutions exhibit higher levels of academic achievement and public support.

Ntekane (2018) also holds the view that in these institutions, as a result of greater parental involvement, there are far less discipline issues, as rules and regulations are easily applied and adhered to as the parents of the learners are well known to the institution. Hamilton, Roksa and Nielsen (2018) assert that when parents are involved, it creates a strong rapport between themselves and the institution. They contend that educational institutions, especially tertiary institutions are increasingly relying on the partnership with parents in order to develop successful students and professionals who would eventually support the institution as alumni. This results in the individuals having very strong ties and bonds with the institution, which in some cases continue long after their children have graduated and moved on.

In terms of academics, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) believe that in institutions where parents play an integral part, the institutions are more likely to offer higher quality instructional programmes and also are more likely to forge relationships with local industries thereby establishing an educational supply and value chain for the institution.

2.11.4 Benefits for the educators

One of the most significant benefits for educators in institutions where there is regular involvement by parents is higher educator morale and improved parent-educator relations (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Llamas and Tuazon (2016:70) found that educators also benefitted as they had improved parent interaction skills, improved communication skills, and a greater sense of self-awareness. Llamas and Tuazon (2016) furthermore cite Chen (2010) who contends that it encourages the educator to become more in tune to the needs of learners thus allowing the educator to adapt and modify their teaching at an individual level.

2.12 MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TVET COLLEGES

Given the high correlation between PI and academic achievement, it would only be natural that strategies have been proposed to increase the involvement of parents. According to Badenhorst and Radile (2018:3), at TVET colleges, a “trend of poor performance still exists”, thus the researcher maintains the viewpoint that incorporating these strategies into TVET colleges can assist in reducing the impact of poor performance and addressing some of the barriers presented earlier in the chapter.

Literature has shown however that such concerns can be mitigated through efficient management, and as Martinez (2015) assert that over and above the advantages to educational achievement, efficient parental engagement goes hand in hand with various indicators of a student’s development such as better social skills, improved behaviour, confidence, increased social capital, a greater sense of personal

competence, increased trust level, sense of responsibility and efficacy for learning and a stronger belief in the importance of education.

2.12.1 Lecturer training

According to Jaiswal (2017:101), “one of the ways of increasing parent involvement is educating perspective teachers and current teachers on the importance of parental involvement”. Foster, Young and Young (2017) argue that educators are the liaisons between the parent, family and community and the institution(s) which invariably makes their perceptions vital. Their study revealed that the educator’s perception of parents mattered, as a result of gender and race bias, stereotypical views in relation to single parent, nuclear families as well as blended families together with limited knowledge of culture and tradition which, ultimately had a negative influence on learner achievement. Foster et al., encourage the professional development of educators because “parental partnerships are built on relationships” (Foster et al., 2017:12). Furthermore, they assert that professional training for educators particularly on ways of encouraging and fostering partnerships with parents, equip lecturers with necessary skills and also provide them with a much better understanding of their learners.

2.12.2 Parental education

Sections 2.4 and 2.5 have already alluded to the importance of the roles that parents play in their child’s education. To this extent, Ali (2019) asserts that the positive influence that parent involvement has on student achievement can negate other factors such as low socio-economic status. Cross, Marchand, Medina, Villafuerte and Rivas-Drake, (2019) are ardent believers that educational workshops, programmes, or events in this regard are crucial as they equip parents with skills, knowledge, abilities, and materials to be able to engage with their children. They contend that educational institutions ought to hold workshops for parents to improve the interaction between home and school and perhaps persuade them to embrace a growth mindset for their kids’ academic success. TVET colleges could even be

involved as being the facilitators of such workshops or by simply providing a venue whereby such workshops could take place.

2.12.3 Partnerships with stakeholders

Rasool (2014) as well as the DHET (2012) have clearly articulated that partnerships are important in TVET colleges so that there are educational and vocational benefits from the relationship. In the context of TVET, Rasool (2014:9) defines a partnership as “a formal relationship with joint rights and responsibilities between two or more parties in co-operation to achieve mutual goals”. In the researcher’s view, the ‘partners’ here should include parents, lecturers, campus managers, principals of TVET colleges and learners themselves.

Msibi (2021) asserts that these partnerships are crucial if there is to be any endeavour to bring about some educational reform. TVET colleges can host open days, parent-lecturer meetings, project, or entrepreneur days which can assist in fostering long lasting partnerships. Msibi argues that the misunderstandings about TVET and its inferior perception in general are as a result of a lack of input and involvement from the ‘community’ (for example the lecturers, learners, parents, businesses, industries, and the public) which, the TVET colleges essentially serve.

2.12.4 Parents as executive members of councils

Section 2.8 alluded to the CET Act 16 of 2006, which mandates the role of a College Council as a governance structure of TVET colleges. The researcher (in section 2.8) has also attempted to draw some comparison between the CET and SASA Act, with particular reference to both of them being about establishing a governance structure, and at the same time noting that the legalisation is highly centralised. In this regard, the researcher is of the opinion that at a national level, policy needs to be inclusive of parents in the governance structure of TVET college councils. Obiora (2021) cites Spitzbeck and Hansen (2010) who assert that it is only logical to include parents in the governance of TVET colleges.

2.12.5 Parents can be involved with curricula/co-curricular.

According to Yeap, Suhaimi and Nasir (2021), the TVET curriculum focuses more on practical skills and practical knowledge gained through learning-by-doing. Yeap et al., asserts that these takes place in traditional classrooms, workshops, and laboratories. Parents can be involved with excursions, volunteering their time to talk to a class about their vocation, assist in various TVET events such as sport days, open days and even graduation ceremonies. In certain instances, parents can assist as substitute lecturers as and when needs be (Venninen & Purola, 2013).

2.13 LITERATURE RELATED TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Section 1.8 made known the theoretical frameworks used in this study namely Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of human development, Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, Epstein's (2001) theory of the overlapping spheres of influence and the theoretical model of factors influencing learner academic achievement by Lebrun-Martin (2013), which are discussed in this section.

2.13.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development

There is an entire community of people that in some or other way contribute to the development and well-being of a child. Children are born into families and grow up to be members of a community or society. Bronfenbrenner (1979), cited in Kocayörük (2016) asserts that the ecological theory provides a framework that can be used to predict which parental functions yield which child outcomes as a result of the analysis of the environment in which the child and caregivers co-operate. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979,1986), the individual child lives within a system of systems, termed ecological systems, and more importantly asserts that the interaction the individual has with others and within these various environments are crucial for development. The systems that the child finds themselves in vary from the home\family life system to the schooling system as well as the larger societal and cultural systems. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model is depicted in FIGURE 2.4 below.

Kocayörük (2016) contends that Bronfenbrenner's model expects successful school outcomes for a child to be directly correlated with high levels of parental involvement.

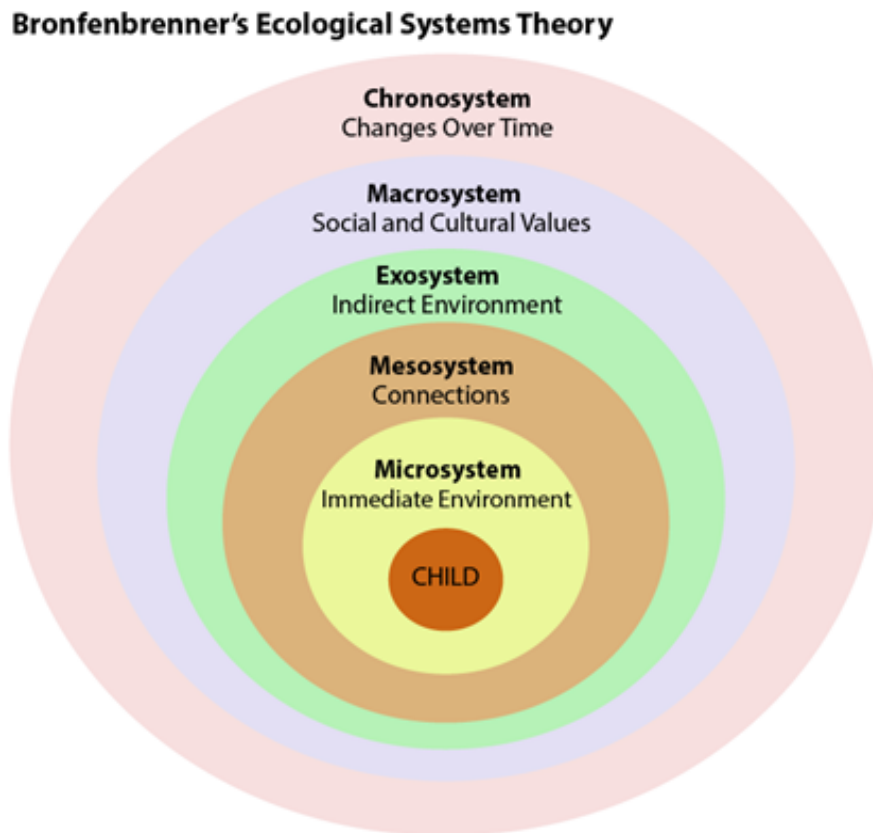


FIGURE 2.4: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model

[Source: <https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/bronfenbrenner-01.png>]

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem as four ecological systems. According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem is the smallest environment that the child is part of, is the most immediate environment, such as the school or community and consists of personal relations (amongst others) between family members, peers, and teachers. Woolfolk (2014) asserts that the relationships between the various elements in these systems are fluid and reciprocal in nature. For example, the child effects the parent, and in turn the parents effect the child. The microsystem in turn, as a result of the interactions within the microsystem, give rise to a larger system called the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Therefore, the mesosystem incorporates the relations between the elements of the microsystem, for example between parents and the school. Similarly, the exosystem also contains relations between the various elements, however the relation does not directly involve the child, but consequently affects them anyway. For example, the child's two parents' connection, which, if it is unstable, may directly or indirectly effect the child, as the child is not a direct member of the caregiver's relationship and has no say in his or her parents' relationship (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Kocayörük (2016) also emphasises the need of recalling that these systems are interrelated, which posits that any disruption to one has a ripple effect on the others. Lastly, the macrosystem consists of the larger social, cultural, religious, and political context in which all the previously mentioned systems are rooted. According to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the macrosystem does not directly impact the child's life, but rather impacts the society (of which the child is a part of) as a whole. Bronfenbrenner continued to revise his theory and consequently, Bronfenbrenner (1986:724) introduced a fifth system, which he titled the "chronosystem", that consists of all the cumulative changes on an individual's development, brought about by the environment, which have occurred over their entire lifespan. Elliott and Davis (2020) assert that Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem to signify the changes in an individual's life over their lifespan.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model is based on the premise that the relationships between parents/caregivers directly affects their development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posits that the social context such as the home, school, community, immediate family, among others, affects the nature of the relationship which, in turn are affected by broader cultural values, beliefs, societal laws and time itself. Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, and García Coll (2017) assert that his theory is of particular importance, and it assists us in understanding the difference in behaviour of an individual whilst in the presence of family versus the behaviour at school.

Vélez et al., (2017) however offer a critique of his theory and suggest a slight revision of his model wherein they state that their revision "emphasizes that culture needs to take an important role" (Vélez et al., 2017:909) which, is a viewpoint shared by Ali

(2017). Ashiabi and O'Neal (2015) draw upon Bronfenbrenner's model and hypothesise that socio economic status (SES) is a construct of the macrosystem of the bioecological model. They assert that parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibit higher levels of parenting stress and anxiety which they believe somewhat affects a child's socioemotional competence.

2.13.2 Coleman's concept of social capital

Beginning with Bourdieu (1985) and Coleman (1988), authors attempted to explain and provide evidence for the idea that social capital activities promote social reproduction when linked to the education of individuals (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016). Bourdieu was one of the first and described social capital theory (SCT) as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" in his book *Social Capital Theory* (Rogošić & Baranović, 2016:89). The network, in this case being the parent/family or community. Its fundamental tenet is that a network gives members value by giving them access to the social resources that are integrated into it. Coleman (1988) asserts that a person's educational success is correlated with their many forms of capital, such as social, economic, and cultural capital.

According to the social capital theory, interpersonal relationships provide value to people because social connections are resources that can promote the growth and accumulation of human capital (Machalek & Martin, 2015). Furthermore, they contend that it also gives them access to resources that may be used to achieve their goals. In general, there are two components that make up social capital. Firstly, the social relationship itself, which enables people to claim access to knowledge resources held by their friends, family, or peers and secondly the quantity and quality of those resources (Mikalef, Pappas, Krogstie & Giannakos, 2018). For any learner, this is especially advantageous as these social relationships can be a source of emotional, financial, and information assistance. Machalek and Martin for instance purport that educational success and the development of highly sought-after and well-paid skills, talents and credentials can both be supported by a secure home environment.

2.13.3 Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement

The spheres of influence paradigm, according to Epstein (1987) is made up of three major realms: home, school, and community. Various forces can then be used to draw the three spheres together and/or push them apart. Epstein's model illustrates four forces that act on the three spheres namely, Force A: represents the time/age or grade, Force B: represents the characteristics, philosophies and practices of the family, and Force C: represents the school. The centre zone of the model where all three spheres 'overlap' represents the child. Epstein's model is depicted in FIGURE 2.5 below.

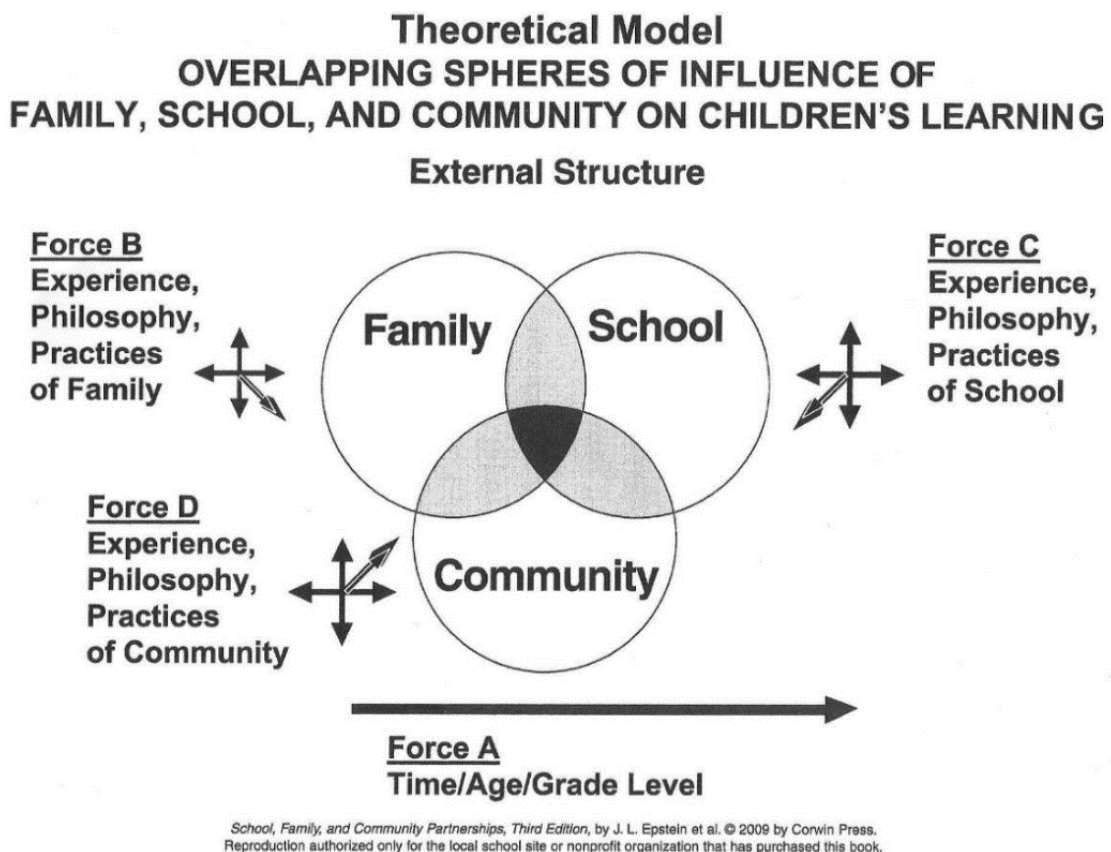


FIGURE 2.5: Epstein's spheres of influence model

[Source :

<https://d3i71xaburhd42.cloudfront.net/18e39748534fcf5a2c007799dc46f207e345afe4/33-Figure1-1.png>]

The model is driven by the six fundamental types of parental involvement and according to Harris (2020), these overlapping forces occur more frequently during

primary school education and may or may not help create instances for shared involvement between the parents and the school. According to Harris, the spheres of influence model, depicts that each of the spheres (family, school & community) are all interdependent on each other. This means that the greatest interaction between the spheres occurs when all work as cohesive partners that includes shared activities.

Kocayörük (2016) cites Wanat's (1997) study with parents who were actively involved in the education of their children and found that increased parental involvement increased learning, positively shaped the child's attitude toward school, increased self-esteem, and made children more serious about education. Harris (2020) summarised the theoretical argument by contending that when parents see that their participation and collaboration are encouraged and accepted by instructors and the school in general, they are more inclined to participate in their children's education at home.

The proper upbringing of children is ultimately the responsibility of parents, whereas the responsibility of educating children becomes that of the school (Epstein, 2001). According to Epstein (2001), the nature of the parent-school relationship is in flux, whereby previously, the partnership would be called upon only when there was a problem, currently, the partnership is deliberate and intentional in order to contribute to student achievement and success at school. Dr Joyce Epstein is one such researcher who has done extensive work on parental support and developed a framework of how parents should be involved. She asserts that there are six fundamental types of parental involvement, with each one of the six (6) having a specific focus and in her theoretical framework she labels them as:

- Parenting – This is when parents meet their children's basic needs of their children to make them able to learn both at school and at home, by creating a conducive environment at home that supports the child's learning.
- Communicating - This refers to the two-way process whereby the parents communicate with the teachers about school related matters and vice versa.
- Volunteering – refers to parents who assist the school in either physically or financially or who participate as supporters at school events.

- Learning at home – refers to learning that occurs at home whereby the parent under guidance from the school is involved with for example homework and or learning for any assessments.
- Decision making – where parents are involved in school decisions through structures such as the school governing body or sports organisation committee.
- Collaborating – whereby the parent is involved with the wider community or stakeholders of the school.

According to her, the aim of the framework is to assist educators in developing school and family partnership programs, which she asserts is one of the reasons young people succeed in school and later in life, whilst at the same time indicating that one specific type of involvement is not necessarily better or more important than the other. Each of these six types of parental involvement can also be used by schools as strategies to increase stakeholder involvement. Martinez (2015) further contends that not only does parental involvement have positive effects on learners' academic performance, but there are other side effects such as increased motivation, self-esteem, and self-reliance, which may lead to academic success regardless of economic background. Thus, parental involvement can be asserted as highly important especially where TVET colleges are serving rural communities, which as Mathebula, Molokomme, Jonas and Nhemachena (2017) contends that poorer rural households tend to engage in low-return activities to ensure survival, reduce vulnerability or to avoid falling deeper into poverty.

2.13.4 Goodall's Six Point Model

Numerous years of research have been undertaken to understand parental involvement. Epstein's framework is not the only model relating to parental involvement, in fact, a more recent study by Dr Janet Goodall culminated in Goodall's six-point model of elements of parental engagement which she has shown to be effective in supporting children's learning (Goodall, 2013). Goodall's six-point model is depicted in FIGURE 2.6 below.



FIGURE 2.6: Goodall's 6-point model

[Source: <https://cdn.3plearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Authoritative-parenting.png>]

The first component of Goodall's model represents the authoritative parent who sets clear and concise boundaries with expectations of how their children should perform academically at school. This is typically accomplished when parents are kind, understanding, and compassionate to their kids, and those parents can anticipate their kids performing well academically in school when they do so. The second aspect of this model focuses on learning in the home, where parents actively teach and instill values and set aside time to engage in meaningful reading and to assist their children with homework and other school related activities.

The third component of the model involves parents beginning engagement very early on in the child's life. Creating a regular framework and routine such as regular mealtimes, regular bath times, and regular story time or playtime, is necessary to achieve this. The fourth component speaks to how parents can stay involved in the education of their children throughout their school career. It is easier for parents to be involved in their children's learning and schooling at a young age however as

children progress to higher grades and when their education becomes more demanding, parents tend to become less involved. A possible reason is that perhaps the parent does not have formal education and therefore has limited or no understanding of subject content.

The fifth component refers to parents valuing education highly and passing on high aspirations for their children. Research once again by Harris and Goodall (2007) has shown that parents' expectations for their children's education is based on the extent to which they value education themselves as well as what parents say and think about education has a direct effect on learners' own beliefs (Harris & Goodall, 2007). The final component of Goodall's model refers to parents taking an active interest in children's learning and education by being involved with homework, attending parent teacher consultations, and being involved in the school community. With that being said, parental involvement such as attending meetings and conferences can be daunting to many a parent, as parents fear that they may hear reports about their children which may not be in their favour, and similarly educational institutions may fear that they may give the wrong impression about the student or be unable to actually help a parent understand their child's academic performance.

2.14 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed relevant literature in order to understand the role of parental involvement in their children's education. It included defining parental involvement, establishing its significance as well as identifying the various forms it may take and shown its determinants. The chapter revealed the various different definitions of the term parental involvement, and that there are different understandings of parent involvement and what it actually entails. The literature provided insight into the role and importance of the parent, and how their involvement has evolved over the years in educational systems.

In addition, the literature looked at the benefits and challenges still faced with regards to parental involvement. It showed that parents can create the necessary supportive environment for their children's educational development, however despite this, there appears to be a shortfall in South African research particularly on parental

involvement in TVET colleges. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has carried out numerous, research into TVET colleges particularly in Kenya, Africa, and the role of community engagement in these colleges. They refer to the term community and although it is a broad term, parents and in some cases, grandparents are part of that term. They further assert that specialised literature on community engagement in TVET institutions does exist, but it is not as extensive as the literature focusing on universities (Gagnon, 2019).

However, there is somewhat limited research on TVET student populations and on how these frameworks can be applied. In the opinion of the researcher, this is due to the perception that TVET is a second-class education system for those who find mainstream school challenging, a view which is also asserted by Wahba (2012) that although TVET is being used by several developing countries as a means of sustainable development, TVET has been still left to the periphery and its significance has not yet really been embraced. Lastly in this chapter the researcher illustrated the various frameworks which underpin the research. The next chapter present the research design and methodology. The rationale for embarking on a qualitative study and the choice of design and methodology to be employed will be explained and discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two presented the literature that was used to inform the research relating to parental involvement. Given the discoveries presented in the literature review, there is indeed a correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. The literature review, however, has revealed an apparent disconnection between TVET colleges and parents. In this chapter, the researcher outlines the context for this research study starting with the research paradigm, philosophical approach, research method, research design, site selection and data collection methods and thereafter describe how the data was analysed and represented. Furthermore, the researcher discusses important aspects of ethical considerations and all these are applied prior to applying the intended research design.

This research study locates itself within the qualitative research framework and on the key underpinnings of the interpretivist research philosophy. The intended design and methodology were used to gain insight and understanding of the main research question of factors influencing parental involvement in the education of their children at a TVET college. Thus, the researcher was of the opinion that it is important to clarify the meanings of research paradigm, research philosophy, research designs and research methodology in the context of this research. It is not the researcher's intention to rehash literature, but rather to clarify and definitively provide a rationale for the researcher's choice(s) of the design and methodology.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research is a way of systematically generating and expanding our collective knowledge (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2014), and is guided by shared views and arguments with regards to (amongst other things) how one should understand and address problems. This is what is regarded as a research paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) cited in Makombe (2017:3367) define paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guides the investigator".

In this regard, the researcher chose the interpretivist paradigm to be utilised in this study in the context of the qualitative research approach, in order to better comprehend and interpret the research problem. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) assert that the nature of interpretivism is based on relativism and contend that relativism implies that reality is subjective and can alter depending on the perception of the individual. Scotland (2012) argues that our awareness and the interaction of our consciousness with the world enable us to experience reality and create meaning and reminds us that it is us (humans) who call the 'lemon tree a *lemon tree*' and not the tree itself.

Thus, when we consider that the premise of this study is to understand factors influencing parental involvement in learners' educational lives in the context of a TVET college, the interpretive paradigm was chosen because it deals with knowledge generation and understanding based on the participants' subjective experiences. Furthermore, Peters (2014:54) asserts that "an interpretive paradigm offers more flexibility for perceiving and understanding reality", which allowed the researcher to learn about the perspectives of parental involvement in TVET colleges.

However, according to Rahi (2017), the paradigm also protects the researcher from undue influence from his or her own thoughts and perspectives. Paradigms, according to Makombe (2017), should also not be seen as rigid and unchangeable, and in order to address the research questions, the researcher occasionally has to switch between different philosophical assumptions in order to make certain inferences apparent. Makombe is a fervent believer that no researcher should attempt research inquiry without first gaining a thorough understanding of "what paradigm informs and leads" it (Makombe, 2017:3367).

Furthermore, Makombe (2017) asserts that these paradigms "are our tenets about the nature of our reality, how we may know this reality and how knowledge is produced" (Makombe, 2017:3367). Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) purport that the nature of our reality is termed ontology, how we come to know what we know is termed epistemology, and how we as researchers go about studying phenomena

and generating knowledge is termed methodology. Respectively, they are referred to as philosophical assumptions.

3.2.1 Philosophical assumptions

Creswell and Poth (2016) argue that there are times when researchers have their own convictions and persuasions when conducting research that may or may not be influential, based on the assumption that their minds are not empty slates. They claim that researchers are occasionally aware if not completely unconscious of them. According to Moroi (2021), the argument put forward by Creswell and Poth emphasises the need of becoming aware of certain philosophical assumptions since they influence a study's direction. Here, Moroi draws attention to the value of having a philosophical foundation in research, namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Kamal (2019:5) cites Antwi and Hamza (2015) who defines ontology “as the way the researcher defines truth and reality”. With reference to ontology and the nature of reality that was investigated in this research study, the researcher questioned the subjective reality of how the involvement of parents in the education of their children at TVET colleges is perceived by parents, students, and lecturers. Al-Ababneh (2020:2) defines epistemology as “the nature of knowledge”, and refers to Crotty (1998, 2003), that epistemology is the science of explaining and letting us understand “how we know whatever it is that we know”.

Ryan (2018) posits that our understanding of truth and meaning is subjective, based on the way we engage with the reality of our existence, and is also based on people's experiences and comprehension of them, culturally and historically. Because the major goal of this study was to obtain knowledge from the interviewee's viewpoint, it demonstrated an interpretive epistemological stance. According to Kamal (2019:7), Antwi and Hamza (2015:218) define methodology “as the method used in conducting the investigation”. For this study, the researcher used interviewing that relied on the subjective relationship with the participant, as this research study aimed to seek and understand the plethora of factors that were influencing parental involvement in the studies of their children at TVET colleges.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that it is the paradigms that provide the basis for the different approaches to research namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method. The researcher chose the qualitative research approach for this study. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013:15) cite Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) who define qualitative research as a contextual activity in which the observer situates themselves in the world. Utilising a qualitative approach, according to Creswell (2013:48), favours the empowerment of individuals “to share their stories, hear their minds and minimises the power relations that exist between researcher and participant(s)”. Furthermore, Creswell purports that qualitative research studies a phenomenon from the perspective of individuals who are directly affected by it.

According to the above definitions, qualitative methods allow the researcher to collect data in the form of words, in contrast to numbers, the qualitative method emphasises a narrative language. The qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for this study since it allowed the researcher to get data directly from the participants while also allowing for the investigation of their experiences and meanings. Because of the different approaches utilised to acquire data, the research study was also exploratory and descriptive. Hunter, McCallum, and Howes (2019) cite Polit and Beck (2013) who suggest that exploratory research is intended to shed light on how a phenomenon manifests itself and is particularly beneficial in revealing the complete nature of a less understood phenomenon.

3.3.1 Challenges and benefits encountered with qualitative research.

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:344) posit that “qualitative research is described as field research” because it lets the researcher observe things as they happen in their natural environment. Undertaking qualitative research requires extensive time partly needed during the data collection phase with regards to issues of gaining access and establishing a rapport with participants (Creswell, 2013). Given that the

study used different methods to acquire data such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the process of data analysis was complex (Creswell, 2013), as large datasets had to be reduced into a few themes.

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) also argue that qualitative researchers rarely try to condense what they're studying because this method produces rich narrative descriptions that help people comprehend why things are the way they are.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers are frequently required to write long paragraphs since evidence must back statements and the researcher must demonstrate multiple perspectives. Furthermore, according to Creswell, using quotation marks to convey participants' viewpoints lengthens the study. The researcher was also aware of the importance of context in shaping and influencing human cognition and behaviour (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2014). This was in addition to being cognisant of society's numerous complexities and the fact that human behaviour is such a complex phenomenon in and of itself (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Bearing the above in mind, the researcher's rationale for choosing the qualitative approach was influenced by the following benefits as alluded to by Creswell (2013: 45-47):

- The research was conducted in its natural context rather than a strict controlled laboratory setting, allowing the researcher to experience the participants directly.
- The researcher collected audio data directly, thus serving as a crucial instrument, and without depending on data gathering instruments created by other researchers.
- Multiple methods such as interview, and focus group were used during data collection.
- The researcher was focused on the meaning that the research issue had for the participants.
- The researcher aimed to create a comprehensive picture of the research issue under consideration.

Thus, the researcher acknowledged the fact that the qualitative approach allowed one to investigate and interpret the factors influencing parental involvement at TVET colleges, whilst also being mindful that these factors are based on context, that are intrinsically linked to social, class, race, and gender factors. Furthermore, the researcher fervently believed that the choice of using a qualitative method was appropriate for the study as the rich information gained from participants as part of this study would allow the researcher to provide recommendations to TVET colleges with an aim of fostering a partnership between the parents, lecturers, and colleges.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 Design

According to Rubin and Babbie (2016:628), the term research design, “refers to all the decisions made in planning and conducting of research”. The research design defines the overall approach of using different components (available to a researcher) of a research study, in a concise, coherent, and logical manner. Akhtar (2016:68), states that a “research design can be considered to be the structure of research and the ‘glue’ that holds it all together”, which essentially allowed the researcher to answer the research questions.

3.4.2 Case Study

A case study is a research approach in which a researcher investigates “a bounded system (a case) or numerous cases over time, through thorough, in-depth data collecting involving multiple sources of information and produces a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2013:73).

This research study employed a case study design. Yin (2014:18) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”. The case study design was deemed appropriate as the researcher investigated a single case vis-à-vis factors influencing parental involvement in one TVET college within the uThukela district of KwaZulu-Natal.

Case studies according to Akhtar (2016), try to precisely determine the reasons for patterns of behaviour and the case's contextual location. This research study adopted a case study method of inquiry to explore the factors influencing parental involvement and describes the experiences of eleven (11) TVET learners, five (5) parents, five (5) lecturers and their assumptive beliefs of parental involvement in their educational experiences.

Furthermore, Akhtar (2016) contends that research designs can also be classified as either exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, or experimental. This research study is exploratory as its very purpose was to gain insight into the concept of and factors influencing parental involvement in TVET colleges, of which currently, this is an area less studied given that it has few research studies.

3.4.2.1 Challenges encountered using a case study.

All research methods have some benefits and drawbacks and therefore for this study, many considerations had to be considered in using the case study. According to Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen (2010), case study research has been heavily criticised since it is perceived to be impractical to generalise. The goal of this study, in accordance with qualitative research principles, was to describe, comprehend, and explain. Whilst common themes emerged, the researcher was not expecting that the attitudes and perceptions of individual participants could and would be universally generalised to the entire TVET population. As a result, the research helped one to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between PI and TVET colleges.

Another criticism of case studies, according to Yin (2014), is that case studies appear to lack rigour. This influence, as well as the function of the researcher and their interpretations in the study process, were acknowledged in the research approach. To counter this effect, Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen (2010) stress the importance of providing rich and narrative descriptions of research data. In this regard, the researcher provided a description of research sites and excerpts of interview transcripts when reporting the results.

By far and large, the biggest challenge faced in this study was accessibility of all the research participants. Adepoju, Arilesere and Ajibona (2019) contend that the lack of accessibility in the context of research can limit a person's ability to participate in research activities. With regards to the selected student and lecturer participants, the researcher had to negotiate for a suitable time and venue in which to conduct data collection. Given the fact that the selected site was an educational institution that offered different types of instructional programmes, both lecturer and learner participants were typically involved in either class lectures, revision classes or formative and summative assessments. However, both learner and lecturer participants were able to negotiate and were able to find the researcher or vice versa.

A similar situation was encountered with regards to parent participants. The researcher had to negotiate a suitable time to interview parents that would not coincide with family, household, and other responsibilities. Furthermore, with the exception of one parent, parents were interviewed in their homes. Therefore, the researcher had to travel to different geographical areas (other than the main site) to conduct interviews.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2020) contends that the research methodology is the science in understanding the manner and approach the researcher undertakes in addressing a research problem. Accordingly, there are various tools and techniques the researcher can utilise to address their particular need of collecting and analysing data.

3.5.1 Site

The study was conducted at the business studies campus of the selected TVET college in the uThukela district of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The selected campus was situated in the central business district of the town and was a business studies campus, which provided study opportunities for learners by offering the Report 191 or National Technical (NATED) and the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) programmes. The researcher selected this site as it was deemed

appropriate in addressing the research questions stated in section 1.7, in addition to its proximity to the researcher, thereby reducing cost and time.

3.5.2 Sample procedure of research population

Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:5) define population as “the group of individuals from which a sample is drawn”. According to Kamangar and Islami (2013), the process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from a population of interest is referred to as sampling. The sample population identified for this research study were parents, learners, and lecturers of the business studies campus of the selected TVET college in the uThukela district in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher believed that the selected participants represented the best selection to share their personal experiences and perceptions about PI and its influencing factors, with a view to addressing the research questions posed in section 1.7 in chapter one.

Furthermore, parents were able to directly provide data on roles they played and how they supported their children in TVET colleges in terms of academic achievement. The study used purposeful sampling for all participants delimited to the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) instructional offering. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers employ purposeful sampling based on the assertion that the research participants are better able and suited to the purpose of informing a better understanding of the research problem at hand. This means that the researchers' judgement is what informs and determines the criterion for the selection of the sample population.

Given the time constraints, the reactive nature of rules and regulations aimed at managing the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant academic changes made to the college academic year, the research study sampled five (5) parents, eleven (11) learners and five (5) lecturers representing a total sample of twenty-one (21) participants. The following sections discusses the criteria used to select research participants.

3.5.2.1 *Parent selection criteria*

Parents were selected based on their experience of having a child enrolled in the selected campus of the TVET college in one of the following five programmes offered by the college.

- Education and Development
- Hospitality
- Information Technology and Computer Science
- Office Administration
- Tourism

In addition, the researcher sought to sample parents who were of low socio-economic interest status, with the main indicator being parents who applied for the funding of their child's education through NSFAS as well as high socio-economic status, whereby parents were the main person responsible for paying tuition fees.

3.5.2.2 *Learner selection criteria*

In as far as the learner population was concerned, the criteria used to select participants was that learners from any of the five (5) NC(V) programmes offered by the selected campus of the college were selected. The learners were enrolled (full-time or part-time) in any of the five (5) NC(V) programmes. In addition to the above criteria, learners needed to be between the ages of sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age, of any gender, and studying at any of the three NQF levels, giving a maximum of eleven learner participants.

3.5.2.3 *Lecturer selection criteria*

The educators of the college were selected based on a minimum of 4 years of experience in teaching and learning in their respective domains giving rise to a sample size of five lecturers, which in turn was used to form one focus group.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

According to Creswell (2013:146), “data collection can be seen as a series of interrelated activities with an intention to gather good information to answer emergent research questions”. To this end, Creswell (2013) asserts that qualitative researchers are afforded a variety of choices with regards to collecting data and that the typical qualitative researcher usually uses more than one method. Therefore, the researcher used more than one way in collecting data. This research study collected data through semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. The researcher decided on using semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews as it:

- allowed participants to share their experiences,
- allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions in response to the participants,
- was conducted on a one-to-one basis in the case of parents and learners,
- allowed participants to provide a greater level of understanding into the research topic.
- assisted in reducing biasness from the interviewer.
- is dependent on the context of participants (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The researcher simultaneously digitally recorded and took notes whilst the following two types of interviews were ongoing.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative researchers often use semi-structured interviews as it is popular, versatile, and flexible (Kallio et al., 2016). Galleta (2012) cited in Kallio et al., (2016) assert that the major advantage of using a semi-structured interview is that the interview method allows for a dynamic interaction between researcher and participants. In this study, the researcher attempted to select an appropriate way of gathering data from participants. It was decided that the semi-structured interview would provide in-depth information and insight from the participants, especially because the researcher explored the research topic from the perspective of the research participants and their social construction of the phenomenon. With regards

to collecting data, the researcher selected the parents and learners who were interviewed on a one-on-one basis.

3.6.2 Focus-group interviews

As alluded to earlier, interviews are the primary means of data collection. Whilst originally being more predominant in marketing research for business organisations, focus groups have become more common in educational research as they are used to “explore perceptions, attitudes beliefs and experiences” (Billups, 2012:2).

According to Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2018), a focus group discussion is a strategy through which a researcher gathers a group of people to discuss a given issue, with the goal of eliciting the members' complicated personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes through a mediated interaction. Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:389) contend that focus groups “create a social environment where group members are stimulated by one another’s perceptions and ideas, provides for an increase in the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy opposed to one-on-one interviewing”. Furthermore, the researcher chose a focus group based on the arguments provided by Adler, Salanterä, and Zumstein-Shaha (2019) who posit that focus groups foster compassionate peer settings and diminish power dynamics. In as far as data collection was concerned, the researcher conducted a focus-group with five lecturer participants.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis, according to Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller (2020), is the process of bringing order and meaning to a set of data. This research study used thematic analysis which is postulated by Creswell (2013) and Flick (2017) as the method of analysing the data. According to Flick (2017), thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis approach in which collected data are segmented, categorised, summarised, and re-assembled in such a way that it captures the main themes.

3.7.1 Data analysis process

According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:395), “qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships amongst the categories”. “Data analysis is an iterative process,” (Peters, 2014:51), and it entails continually looking through one's data before progressing with categorisation and searching for themes. To analyse the data, the researcher employed Creswell's (2013:205) data analysis spiral model, which contends that “the researcher moves in analytical circles rather than taking a fixed linear method” Creswell's (2013:204).

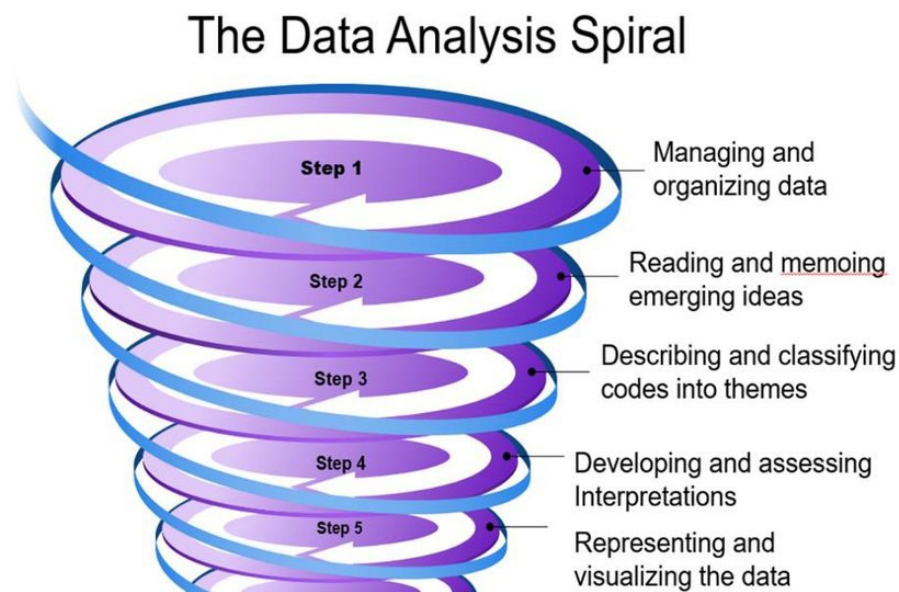


FIGURE 2.7: The Data Analysis Spiral

[Source: Creswell & Poth, 2018: 186]]

The first step of the model involves data organisation and management. All interview sessions that were digitally recorded were transcribed verbatim from its digital audio format into a Microsoft Word document format. Transcription, according to Macmillan and Schumacher (2014), is the process of capturing notes and other vital information and putting it down into a format that allows for easier analysis and comprehension.

To ensure accuracy of the transcriptions, the researcher repeatedly listened to the audio recordings. Participants had to be contacted, in some cases to provide clarification on their responses.

The second step emphasises repeatedly reading through all the data. It is critical that one reads over the transcripts numerous times. Creswell (2013, 2016, 2018) emphasises the significance of immersing yourself in the specifics when reading through the data, attempting to obtain a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it down into bits. The researcher reviewed the transcripts and repeatedly listened to the audio recording to become familiar with the data. By doing so, the researcher was able to thematise key and crucial ideas that emerged from the interviews.

Furthermore, the researcher made notes in the margins of the transcripts (Creswell, 2013), as these assisted the researcher to reflect on the data collection process. The third step involved coding the data. According to Saldaña (2015), coding is another tool that qualitative researchers can use during analysis, by identifying sections in the data and providing a code, which Saldaña (2015:3) defines as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”. Peters (2014) contends that in qualitative data processing, coding is by far the most crucial step.

The researcher analysed the transcribed data by reading line by line and separated it into meaningful segments during this phase whilst simultaneously keeping the research questions in mind and thereafter, the researcher assigned a code based on its relevance to the research topic. Using inductive coding, the transcripts were classified and labelled to discover common elements, themes, and categories. Coding data, according to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), is usually done in a cycle with two or more steps. The first cycle of coding was primarily focused on the participants whereas the second cycle was more researcher focused. Thus, the data was recoded in a new fashion, to draw a relationship between each of the categories and sub-categories of codes.

Beyond coding, the fourth step involved categorising the data from the codes that were generated with regards to the information provided by the participants. This entailed dissecting the text or qualitative data and looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of data (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013:208), qualitative researchers typically “identify between five (5) to seven (7) general themes”.

The penultimate step, according to Creswell, related to the interpretation of the data. This, according to Creswell, is about making sense of the data and understanding lessons that can be learnt. According to Creswell (2013:209), “the final step of the spiral model involves researchers representing the data”, in a meaningful and acceptable manner. Therefore, the data analysis afforded the researcher an opportunity to recognise patterns and themes in the data. All collected data was therefore structured to address the main question(s) of this study.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

According to Saldaña (2015), the believability of the researcher's presentation is referred to as credibility, of which Saldaña emphasises its importance to qualitative research and our role(s) as qualitative researchers. It is critical in all study that the researcher's assertions and research findings are legitimate, true, and reliable. Lincoln and Guba (1995) cited in Korstjens and Moser (2018) contend that qualitative research must address the aspects of; “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability”, (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121), in establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility refers to a trustworthy account of the study issue and the formulation of persuasive research claims (Creswell, 2013). In order to ensure credible research, the researcher provided clear and direct research question(s) and used interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from multiple sources over a two-month period for subsequent analysis and reporting. The standard of the participants' responses was used to confirm the authenticity and trustworthiness of the study.

According to Maluleke (2014:48), “transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings”. The findings of this research study can be transferred if they can be applied

to a specific situation or a similar case. Korstjens and Moser (2018) posit that dependability concerns the consistency of research findings and if similar findings would occur a second time around. In this regard, the researcher achieved dependability by providing consistent reporting whilst also being mindful of the fluctuating nature of the research context associated with qualitative research.

Gill, Gill, and Roulet (2018) assert that confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings can be confirmed or verified by other researchers. This is crucial as the research findings should never be asserted to be a result of the researchers own thinking or bias. In this regard, the researcher thoroughly captured all the viewpoints of all participants irrespective of what informed their respective viewpoints. The researcher, in the next sections, allude to the strategies used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of this study.

3.8.1 Member checking

During the interaction with this study's participants, a digital audio recorder was employed to guarantee that the data was accurately recorded. According to Creswell (2013), member checking is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) as "the most crucial strategy for building credibility". This involves the researcher asking participants about the veracity of the findings and interpretations. Member checking was conducted during the interviews as well as after the transcription by the participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts of the interview.

3.8.2 Peer debriefing

According to Flick (2017), peer debriefing is the practice of collaborating with one or more peers to improve the validity of a particular research. The logic behind this is because, as reported by other researchers, peers are impartial, independent individuals who have no personal stake in the project. In this regard, the researcher engaged a colleague who had completed a qualitative research qualification at another university. The researcher's credibility was raised when the researcher's colleague provided intelligent guidance on the collection and analysis of data.

3.8.3 Audit trail

In qualitative research, an audit trail is a record of how a study was conducted and how conclusions were reached by the researcher (Carcary, 2020). Furthermore, Maluleke (2014:49) asserts that qualitative researchers should also fully “document the procedures for checking and re-checking the data throughout the study”, in order to facilitate an audit trail of how they arrived at their findings. Bearing this in mind, an audit trail was kept of how.

- Participants were selected.
- The raw data was collected, including notes made during the interviews and how they were stored.
- Data was analysed in this study, including how data was reduced into codes.
- Data was reconstructed into themes.

3.9 ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the human element and social nature inherent in qualitative, it is imperative that the researchers interactions with participants is guided by ethical behaviour, as Macmillan and Schumacher (2014:362) quite rightly point out that “qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive”. The following sections allude to the ethical guidelines and principles used by the researcher in ensuring that participants were protected from any potential risks which could have occurred, because of the research process.

3.9.1 Request for permission to conduct research.

According to Saldaña (2015), proposals to conduct research are subjected for review by established bodies within academic institutions, whose function is to oversee such topics to ensure the safe design and ethical conduct of a researchers’ work, particularly with children and other vulnerable populations. Prior to conducting any research pertaining to this educational study, permission was sought from the ethics review committee of the University of South Africa, where the researcher applied for a certificate of ethical clearance and followed the university's application process,

which was subsequently granted. Furthermore, the researcher requested and received permission to conduct the study from the deputy principal: academic of the TVET college.

3.9.2 Informed consent to participate.

The participants in the study consisted of learners, parents, and lecturers. Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) assert that informed consent, relates to obtaining permission from persons to engage in research prior to the start of the study. The researcher was completely honest with the participants and did not utilise any unethical tactics to persuade, coerce or incentivise them into partaking in the study. According to Creswell (2013), it is crucial to inform the participants about the study's goal, which is frequently indicated on a consent form filled for the purposes of an institutional review board at a college or university. In this study, all participants were informed about its nature and purpose, in addition to informing them that they were taking part in the study.

The researcher furnished all participants with the necessary information with which they used to make a conscientious decision regarding their participation. In this regard, learners were also provided with documentation to provide to their parents and guardians indicating the nature and purpose of the research study. In addition, participants were duly informed and constantly reminded that there would be no coercion whatsoever to participate and that their participation in the study was purely voluntarily, and should they so wish, participants were eligible to withdraw at any given point in time.

3.9.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Owing to the intrusive nature of the topic at hand, the identities of all participants that were interviewed were kept confidential. Furthermore, all voice recordings, notes and interview transcripts taken during interviews were kept safe and encrypted. The researcher also made use of pseudonyms when referencing a particular participant, to ensure that responses (made by the participant) cannot be linked to the actual participant themselves, thus ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

3.9.4 Privacy and empowerment

The researcher ensured that participants were not subjected to deception and misinformation. In this regard, the researcher reiterated the purpose of the research study, thereby building and establishing a trust-based relation.

3.9.5 Caring and fairness

The researcher ensured that all participants were treated equally and fairly and that no physical and or emotional harm occurred. All responses and viewpoint of the participants were recorded and noted.

3.9.6 Health and safety

Ever since November of 2019, the novel coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 virus has made unimaginable consequences and changes in our daily lives. Although there have been other outbreaks of such nature, the measures and safety protocols that were introduced have assisted in the public health response to the virus. The researcher ensured that all protocols were adhered to, such as the mandatory wearing of a face mask, the use of a hand sanitiser prior to and after engaging in interviews, conducting interviews in ventilated rooms or areas as well as maintaining the required two metre physical distance between individuals.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the design and methodological approach used in the study in relation to the philosophical approach. The rationale for the researcher's choice of opting for using the qualitative approach was described. Thereafter, the researcher detailed the concepts of the research paradigm, research questions and the methods of collecting data. Furthermore, the researcher alluded to the population and sampling used in the study, as well as the ethical considerations that guided the research. The next chapter presents the analysis of the data as well as the themes that emerged from it.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research design and methodology employed for the study was explained in the previous chapter. Data is presented and analysed in line with the study's main aims and objectives, as re-iterated in section 4.2. This chapter describes the results of a case study that the researcher conducted at a TVET college in the uThukela district municipality of KwaZulu-Natal. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview were used to collect data. The analysis and discussion of the research have been combined to offer a rich description of the qualitative data gathered.

Personal information about the participants provided a background to help in response interpretation. To facilitate a qualitative impression of the responses, quotes have been utilised frequently. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), one of the purposes of qualitative research is to give people's opinions a voice. The researcher also explained how the gathered data were analysed, including how codes were allocated, themes were found, and preliminary conclusions were reached. According to Lester et al., (2020), the purpose of a qualitative data analysis is to summarise what has been heard or seen. Lester et al., contend that this is achieved using common words, phrases, themes, or patterns that allowed for the comprehension and interpretation of emergent topics without assuming that something needs to be said.

Lastly, in addition to recommending strategies on how better to involve parents, this study investigated the factors that affected parental involvement at a selected TVET institution in the uThukela District.

4.2 RESEARCH PURPOSES AND AIMS

As the main research question states, the purpose of this research study was to examine the concept of PI, that is, to examine how PI was perceived in the TVET college by learners, parents, and lecturers as well as to identify the factors

influencing it. Another goal of this study was to identify more effective strategies for PI based on the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political status of parents.

In this regard, the sub-questions that guided the study were:

- How is the concept of parental involvement understood by learners, parents, and the lecturers?
- What are the benefits for the TVET college if parents are involved?
- How is parental involvement in the TVET college perceived by learners, parents, and the lecturers?
- What are the barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college?
- What strategies can be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college?

4.3 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

In this study, interviews with eleven (11) learner participants and a focus group discussion with five (5) lecturer participants were held at the selected campus of the chosen TVET college in the uThukela District. The participants were people who lived in what can best be described as a semi-rural area. The term "semi-rural" was coined by the researcher to characterise a geographical area that was not specifically rural or urban but maintained a small town-like cultural environment. Four of the five parent participants were interviewed at their respective residences. One parent requested to be interviewed during their lunch break at their workplace, owing to personal reasons. This resulted in a total of twenty-one (21) participants.

4.4 PARTICIPANTS' SELECTION BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

As previously alluded to, this research study was delimited to a single campus of the selected TVET college and to twenty-one (21) participants. All parent participants acknowledged in this study had children attending the TVET college and their children are all recipients of the NSFAS bursary scheme. By virtue of the fact that all applicants to the bursary scheme must undergo a financial means test, suggests that these parents can be classified as having a low socio-economic status. The Southern African Labour and Development Unit (2017:2) states that, "The financial means test

formula takes into account the family's cost of living, the number of dependents living in the home, and the household income”, which it uses to determine how much the family would be expected to contribute financially towards study costs and thus by extension also determines the families’ socio-economic status.

The second group of participants were the learners’, all of whom were enrolled full-time in the National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) programme at the TVET college and at various levels of study. To avoid any parental bias from occurring, the learner participants that were selected were not in any way related to the parent participants who were selected. The third group of participants were the lecturers, all of whom were either teaching a specific subject or subjects within a particular NC(V) programme at the TVET college. All twenty-one (21) participants who took part in the study chose to do so voluntarily and all participants were identified only by a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity. The biographical information about the learner participants, including pseudonym, age and programme are shown in table 4.1. Table 4.2 displays the information regarding the parent participants. Lastly, table 4.3 displays the lecturers’ biographical information.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of learners involved in the study.

Participants	Pseudonym	Age	Programme
Learner 1	LNR1	23 years	Office Administration
Learner 2	LNR2	23 years	Office Administration
Learner 3	LNR3	24 years	Tourism
Learner 4	LNR4	21 years	Tourism
Learner 5	LNR5	31 years	Education & Development
Learner 6	LNR6	21 years	I.T & Computer Science
Learner 7	LNR7	20 years	I.T & Computer Science
Learner 8	LNR8	21 years	Education & Development
Learner 9	LNR9	22 years	Hospitality

Learner 10	LNR10	23 years	Hospitality
Learner 11	LNR11	29 years	Office Administration

Table 4.2: Biographical information of parents involved in the study.

Parent	Pseudonym	Gender	Course Studied By Child	Age	Highest Qualification	Occupation
Parent 1	PAR1	Male	Tourism	50 years	Grade 9	Skilled Worker
Parent 2	PAR2	Female	Office Admin	53 years	Degree	Financial Manager
Parent 3	PAR3	Female	Tourism	52 years	Diploma	Unemployed
Parent 4	PAR4	Male	Hospitality	68 years	Grade 8	Pensioner
Parent 5	PAR5	Female	Tourism	40 years	Grade 12	Self Employed

Table 4.3: Biographical information of lecturers involved in the study.

Participants	Pseudonym	NC(V) Programme / Learning Area	Lecturing experience (years)
Lecturer 1	LEC1	Maths Literacy	8 years
Lecturer 2	LEC2	Office Administration	14 years
Lecturer 3	LEC3	Information Technology & Computer Science	13 years
Lecturer 4	LEC4	Education & Development	11 years
Lecturer 5	LEC5	Office Administration	15 years

4.5 EMERGENT THEMES AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As previously stated, this research study was delimited to a single campus of the selected TVET college, and to twenty-one (21) participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from five (5) parents and eleven (11) learners, whilst five (5) lecturers from the chosen TVET college who participated in a focus group discussion, from which raw data was derived. The collected data in the format of audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and organised in an MS Word document format. Thereafter, the researcher revisited the raw data and the transcriptions and identified important patterns and relevant information. Using a code sheet, the responses given by all participants were initially broken down into codes.

The researcher then refined the codes that were deemed similar, and which routinely presented themselves across the entire data set. Thereafter, the data were revisited and categorised into themes and sub-themes. After grouping the themes and examining their connections to the research questions and the interview questions, the researcher tabulated the themes and condensed and or reduced them from thirteen to five major themes with corresponding sub-themes. To facilitate the discussion of the results, sub-headings representing the themes/categories that emerged as the main or recurrent themes, are used, and listed below in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Research questions, themes, and sub-themes

Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
1. How is the concept of parental involvement understood by learners, parents, and lecturers?	4.5.1 Theme 1: Stakeholders understanding of the concept of parental involvement.	4.5.1.1 Parental awareness 4.5.1.2 <i>Communicative parental involvement</i> 4.5.1.3 <i>Participative parental involvement</i> 4.5.1.4 Collaborative parental involvement 4.5.1.5 Punitive parental involvement

2. What are the benefits for the TVET college if parents are involved?	4.5.2 Theme 2: Benefits of parental involvement.	4.5.2.1 Increased academic participation 4.5.2.2 Increased accountability
3. How is parental involvement in the TVET college perceived by learners, parents, and the lecturers?	4.5.3 Theme 3: Ways in which parents are involved in their children’s education at the TVET college.	4.5.3.1 Family decisional influences 4.5.3.2 Enrolment assistance 4.5.3.3 Financial assistance 4.5.3.4 Career aspirations 4.5.3.5 Concerned engagement
4. What are the barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college?	4.5.4 Theme 4: Barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college.	4.5.4.1 Lack of communication 4.5.4.2 Lack of opportunity 4.5.4.3 Distance 4.5.4.4 Occupational constraints 4.5.4.5 Generational differences 4.5.4.6 Bursary as a contributing factor 4.5.4.7 Learners as parents
5. What strategies can be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college?	4.5.5 Theme 5: Interventions that can be used to overcome barriers to parental involvement	4.5.5.1 Parents meetings 4.5.5.2 Communication platforms 4.5.5.3 Acknowledgement of progress reports

In the order listed in Table 4.4, themes and sub-themes are presented and discussed in the next section.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Stakeholders' understanding of the concept of parental involvement.

The stakeholders in this research study were parents, learners, and lecturers. Data that emerged were that all stakeholders held an understanding of the concept of parental involvement wherein the participants concurred with each other. The conception(s) of all the participants on parental involvement revealed that they all acknowledged and accepted the value of involving parents in education and how the said involvement affected educational achievement. The participants believed involving parents could bring about meaningful contributions to their children's education at the TVET college. Parent participants understood the concept of parental involvement as being cognisant of the importance of education and wanting to be involved in their education even when they are in a tertiary institution. This was evidenced by the remarks of parent participant 1:

“To me, it means a lot to me, to be involved for my daughter to be educated. So as a parent I have to do whatever it is to be able for her to get an education that she needs.” [PAR 1]

With a similar assertion made by parent participant 2 who commented:

“Parental involvement it has to deal with the parents being involved in the learner, or the child's learning at an institution, whether it's school based or tertiary, wherever.” [PAR 2]

Upon closer analysis of parent participant 1's statement in the contextual view of said parent's educational qualification, it can be asserted that despite the parent having not completed grade twelve, said parent was aware of the view that they needed to be involved so that their child could receive a better education in comparison to what the said parent received. Likewise, the viewpoint raised by parent participant 2

indicated the determination and necessity that they had, to be involved with their child's education.

This is in-line with Massucco's (2020) argument, wherein it is posited that parents are aware of how crucial parental participation is to their children's academic success. Furthermore, Massucco contends that parents are also in the possession of human and cultural capital which the researcher contends that if properly tapped into, would be advantageous to the TVET college in many ways.

Learner participants' views and opinions were also in agreement with those that shared by parent participants. When it came to the notion of parental involvement, learner participants understood that their parents being involved appertained to their learning. Their view(s):

"I think it's when you are involving your parents. Like here in college. Involving my parents in my studies and like having parent meetings." [LNR 4]

This opinion was also shared by learner participant 8:

"I understand what it is, it is where it is a participation of the very people that is played by parents to assist, to assist the child to learn." [LNR 8]

Data from the focus group discussion with the lecturer participants, showed that there existed the same understanding of the concept of parental involvement. This was with regards to the roles, duties, and responsibilities that parents should fulfil in respect of their children's' education. Lecturer participant 4 framed their understanding of the concept by alluding to parental involvement being the holistic development of the child when they said:

"Yeah, parental involvement, according to my understanding, it includes participation of parents in the education of the child. Umm also, the parents' participation in issues pertaining to, to discipline, to academic work, in fact to the overall development of the child, in terms of the psychological development, in terms of social development, in terms of emotional development and parental involvement also involves the co-operation of

parents with the teacher, especially on issues pertaining to the child's academic progress at school.” [LEC 4]

The understanding of parental involvement by all the participants indicated a unanimous view. Participants highlighted areas where involved parents provide for the full growth of a learner such as the cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual components. This concurs with literature (Arshad, Shahzadi & Mahmood, 2016; Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen & Brand-Gruwel, 2018; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein, 2009; Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Graves & Brown Wright, 2011; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016), which has pointed out that the active participation of parents has a direct bearing on their children's social, cognitive, and academic development.

The views raised in theme one indicated a consciousness by the participants about the importance of having parents involved in the educational lives of especially young adults. Upon further analysis of the interview data, further sub-themes emerged, and are discussed in the next section.

4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Parental awareness

As discussions with the participants continued, it emerged that having an awareness and being mindful of their child's education is what some participants understood to be parental involvement. This was evidenced by the statement made by parent participant 2 who stated the following:

“As a parent you need to be involved somehow and actually know what is going on.” [PAR 2]

Parent participant 3 also believed that parents need to be aware of important aspects, such as when assessment are being undertaken, as well as the results of those assessments. They mentioned that:

“It's uh, knowing when your child is writing exams. The results of your child. And you know.” [PAR 3]

Learner participants 5 and 7 respectively believed that parents needed to be aware of their children's academic interests, their children's whereabouts and be aware of how the TVET college functioned. They said:

"I understand that parents must be like involved in the academic life of a student know their whereabouts, know about the courses. Cause sometimes parents like they don't understand like what's actually happening at the college." [LNR 5]

"So parental involvement. I think they should. I understand that they should be somehow involved in your life. Like they should ask you how your progress is. How are you doing? Where you staying? How's your life basically going and all that." [LNR 7]

This point of view was further validated by lecturer participant 2 and 3 respectively as was witnessed by their remarks:

"Ya, and it's not only a financial aspect it's about providing guidance for the children in school. And not only school, it's about finding out things like just being interested, in what happens in the student's day also, is really involved in the student's life. Knowing who their friends are, who the teachers are and who's responsible for them during the day at the college." [LEC 2]

"Yeah, mainly for me I think parental involvement will, will revolve around a parent staying aware. It's an awareness of what is happening in in a, in an educational perspective of his or her children." [LEC 3]

The opinions of the participants indicated that they believed that parents had a responsibility to contribute to their children's education by being aware of what was occurring in their lives, from an emotional, social, and educational perspective. These views are in line with Juwariyah, Slamet and Kustiono (2019) who assert that as a sign of their commitment to their children, parental awareness is essentially one of the finest methods for parents to use when educating their children.

4.5.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Communicative parental involvement

Participants raised communication with parents as another important consideration. This became evident during the interviews, wherein parent participant 3 felt that it was imperative that parents were informed. Parent participant 3 stated that, to be involved in their children's education at the college, parents had to be communicated with so that they would be informed about how the college, as an institution, functions and how their child was progressing with their studies. They said:

"You know, by being informed of what's going on in the college and more, more, moreover, how your child is progressing." [PAR 3]

Furthermore, it was revealed that learner participants also felt that it was important that their parents were informed. The learner participants believed that parents must be informed about pertinent issues and highlighted areas such as how the college functioned to provide an education to learners, informing parents about academic results and progress, discipline and behaviour and attendance. They said the following:

"Because they must know how we perform in our studies and also, they must know how our college does, to provide knowledge to us." [LNR 2]

"Calling our parents to come and see our academic performance." [LNR 4]

"My understanding is that parental involvement is whereby a parent is involved in a student's academic performance at school. And she [the parent] must always have like. Maybe the record of what the student is actually doing at college. How is he performing. Or maybe how is he behaving in class too." [LNR 6]

"Parents, they have to be involved. Somehow there are things that a parent they should know and be involved in our studies. Because when we are were doing registration, they asked for our parent document information here, so I think they have to be involved." [LNR 9]

The views of the participants are in line with the framework for parental involvement proposed by Epstein's (2009) which contends that one method of involving the parents in the affairs of educational institutions is communication (Caño, Cape, Cardoso, Miot, Pitogo, Quinio & Merin, 2016).

However, it also cannot be argued that parents themselves are not initiators of said communication. When parent participants were probed if they talked to their children about their experiences at college, one had the following to state.

“Sometimes I do, yes. I discuss about what she is, she is studying for. What she wants to become.” [PAR 1]

In addition, all the parent participants emphasised that they desired the best for their children, both in and out of the college classroom. Parents felt that talking to their kids was the platform that allowed them to be a part of their education at the college. This was evidenced by parent participant 2 when they said:

“Sometimes, its general things we talk about like how her day at college was and also sometimes academic things like her, what she's learning in the subjects.” [PAR 2]

Furthermore, parent participant 3 emphasised that in addition to talking to their child about their general daily experiences at college, they also actively asked and enquired about academics as witnessed by the following remark:

“Yes, I do. I ask him about how his day at college went. If he has any assignments or projects that he needs help with to complete.” [PAR 3]

One parent participant felt that being emotionally available and being available to talk and share their experiences was indicative of the level of emotional support parents could offer their children. Parent participant 5 said the following:

“Yes, yes always huh. Yeah, most of the time because he comes home with a friend from college, you know. So, we get down to chatting, that guy comes has lunch here. So, we always start communicating, how was your day and all of that.” [PAR 5]

The findings from the above responses indicate that the parents viewed involvement as communicating with their children about their educational lives. According to Yulianingsih, Susilo, and Nugroho, (2020) parenting includes, amongst other things, the relationship and communication between the parents and their children. Communicating with children about education-related issues such as academic progress, important dates and events related to the education of the child is understood to be parental involvement (Boonk et al., 2018; Epstein, 1987; Epstein, 2009).

The views by the participants are in agreement with the literature that communication can be viewed as an integral part of parental involvement. Their statements corroborate the second type of parental involvement, postulated in Epstein’s (2009) framework of six types of parental involvement as well as being in line with the overlapping spheres of influence theoretical model hypothesised by Epstein (1987). However, there are some barriers that exist, but what is also evident is that there also exists the possibility of creating greater cohesion between the parent, the learner, the lecturer and by extension the institution.

4.5.1.3 Sub-theme 2: Participative parental involvement

Participating was mentioned during the discussions as another way to comprehend the idea of parental involvement. Parent participants 4 and 5 respectively stated that their understanding of parental involvement was that they had to involve themselves in their child’s education, as can be seen below:

“When you want to, perhaps, I don’t know and I stand to be corrected, but when as a parent, you want to get the parents involved in your kids umm, daily educational, err routine or studies.” [PAR 4]

“Well by the term parent involvement is it's you know, with your child, you got to, you know, be always like pushing him, as I say you know so he can do his studies and don't let him lack, you know. And other ways you want me to get involved, like okay, it's good to be invited like to the college and you know. Parents can help with the grades or whatever.” [PAR 5]

The quotations from parent participants suggest that they understood parental involvement as them having to be a part (involved) in their children's education, and in this regard, the degree to which they were involved was termed participation.

A similar view was put forward by learner participant 11, indicating the exact ways their parent was involved in their education at the TVET college. They had this to say:

“I think. If you are a child. You are being supporting, by somebody like your parents. I think so. My grandparent, she supports me in my studies here at the college. She is involved and doing things for me. She knows my lecturers and everything.” [LNR 11]

These views also resonated with lecturer participant 1 who had the following to say:

“Uhh, I think, parental involvement, I think it includes parents, to encourage or to inform students about. I would say about what they are learning at the TVET college. Or to assist their, their, their, their children as a student, when they are learning at the college.” [LEC 1]

Lecturer participant 3's views pointed to what the researcher earlier mentioned that participation in this context referred to the degree of involvement by the parent, as mentioned below:

“Checking that the student is attending that the child is actually in schools as expected. And whatever work that is assigned that the child is doing it during the spare-time when he's meant to be doing something during the spare-time.” [LEC 3]

Lecturer participant 3's point of view was also shared by lecturer participant 5 as witnessed by their remarks:

"I think parental involvement is when a parent is able to take part in the child's education. It might be that it can take on different forms of engagement such as checking up on what the child is doing, helping them with tuition. Or attending things that the school or college might be having and in general just being there for your child." [LEC 5]

From what the participants were all alluding to, it can be understood that parental involvement included being actively involved in a child's learning and educational activities, offering support and encouragement, providing guidance, and providing financial assistance. Furthermore, it also included showing empathy, ensuring that learning took place and providing resources to support and enhance learning and being aware of what their young adult was doing at the TVET college.

These views and sentiments are in line with Boonk et al., (2018:42) who contend "that the construct (of parental involvement) refers to a broad variety of parental behaviours and beliefs/attitudes", whilst also resonating with Nzembe (2019) who asserts that parental support can take the form of encouraging, coaching, and mentoring their children while they attend a TVET college.

4.5.1.4 *Sub-theme 3: Collaborative parental involvement*

The interviews also revealed that parental involvement also encompassed a certain degree of different stakeholders all working together in unison, to benefit students. This was raised by lecturer participant 3 who said:

"And to further make certain resources available which may not have been provided by the school. Make resources available for the student, to be able to do some research if they have to do research, allow them maybe to visit places like the libraries, and support the student to achieve better results." [LEC 3]

Learner participant 10 also mentioned academics and believed parental involvement was a joint activity, between the learners, the parents, the educators, and management, such as the principal, which encompasses and included all relevant and important stakeholders in a child's education. This was made clear when they said:

"I, I think it's where a parents, students and lecturers or a principal coming together to form a part of uh, a team to lead the, the children's performance."
[LNR 10]

This notion was also shared by learner participant 3, who felt that parents should utilise their educational experiences to collaborate with their children with an aim for enhancing their academic performance. They said:

"I understand that, err the parent they have to, to work with us and us see that how we experience in the life at college and how we do the things we do in the college. And they know how they were successful. We can look at them, see where they were doing it their way at that age that time and then see, which right now as we want to do whether to become better. And then in that way, they, they, they are close to us." [LNR 3]

What these discussions revealed is that another understanding of parental involvement included when various stakeholders such as the institution and its management, the lecturers, the learners, and their parents worked together for the interests of the learners. This correlates with the sixth type of parental involvement postulated by Epstein's (2009) framework for parental involvement.

4.5.1.5 Sub-theme 4: Punitive parental involvement

Learner participants of the study also felt that involving parents in their education at the college could be viewed as somewhat punitive and controlling in nature. Participants expressed some heightened emotions when speaking about this, given their age(s). Learner participant 10 in particular had the following to state:

“Some of them [the learners] they are scared of their parents like me. Yes, that's the truth they [are] shouting.” [LNR 10]

This point of view was also raised by learner participants 3 and 4 respectively who shared the following:

“In a way that if I do wrong, they gonna say ‘Hey watch it’ and then. Some of the parent they are like that. Like you know the grandma, grandmas. Yeah, yeah, they strict yeah too much.” [LNR 3]

“We are scared of our parents, Punish us if we not inside the class.” [LNR 4]

Lecturer participant 1 validated this by highlighting that involving parents in the college could be used as a control measure, as they believed learners tend to sometimes not tell their parents issues of importance. They said:

“It's a control measure because, like I was saying, the, the last question was asking, asking strategies that you can implement to communicate with, with the parents. Some of the parents don't even know when the classes are starting. They expect, I mean saying that the students will tell them everything. So, involving, involving parents could also be able to control students and also bring their parents.” [LEC 1]

It also emerged that other learner participants shared this opinion. When learner participants were investigated to determine if lecturers had requested to speak and or meet with their parents, the learners felt this was not necessary as they had not done anything untoward. When probed for a reason(s) as to why they felt this way, one learner participant shared the following:

“I think because there's no reason for them to ask for my parent to communicate. For what? I've haven't done anything wrong. Yeah, that's what lecturers do. If you've done anything wrong, going to communicate with your

parent to see if there's something wrong, or something that's happening with you, you've changed or something like that.” [LNR 7]

Another learner participant echoed similar sentiments. They said that:

“Mainly, maybe because I am a good student. I'm not mischievous.” [LNR 6]

When probed to ascertain why they believed lecturers would want to communicate with their parents, the learner concluded by stating:

“Yeah, It's because you. You did something wrong, yeah, or maybe your marks are not great.” [LNR 6]

Learner participant 2 expressed emphatically that it was not necessary for lecturers to communicate directly with their parents because they felt that their parents were not students at the college. It was the body language of learner participant 2 when responding that led the researcher to deduce that the participant felt that their lecturers should have no contact with their parent. Furthermore, learner participant 2 believed that if there was anything important that their parents needed to know, they would be the ones to convey the message. They had the following to say:

“Because hayi [no]. The one whose studying is me. So, for my parents, I, I can tell them about my, my report, my result yeah.” [LNR 2]

One learner participant felt that studying in a place that was not near their parental home afforded them some degree of freedom and autonomy, as they were of the opinion that their parents were strict. This is what they had to state:

“[Be]Cause my parents are strict. She'd [mother] be like no, you did worse to like the previous exam. You did good or you did bad. Try, try, and study like don't go out, what are you doing? Yoh like. They're strict, they know how to treat like.” [LNR 5]

Closer scrutiny of the participants' responses revealed that learners felt that the degree to which parents were involved in their education at the college can be viewed as a punitive and controlling measure. Learner participant 10 noted that learners would not absent themselves from lessons as a result of not wanting to be reprimanded by their parents. The impacts of overly controlling parenting, or what is termed helicopter parenting (Hong & Cui, 2020), have not been thoroughly studied, especially involving the participation of learners that are in institutions of higher learning (Schiffrin, Liss, Miles-McLean, Geary, Erchull & Tashner, 2014). The views raised by some of the selected participants are in-line with Tang and Davis-Kean (2015) who contend that adolescent youth typically favour autonomy and are indicative that parental involvement can be viewed as somewhat punitive and controlling, depending upon the parenting style of the parent.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Benefits of parental involvement

This study found that by involving parents in the educational lives of their children, certain benefits could be realised. In terms of the overall benefits that parental participation affords, the researcher's findings were in agreement with some cited in the literature review. In terms of the college, the participants felt that involving parents could benefit class attendance and institutional accountability. Upon further analysis of this theme, the following sub-themes emerged which are discussed in the next section.

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Increased participation.

There exists a general viewpoint that parents always want the best for their children, and thus place certain levels of standards and expectations upon them. During the interview sessions, participants were questioned as to whether there was a link between a parent being involved and academic achievement. The interviews yielded information that suggested that there is a positive relationship between the parents being involved and academic participation and achievement. When probed by the researcher as to what exactly they perceived the type of relationship between the two to be, the parent participants felt that being involved would ensure that learners

were coming to college with the purpose of studying, as opposed to if they were not involved. Parent participants had the following to say:

“Well, I think she will do her schoolwork better. She already goes to college every day, so I think she will want to make me proud by getting good marks.”
[PAR 1]

“Yes, there is, because the attitudes that the parents give to a child or the, the, the, the motivation it makes the performance to be much better. The involvement of a parent in a child’s learning it makes it easier, and it’s also motivating even the learner himself or herself to do better, because he or she knows that the parent is waiting for something. So, in any way it is the relationship between these two things that can give a successfully academic career.” [PAR 2]

“I think the, the children will perform better if the, if the parent is involved because then it will be not a one-way street where only the lecturers have the burden of seeing your child’s progress or where your child stands it’s also the responsibility of the parent. So, at the end of the day, the child has no, you know no, no gap too, for failure.” [PAR 3]

“Well, I think it will have a positive effect. I mean, as a parent, if I’m involved or I am being allowed to be involved, my money won’t get wasted number 1. Number 2 the child’s efforts will be monitored by me. You know everything means money. And the only thing that I understand that is your education will play a big role in you reaching certain successes so, as a parent, I feel it’s important for me. It’s very important for me to, to play a role so that the child achieves what needs to be achieved.” [PAR 4]

“Well, I think it is going to be good huh. You know, I mean if your father is checking up on you, you know you not going to mess around right. You won’t bunk classes and all that. You gona study, you gona do the work given to you.” [PAR 5]

All the parent participants in this study shared the same expectations that they expected their children to come to college and give off their very best. What was also evident to the researcher was that this expectation was clearly communicated to them, verbally and in some ways non-verbally. Similar viewpoints were shared by the parent participants and this conceptualisation of parental involvement appears to be validating that parents can help students build new, relevant knowledge, as it is apparent that these parents possess sufficient cultural capital that can indeed benefit the college (Mbatha, 2018).

Learner participants believed that by virtue of their parents being involved, they would be encouraged to participate more in their studies. Learner participant 1 was of the following opinion:

“Because they will. They will try to, to put more effort in their studies because parents are always in. Parents are always involved in every step in the college. So, I think it would benefit.” [LNR 1]

When probed by the researcher for further clarification, learner participant 1 supported their view, adding the following:

“Like studying more. You know when we are here in college, we find friends and forget about what we came for to the college and doing something that is not necessary to be done. Ya, that’s what I’m trying to say.” [LNR 1]

This view was also shared by learner participant 5 who re-iterated that if a parent is involved, the child would seek to improve their academic performance. The participant offered the juxtaposition where when a parent is not involved, there exists a tendency to procrastinate with their studies, when they stated:

“Yeah, if your parents are like involved, you will like, perform better marks. So, if a parent is not involved you sometimes you feel like relaxed like, ‘Okay, I’m not gonna study.’ Like I’m free. I’m relaxing.” [LNR 5]

Learner participants 7 and 11 respectively suggested that any increase in their participation would be the result of them wanting to make their parents proud and not disappoint their parents as shown by their remarks:

“It depends on how someone is brought up. If my mother chose something for me then I was raised right to do to follow his interest and instructions. So, I will perform very well to make, to please her, knowing myself, to please her to be happy that I’m doing something.” [LNR 7]

“Because of my grandmother, I’m working hard at school. They, because of they [grandmother], my participation is very good at school and in future I want to be something.” [LNR 11]

Learner participant 10 felt that if parents were to be involved in an educational institution, there would be an increase in the academic performance of the child. They mentioned that:

“Well, when the parents if there are involved in the academic performance in school. The children performance is going high.” [LNR 10]

When further elaboration was elicited by the researcher with regards to clarification about ‘performance going high’, the learner indicated that by virtue of learners knowing that their parents were involved in their education, the learners would not want to disappoint their parents. This is what they had to say:

“In their studies, they study very hard because they know there is their parents. They do not want to disappoint them.” [LNR 10]

Learner participant 10 concluded by framing their argument, in terms of how they would try their best to improve their academic performance because they would try to appease their parents.

“My performance will be very great because they are my parents there and I do not want to disappoint them.” [LNR 10]

Learner participants 4 and 6, respectively believed that there would be a marked increase in classroom attendance. The participants stated that if parents knew the whereabouts of their children, the tendency of being absent would be negated. The participants shared the following:

“For example, other learners, they, they, they left home saying they are coming to college, but they don’t attend classes. So, if their parents are involved. I think that the attendance, will be 100%.” [LNR 4]

“It will actually boost the attendance, because if a parent knows when the student is like going to school, he will not be absent.” [LNR 6]

When learner participant 6 was probed for further elaboration, they had the following to say:

“When a parent is involved, the student performs greater because he knows that he’s being watched by his parent or a parent. So, he performs even greater than before rather than being not watched by his parent.” [LNR 6]

And concluded by re-iterating their point that they believed that the increased participation would be a result of punitive parental involvement, as witnessed below:

“Because involving a parent in a child’s academic can like, mainly because. If, like a student fears his parent or her parents. He can like one to not getting lies on his bad, on his parents bad side so he will like, boost his marks so that she will not like hit him or something. If he’s failing, you know he will always have higher marks because of his parents.” [LNR 6]

Other learner participants attributed the increased participation to the encouragement and support afforded to children by parents. Learner participant 8 was of the view that their parent’s encouragement was what inspired them to study harder.

“Parent they are encouraging me, my parent they are encouraging me to study, so I can increase my marks for each and every task that you get or test that you get.” [LNR 8]

This prompted the researcher to probe, how the learner participant arrived at that conclusion. Learner participant 8 then elaborated by stating that:

“By encouraging the students, they are charged to learn to study every day, so that can make this student mark to increase.” [LNR 8]

Learner participant 3 based their remarks on what their parent did for them when they experienced challenges in certain subjects. They highlighted the significance of encouragement and support and illustrated for them how having their parent’s support translates in increased subject engagement. They said:

“Because they, if they [marks] are low, he, he [father] will encourage me. And then. And ask me, ‘what, what is the problem?’, why I do less. And then I will say, ‘Here, I was struggling with this’, and then next time he will know what is happening. And I will be saying, ‘you know, and right now I have this problem. Okay what must I do?’ and he’ll [father] know, let’s do like this maybe.” [LNR 3]

Lecturer participant 4 agreed with the remarks and viewpoints made by parent and learner participants. The participant asserted that, when parents are not involved, then the academic performance of said learner is negatively affected, as evidently shown by their dialogue:

“I think there is, because where there is non-participation of parents in the child’s education, we find that the performance of the child might suffer in a negative way, so the participation of the parents in the child’s education will actually add to the child’s development within the system.” [LEC 4]

However, this view held by lecturer participant 4 was strongly challenged by the other lecturer participants in the focus group. The other lecturer participants felt strongly

that it was disingenuous to automatically link parental participation with academic benefits. They believed parental involvement would only have a tangible benefit on the attendance and participation of learners in their respective courses. Lecturer participant 1 had the following remarks:

“I mean, we do not, we do not form that link between the, say the college and the parents so that the parents will know if the student if the student is doing financial management. The parents, doesn’t know what is financial management!” [LEC 1]

“The student will go home and say I’ve registered for I.T. That, that parent doesn’t even know what is I.T! [Information Technology]. I mean I don’t think there is much relationship between the parent and academic achievement.” [LEC 1]

“I mean, I don’t see that much relationship looking at what’s happening. There should be, but it’s not happening.” [LEC 1]

Lecturer participant 1 used the argument of a parent’s educational level and felt that parents may not have sufficient knowledge about the courses or subjects that are offered in TVET colleges. Case in point would be the NC(V) programme *Information Technology* where they felt that some parents would not understand what *Information Technology* and related technological concepts. Therefore, the lecturer participants believed that parents of learners who studied such a programme would not engage sufficiently, owing to their lack of understanding. Owing to these complexities, the lecturer participant was of the view, that should there be an increase in academic performance of I.T learners, it could not be a result of parents being involved having any bearing on the academic performance of a learner. This argument once again raises the point of Cook (2021), wherein in some instances PI does not necessarily have an impact.

Lecturer participant 2 concurred with the statement made by their colleague. The lecturer believed that in the TVET scenario, it was difficult to make such concrete

associations and conclusions and felt that it could not be a one size fits all kind of situation. They elaborated by saying:

“Yeah, and I kind of agree with what [LEC 1] is saying. In a sense that, and I’m not sure if you’re going this way with what you say that even though there’s no parental involvement, our students, are still doing okay academically and some of them are performing. There are some students who are performing academically, we can’t say that there isn’t.” [LEC 2]

Lecturer participant 3, however highlighted that reaching such conclusion(s) is based on commonly held assumptions and not based on sound research and had the following to say:

“I think that can be, uhmm our input will be limited in terms of findings because we’ll be talking from a common-sense kind of point of view, because we are not being maybe guided by anything that says a particular study was done through a certain number of students that we interviewed and whatever.” [LEC 3]

However, lecturer participant 3 conceded that literature does indeed exist which has shown that the more parents are involved in their children’s education, then the child’s academic progress also increases. The lecturer, in their experience as an educator, said that they had read articles which asserted this view, as evidenced with the following statement:

“But being in the field of education and whatever that one will come across the articles around parental involvement. It is believed that the more parents are involved, academic success then will also improve, you know.” [LEC 3]

Lecturer participant 2 was of the view that perhaps with parents being involved, it would reduce the dropout rate, as was the status-quo in the college - learners had a high degree of freedom and independence. They were of the opinion that if learners had a parent whom they needed to ‘answer’ to and account to, they would not simply do as they pleased. They said:

“Maybe it will help with the dropout rate, because then the parents will be more involved in the children going, because now the students are just left to their own devices.” [LEC 2]

Lecturer participant 3 concurred with what lecturer participant 2 had mentioned and substantiated their views as follows:

“I’ll agree with that, with you on that one because students moved from far away to come and stay closer to the college and for some it is the first time, that they are staying without their parents nearby. So, they just find that freedom and they behave anyhow, and then they end up dropping out. They end up being consumed by other things, so maybe err attendance, believing that attendance has a direct impact on the pass rate in that way, yes, it will improve the performance because once the students attend regularly then they will write some assessments because now you will have students who are here, but they have not even written a single assessment which then somehow very, it’s a recipe for failure at the end. So, I, I concur with what you was putting forward.” [LEC 3]

Eventually, the consensus reached amongst the lecturer participants was that an increase in parental involvement would lead to an increase in class and lecture attendance and participation. The lecturers were of the view that since learners themselves would be attending more frequently, this would correlate with an increase in academic performance, as learners would be more engaged with subject content.

The discussions raised by all the participant stakeholders during data collection are consistent with the abundance of literature on the matter (Arshad, Shahzadi & Mahmood, 2016; Bardsley, 2002; Boonk et al., 2018; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Driessen, 2019; Epstein, 2009; Erdem & Kaya, 2020; Graves & Brown Wright, 2011; Hanif & Alwi, 2019; Wilder, 2014; Vijayalakshmi & Muniappan, 2016). The literature contends that increased parental involvement results in improved learner participation and achievement, improved educator motivation and a well-functioning institution. Furthermore, the literature also pointed out that parents are also in

possession of human capital, and through their education, knowledge and experience can help foster learning with their children.

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Increased accountability.

Drawing on the fact that in tertiary educational institutions, there exists some freedom, independence, and autonomy for the learners, participants raised the importance of using parental involvement as tool for holding the institution, lecturers, and the learners to a higher degree of accountability. Parent participant 3 were of the opinion that involving parents would be a positive factor as it would make their children more accountable. They said:

“It will have positive effect because then you’ll know what your child is up to at the college and you’ll be more aware of their examinations, their assessments, their projects that are due, and the moreover their marks they are attaining at the end of the day.” [PAR 3]

Learner participant 5’s statements agreed with that of parent participant 3. The learner believed that by virtue of parents being involved, the parent would be aware of their child’s academic endeavours. The knowledge of which can be used by the parent to question the accountability of the child in respect to their studies. They said:

“Yes, it will be a benefit because uh. A parent will be like informed that if a student doesn’t attend. Or maybe he’s doing naughty things. He like have the Information necessary rather than be surprised at the end of the year. How? Where are your results where you’d like lost? It will be like that the lecturers or the colleges is incompetent and it’s just that they don’t know.” [LNR 5]

Parent participant 2 also believed that this would increase the accountability level within the institution in respect of teaching and learning. The parent felt if they were allowed to be involved, it would allow them to query as to whether teaching and learning occurred. They remarked:

“It could have a positive effect, err, in the sense that. One would be able to check if there is anything that is happening or if any tuitions are being happening at the school so.” [PAR 2]

This point was also emotionally raised by learner participant 2 who felt that parents (if involved) would have the necessary power to change the status-quo of educational delivery in the TVET college. Furthermore, they believed if the parents were involved, then parents would be afforded a platform to report the non-attendance of lecturers. Learner participant 2 had the following to add:

“If parents are involved, parents can, can do some, some changes to our college, to our college like when teachers don’t come, don’t come to class. We can report to our parents and our parents come to college and they discuss it, why teacher not come to class because, we send our, our, our children to, to get knowledge there, but you don’t provide them.” [LNR 2]

Parent participant 5 was more direct in their answer and had the following to state:

“Well, I think it is going to be good huh. You know I mean if your father is checking up on you, you know you not going to mess around right. You won’t bunk classes and all that. You gona study, you gona do the work given to you.” [PAR 5]

Lecturers also indicated that involving parents and having regular parent meetings would protect their integrity and the integrity of the profession itself. Lecturer participant 1 believed that sometimes, learners did not give a true reflection and rather resorted to blaming lecturers instead. Lecturer participant 1 had the following to say:

“Some students, they, they, they go home. They go to their parents and blame the lecturers and blame the college kuthi [they tell their parents] I did not have my assessment because of Mr or Miss so and so was this and that, only to find that's not true.” [LEC 1]

Lecturer participant 1's argument was that there were two sides to every story and was of the opinion that should a learner's parents be involved, it would help to achieve that balance as evidenced by:

"You know, you know the truth is. When, when what our students, when they are here the college, they behave in a different way, than they are at home. So, the parents need to know how the students are when they're here. They need to know this. I think it's very important that we should meet we should meet with the parents and get them involved." [LEC 1]

Lecturer participant 4 concurred with lecturer participant 1 and highlighted a number of problem areas where, if there was parental involvement, such issues could be properly addressed. They said:

"We find we play a cat and mouse game with these students in the college. They don't want to come to class but they expect to pass at the end of the year, so if there is parental involvement then we can always highlight such problems, non-attendance, absenteeism, discipline, performance, all those factors, which contribute to the success, academic success of a student." [LEC 4]

Lecturer participant 5 highlighted an important point of the age and psychological maturity of young adolescents and how if parents were involved would hold these young learners to be more accountable with their perceived freedom and autonomy with the following remarks:

"And if you look at the caliber of students that we receive at the college. Most of them are minors. Err if there wasn't a college they should have been in school. So, they need that guidance from the lecturers as well as a parent. So, some of our students they come from far. They have that in their mind they are going to a tertiary institution, whereas they are not psychologically ready for a tertiary institution. There should be that transition for a learner from school to higher education. Ours they are still supposed to be in school so the transitioning from that level to higher education, it overwhelms them."

And when they come here, they do many things because they are overwhelmed by the idea ukuthti [that] I am not staying at home. I'm at college now, I have freedom, I'm not wearing a school uniform. Then, you know that overwhelms them. If there is that contact between a lecturer and a parent, it will assist.” [LEC 5]

According to Bae (2018), parents becoming more involved and motivated educators who work harder and strive for their learners' successes, are evident in those educational institutions that have mastered the art of having accountability systems. Additionally, Duman, Aydin, and Ozfidan (2018) discovered that educational institutions were able to hold learners and educators responsible to high standards because of the involvement of parents.

However, the researcher has noted that the participants' responses with regards to the benefits of parental involvement were rather limited. This study finds that this is overall, indicative of minimal involvement of parents in the TVET college in the study, resulting in stakeholders being unable to recognise and articulate more benefits other than those identified.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Ways in which parents are involved in their children's education at the TVET college.

The perception amongst learners and parents was that there was very little parental involvement in TVET colleges, owing to the adult status of the learners, which translates into an individual that exhibits greater accountability who is more adaptable, flexible, open, and individualistic. Therefore, it is quite natural to encounter a situation where parents become less involved as the learners should be responsible, young independent adults. However, when the ways in which parents are involved at the TVET college was investigated and unpacked by the researcher, it became apparent that parents were indeed involved in some ways. These findings are similar to Esau (2018), whose study demonstrated that parents played key roles and to a certain degree influenced their children's decisions to study at a TVET college.

It was discovered that parents are involved by having major influential decisions on their academic career, being emotionally available to talk, providing some sort of additional financial assistance, having high hopes for their children's futures, and being concerned about their children's education. The ways in which parents are involved in their children's education are discussed in the sub-themes below.

4.5.3.1 *Sub-theme 1: Family decisional influences.*

The findings of the study revealed that parents and in general, family members were quite influential in the decision for learners to attend the TVET college to study. When the researcher investigated the decision of how the children of the parent participants came to study at the TVET college in the study, four out of the five parents indicated that they had made the decision for their child. According to the information shared, because of the age of the learners, where they are still negotiating adulthood, these learners are guided and steered in a direction by parental wisdom.

These views were corroborated by the learner participants whose statements also indicated that their parents and or family members influenced their decision to come to the TVET college. Learner participants 6 and 12 respectively indicated that it was their parents who decided that they should enrol in the TVET college. They said:

"My mother." [LNR 6]

*"Grandmother because I repeat grade 11 and grade 12 and stay at home three years but 2015, I decided to meet grandmother to go to the college."
[LNR 12]*

Although the rest of the learner participants indicated that it was their decision to come and study at the TVET college, they also indicated that their family members had influenced their decision. Learner participant 5 indicated that their sibling advised them to come to this TVET college based on its geographical location in a small town, rather than to study in a larger city. They said:

“My elder sister told me that at least let me come to a small town rather than a big city like Joburg, [be]cause there are quite a lot of things in Joburg. [S]He said, let me come to Ladysmith. It's a peaceful town and there's a nice college. Clean town, so that's why I decided to come here.” [LNR 5]

Learner participant 8 shared that their parent was the primary source of encouragement for them to study at the college. They said:

“Yes, my mother was encouraging me to come to register in the college.” [LNR 8]

As the interviews continued, it was found that the participants' family's advice in relation to study was always taken into consideration. Learner participants 2, 4 and 11 respectively responded as follows:

“No, one of my sister's working there at dunlop. Yeah, and she told me that, 'there's a college there and it's, it's not far away from, from where I'm staying here. Yeah, you can find a room next to me and then start college.” [LNR 2]

“No, it's my mum only. She told me that I should come and study.” [LNR 4]

“Yes, my older sister. My older sister and my, my aunties.” [LNR 11]

In general, the literature is of the view that families should actively participate in making decisions about their children's education, and these families can be particularly effective in promoting inclusion. This corresponds with the literature findings by Gaffoor and Van Der Bijl (2019), Lutaaya (2017), Mahuyu and Makochekanwa (2020) and Powell and McGrath (2013), which revealed that some learners' enrolment decisions were influenced by parents and or grandparents. The findings confirmed that in some cases, parents directly made and facilitated the decision for their child to study at a TVET college, and in some cases, parents and the extended family members had greatly influenced and encouraged the decision for the learner to pursue an education at the TVET college under study.

4.5.3.2 *Sub-theme 2: Enrolment assistance.*

The findings of the study showed that parents were involved in and assisted to enrol their children at the start of the academic year. Lecturer participants stated that parents were mainly visible during the enrolment period of the academic year. Lecturer participants indicated that they had, had engagements and spoken with the parents of the learners that were in their classes. However, they reiterate the point that this occurred only during the start of the academic year during the registration/enrolment period. Lecturer participant 3 and 4 respectively had the following to share:

“We do see some parents during registration when they are bringing their students. Most of them we’ll only meet them at the beginning of the year if they happen to accompany them, their children during registration.” [LEC 3]

“During registration when the parent, parent brings his child and he needs some professional advice especially on the choice of course, on the advantages of a particular a course of study over the other.” [LEC 4]

Lecturer participant 2 highlighted another important dynamic facing the TVET college, where parents resided quite a distance from the TVET college under study and thus were only able to present themselves during registration. Lecturer participant 2 said:

“But in most cases like with my experience and with what I have identified when the parent is coming. Usually, the parent is coming from Durban or Joburg coming to drop off the student here and then the student is left to their own.” [LEC 2]

The sentiments expressed by lecturers were confirmed by parent participants, whereby some indicated that they were indeed active during the registration period. Parent participant 2 who was also one of the parents who earlier indicated that they made the decision for their child to study at the TVET college, said:

“When she went there to [register], almost all the courses were, were full. It's this the office admin that we found and she entered into it”. [PAR 2]

Further discussions with parent participant 5 revealed the lengths which the parent took to be able to enrol their child at the college, as evidenced by the comments made by said parent:

“I tried to enrol him at Ladysmith Secondary to complete his grade 11 and 12 because he was coming from the, from Pietermaritzburg and because we took him out mid-year to bring him back home, the public schools couldn't accept him mid-year, so the public school told me to take him to a FET.” [PAR 5]

According to Esau (2018), one of the easiest ways in which parents support their children at TVET colleges is during course enrolment. This was also confirmed by the responses of lecturer and parent participants in this study. The data from the interviews and focus group revealed that parents were quite involved and were even in attendance during learner enrolment at the beginning of the academic year. This is indicative of parents who wanted to be involved and were involved and concerned about their children's education and thus made time to assist their children during enrolment.

4.5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Financial assistance

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has played a crucial role in the funding of students at tertiary institutions in South Africa. All learner participants in the study acknowledged that they were recipients of the NSFAS bursary scheme. However, some of the learner participants resided far from their parent's homes, thus had had to rent accommodation, as accommodation was not provided by the college. When the researcher probed the learner participants to determine who was paying for their accommodations, some learner participants had the following to share:

“My parents and my sisters. Sometimes my, my parents give me some money and my sisters give me money.” [LNR 2]

“It's my uncle who pays for my accommodation.” [LNR 5]

Learner participant 7, whose familial home was in a neighbouring town which was more than a hundred kilometres away from the college, shared the following:

“Oh, my mother, my mother is funding my accommodation.” [LNR 7]

During the interview, learner participant 7 also indicated that after the interviews, they would travel back to their family home. When probed by the researcher to ascertain whom would be paying for their travelling expenses, learner participant 7 indicated it was their parent.

It was also discovered that some of the learner participants resided with their parents. Since the other learner participants rented accommodation, the monies paid through the bursary system would at sometimes be insufficient. Thus, there would not be enough money to provide for transport costs and these learners had to walk to college. They had to following to share:

“I'm walking, walking. Every day I need to stroll. Hayi, It's too far. And the taxi rank they cost 10 rand.” [LNR 2]

“Sometimes I, I walk. Sometimes when I have the money to get the transport, I go to the taxi rank and use taxi for transport.” [LNR 3]

“I take a walk. Cause it's too expensive. Having like a taxi fees. So, I try like save money.” [LNR 5]

“I'm walking because I err don't afford. I don't afford money for transport.” [LNR 9]

It is in cases such as those above where parents have had to step in to provide financial assistance, as the study found that some amongst the learner participants had to prioritise their financial expenses. Cases of parents providing financial assistance was also reported by learner participant 11 who although staying with a parent, the distances involved in travelling to and from college, carried with it travelling expenses, which their grandparent assisted with. They said:

“She [grandmother] do something to provide the food at home, then give me a money to go two days college every month.” [LNR 11]

It was revealed by learner participant 11 that although she stayed with a parent, she was a recipient of the NSFAS bursary and that their parent provided finance for her to travel to college as a result of inefficiencies within the NSFAS payment systems. They said:

“The other NSFAS, sometimes they not paying NSFAS in time. But grandmother, they take money to give me to go to the college.” [LNR 11]

Learner participant 3 indicated precisely how their parent was involved in ensuring that their basic needs were met so that they were able to receive an education.

“My father is helping me with rent. Yeah, with the rent. Yeah, with food.” [LNR 3]

Furthermore, they added:

“When I say, ‘you know dad the month is end now, it’s the end of the month. I have to pay rent and I don’t have money. So now is the end of the month. So, what must I do?’ He says ‘okay, I have R600’.” [LNR 3]

According to Yende (2021), this funding benefits many South African students from marginalised communities who enrol in regional public universities and public TVET institutes. Despite the low socio-economic status of some parents, they have had to provide financial assistance in addition to the financial assistance provided by the

bursary scheme given certain shortfalls. Data that emerged from the interview sessions with learners revealed that the economic situation of many learners resulted in parents and families becoming involved in providing financial and emotional support.

Demands for access to higher education without tuition fees point to, amongst other things, the potential existence of financial hurdles in higher education, and as such, the bursary scheme was simply unable to financially cover every single student, and also provide financial assistance for every aspect of the learners' life. Parents have had to assist with finances for rent, clothing, food and in some cases even electricity so that their children would be able to study. This is in line with Fingerman, Huo and Birditt (2020) who purported that there is evidence that young adults can prosper with financial assistance because of parental involvement, citing stronger coping skills and a higher possibility of achieving adult statuses like completing their studies.

4.5.3.4 *Sub-theme 4: Career aspirations.*

The expectations that parents' have for their children, in terms of their academics and a future career are an important consideration, and during the interviews it emerged that parents envisaged a future for their children wherein they used their educational qualification to pursue a career thereby resulting in a change in their socio-economic status. This is evidenced by the comments of parent participant 4 who had the following to say:

“Uhm, ah also I as a parent I, I, maybe because I haven't achieved much in my life. I, I, I, I try to push my children to take that one step further and try to be successful.” [PAR 4]

When parent participants were asked if they had any specific careers or career aspirations and goals for their children, they mentioned that:

“I'm hoping that as she finishes off then she'd be able to further her studies because it was one of her wishes to go to a tertiary institution after matric, but

then it couldn't happen, so I'm hoping that after this there will be something different.” [PAR 2]

“Well, at the moment he's studying tourism which I like for him too. In fact, tour the world. With this, with this knowledge of his, you know, that is why I got him into tourism. It's one of the one of the careers now that you know that is worldwide and he can go anywhere with he. With this, with tourism.” [PAR 3]

“Right now, I just need him to complete this three years.” [PAR 4]

“Yeah, yeah, I mean, I really only spoke like why being in this. Uh, he likes animals, he could work with animals, he could work in like in the airports, you know in the planes or whatever.” [PAR 5]

The data that emerged is that parents always seek what was the best for their children based sometimes on their own occurrences. This is in line with Mbatha (2018) who contends that parents possess what is termed aspirational capital. According to Mbatha (2018:22) “aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hope and dreams for the future, even in the force of real perceived barriers”.

Learner participants also realised the potential that education had for their dreams. When learner participants were asked whether their parents had any career goals and aspirations for them, they answered in the affirmative. Learner participants had the following to say:

“Yes. Being a nurse.” [LNR 1]

“They wanted me to be educated and, and, and differing from them because they are not educated as they are born in those days.” [LNR 2]

“OK, growing up as a kid I used to like swing my grandparents and always talk about my dreams of what I want to do for them. So my mother didn't have the opportunity to tell me what she wants from me because I already shoulder

that I want to do this so she said to me you can just dream. Whatever you want to dream. Go for anything you want to go.” [LNR 6]

“My mom was really wishing that maybe one day I may become a nurse or a pilot.” [LNR 9]

“Yes, when I grow up, they wanted me to be a teacher.” [LNR 10]

“To have a job, my receptionist or office to work. And changing my life and others, my sisters.” [LNR 11]

What was also evident was that these aspirations were deeply entrenched in the minds of learners. Which also shows that parents had conveyed these aspirations thus making learners want to achieve more, as evidenced by learner participant 3 and 5 respectively. They said:

“Yeah, my father, he was like. When I was young, he used to say you must becoming [an] engineer.” [LNR 3]

“Yeah, she did at once. She like wanted me to be a doctor. She's like an old school lady. It was either you a teacher, a doctor, policeman.” [LNR 5]

Learner participants 3 and 5 respectively concluded with the following:

“Like you know, I want something that I can do which will give me money and then like so two things and then have that savings and then maybe living.” [LNR 3]

“I decided to come study at the college 'cause I once had a piece job so. So that piece job like. We earn small money so like even like I can maybe change my life and do something. Maybe I can like. Have a better job than in the previous one, so I decided to come to the college.” [LNR 5]

What the data revealed is that both the learner's and their parents or legal guardians had aspirational capital, which puts them in an excellent position to take advantage of educational opportunities offered at the TVET college. This is in-line with Owusu, Owusu, Fiorgbor and Atakora, (2021), who contends that previous research conducted by Knowles (1998), Marjoribanks, (1997); Smith, (1991), and Wilson and Wilson (1992), found that a major factor in young adults' career choices, are influences from their parents.

4.5.3.5 *Sub-theme 5: Concerned engagement.*

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 validated that parents are genuinely concerned about the well-being of their children especially when it comes to their educational futures. During the interviews, it emerged that although some of the learners' parents did not reside in the same vicinity as their children, they did not forego their nurturing responsibilities and actively enquired about their children's education. This is evidenced by the following remarks by learners:

"Yeah, because they, they were asking me, 'why you always say you are learning, learning, learning, learning.' They want to see like a, they want the school to call them, like this school call him, 'hey come graduation day', and then say, 'oh, oh, yeah this is what he was always learning.'" [LNR 3]

"Oh yeah, they do and ask for the report." [LNR 4]

"I study on my own but she always asks me about my subjects and everything that I do at school." [LNR 6]

"Because they ask me that report every year. My marks every year. So, they are pretty involved." [LNR 10]

"They, they ask me, they ask me if I'm doing well, they want to see the progress report. If I'm struggling somewhere, they see if they can help me." [LNR 7]

Learner participant 7 furthermore had the following to add:

“She just asks me verbally. ‘How is your college examinations going or your results?’ I was like, ‘oh they good they sharp’. And it’s like, okay, I think she trusts me. Yeah, that’s how it goes.” [LNR 7]

Learner participants revealed that their parents were always requesting an indication of their academic progress either verbally or through the progress report. This once again is indicative of parents that were genuinely concerned regarding the educational futures of their children. This study’s participants’ responses on this matter are in line with Goodall (2018:2) who asserts that, “parental engagement with their children’s learning can have beneficial effects on behaviour, attendance, and outcomes”.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college.

It became apparent from the interview data that involving parents in the TVET college is not as streamlined and functional as it is in the schooling system. In fact, the findings of this study revealed that involving parents in a higher education institution like a TVET college is somewhat complex, owing to a plethora of challenges some of which are expected and some which are unique to TVET colleges. These factors are discussed below.

4.5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Lack of communication.

From the interviews, it became clear that by far, the biggest barrier facing parents being involved in the TVET college is a lack of clear and direct communication. When parent participants were asked if they were satisfied in the way the TVET college communicated with them, all answered in the negative. The same question was posed to learners to ascertain if the college communicated with their parents and similarly, all the learners responded negatively.

In terms of parents themselves, parent participant 3 had the following to add:

“No, uh, I would like them to in fact give me a call maybe or even an email. Regarding my child’s, you know status in the college and really what’s his what. What they are up to in the college, what they’re doing, when they are supposed to come, you know, yeah.” [PAR 3]

Parent participant 2 indicated that the college had never communicated with her. The parent revealed that communication only occurred through the child and not directly with her. The parent expressed some surprise at this, and indirectly questioned why the TVET college required parent details when enrolling a learner. She said:

“Nothing, I’m not informed except that I hear, I only hear from her, to say I’ve passed. I got this, there’s nothing that I’m getting from the college, even though when registering there are our addresses, telephone numbers, emails, and all that. But at no stage since she’s been with the college that I have been contacted.” [PAR 2]

Parent participant 2 raised an important issue, that there were no communication channels that parents could use if there was a need to raise important issues by adding that:

“Worse with parents when there are things that you are noticing that are happening in the college, there is no platform whereby as a parent you can come and voice out to say this and that is happening. We just keep quiet and look at it and are complaining as we see.” [PAR 2]

Parent participants 4 and 1 respectively also indicated that the college was not communicating with them.

“No, the college is not communicating with me.” [PAR 1], [PAR 4]

When probed as to how the parent would like to be communicated with, parent participant 1 had the following to add:

“Maybe by a phone call or something.” [PAR 1]

Learners also believed that there was a lack of communication from the college in informing their parents. Learner participant 3 indicated that their parent was not being communicated with, and that the learner was the one who provided all important information to their parent. Furthermore, learner participant 3 highlighted the perception of some of the participant parents in respect of the validity of the information the college are provided to parents. Learner participant 3 had the following to say:

“Like maybe I can say that it's like he is not being informed. He, he is informed by us telling them so, he can think that this one's playing with me. He's not telling me the truth.” [LNR 3]

Learner participant 2 also indicated that their parents were not being informed and were not aware of important information and happenings at the college. They indicated that instead, they as learners were the in-between messenger as a result of the negative communication that existed when they said:

“Yes, because my parents, even now they don't know how what is going on in the college. Its, me only who tell them what is going on.” [LNR 2]

To drive home their viewpoint, learner participant 2 provided an in-depth explanation of why they felt there was indeed a lack of communication between the institution and their parents. They felt that their parents were not communicated with by the college especially on important matters such as the academic calendar amongst others. They said:

“You see as I'm studying here, my college they don't know nothing about my, my, my parents. My parents they know nothing about my college. Yes. What I'm trying to say is. My parents they should have some, some, some involvement. Like, as I say that they don't know even if we have a holiday here. How [I] will attend class and what time we spend here at college per day. So many things they should know about the college.” [LNR 2]

When the researcher sought to determine if lecturers had ever communicated with parents, three (3) out of the five (5) lecturer participants responded in the negative. Lecturer participant 1, indicated that it had been over a decade since they had ever communicated with a parent. Lecturer participants 1 and 4 respectively had the following to add:

"It's more than 11 years now with me and I've never." [LEC 1]

"Err with me, I think during the course of the year I would say I haven't." [LEC 4]

Lecturer participants 3 and 5 respectively indicated that they had communicated with parents. However, what was noted is the manner in which the communication originated. In this case, it was the parents which had contacted the lecturers as those parents wanted to enquire about their children and not the other way around. This suggests that had the particular parents not formally requested to speak with the lecturers concerned, regarding their children, it can be presumed that the lecturers would not have communicated with those parents. This is evidenced by:

"On my part, I have but it was when you remember I said that I would have extra classes with the level 2's and I'll take them on the weekend and bring them to college on the weekend, maybe from 8 to 11 or 8 to 12 and then parents would want to confirm if the student is telling the truth by saying that. Of course yes there will be classes, so I will, I'll get contacted by different parents who are confirming if that is the case or not." [LEC 3]

"Err, I've only had one encounter with the parent for one student, which was unplanned. The parent was pop in. It was a concern about the student marks when we were giving out progress reports. The concern was one assessment. Then the parent approached me and I had to produce the document and explain to the parent that kuthi, the learner did not write." [LEC 5]

According to Mbatha (2018), for educational institutions to aid students in achieving their educational goals, parents and the institutions are expected to interact frequently. The comments from the parent and lecturer participants are indicative that the lack of communication exacerbates situations, which could have been remedied earlier on had there been a sufficient two-way communication. This argument is further strengthened by the response of parent participant 3, who when probed to ascertain what they believed was the causative factor preventing them from being involved, they remarked:

“The lack of communication. The lack of communication between parents and the college.” [PAR 3]

Parent participant 4 also agreed and shared a similar sentiment as evidenced by:

“I think lack of communication from the college itself in reaching me directly as a parent, because the college has my contact details.” [PAR 4]

One of the theoretical frameworks on which the study was underpinned emphasises the need for communication for a functional relationship between the educational institution and families (Epstein, 1987, 1996, 2009). Interviews revealed that with all three categories of participants in the study, there existed a common barrier that there was a lack of communication from the TVET college. Even though they would be willing to participate, the lack of communication made parents seem unsure if they were wanted as meaningful educational partners. This resulted in them refraining from being involved unless dire situations manifested, requiring parental involvement and or intervention. This correlates with research by Nzembe (2019) who contends that parents in TVET colleges are by far and large excluded in important communication.

4.5.4.2 *Sub-theme 2: Lack of opportunity.*

In addition to the lack of communication, all three categories of participants indicated that the TVET college simply did not provide any opportunities for parents to be

involved. When parents were asked to elaborate if they had had any involvement with the TVET college, parent participant 3 had the following to say:

“We’re not involved at all, except when there, when we have a problem with the, with the subject or assessment or whatever it is.” [PAR 3]

The data provided by the parent indicated a reactive approach as the parent felt the only time parents became involved was when there was a problem with academics or student behaviour and discipline. This is opposed to a proactive approach to involving parents, exhibited by the college, with parents citing a lack of opportunities for them to become involved. With regards to this matter, parent participant 2 had the following to add:

“Err, I think there’s no platform that has been created for parents to be, to participate in the TVET. If there were any, then one would be able to participate and contribute.” [PAR 2]

It also became evident that learner participants acknowledged that there were no opportunities for their parents to become involved. Learner participant 2 shared the following:

“Hmmm, I don’t think. There’s no opportunities here.” [LNR 2]

Learner participant 8 mentioned that the college did not provide for parents to meet with lecturers where they felt that parents would be given an opportunity to discuss the progress of learning. They said:

“It’s that the college they, didn’t, they don’t called parents for meetings and discuss how they their students, do at college or participation, participating in the school so they are found information from us, not from the college.” [LNR 8]

Learner participant 7 in particular, highlighted both curricula and extra-curricular activities where the parents of learners were not provided with an opportunity for involvement. They said:

“Because there's nothing in this college that involved my mother. There's nothing like doing nothing. Even if there's sports, they doesn't involve parents. Even there's the reports, there's no parents. There's no nothing if, if I'm lacking or I have, I failed another subject. They don't ask my parents. It's only me and my decision. There's nothing in this college that involve my mother at all.” [LNR 7]

This viewpoint was also reiterated by learner participant 6 who indicated that the TVET college did not have parents' meetings, which is something that the learner expected to occur, given that they were in their final year of study. They remarked:

“At this time, I've been a student here for two years now. I like, I have never heard that there's going to be a parent meeting like parents are going to be at school discussing the future of the students, of their kids with the with the lecturers. I've never heard that before. So, we, they are not involved.” [LNR 6]

The views presented by lecturers were also in agreement with that expressed of learners and parents. Lecturer participant 2 again highlighted that parents were only seen to be at the college during enrolment. This is what they had to say:

“The college does not provide opportunities for the parents to be involved. There isn't because the only time we are seeing the parents is during registration.” [LEC 2]

From the comments by parents, learners, and lecturers, it is evident that the TVET college limited opportunities for parents to be involved. These views concur with Cavendish and Connor (2018) who assert that research studies have shown that parents still perceive difficulties with participation. According to Cavendish and Connor, the inability to provide opportunity for input, communication problems, and

a lack of a strengths-based approach by an educational institution in instructional planning are amongst some of impediments hampering parental involvement. The data revealed that the only time a parent became involved was when a situation arose where the parents' intervention was required. For example, when a learner had failed and was unable to write an examination or progress to the next level. As parent participants have alluded, this was usually 'too little, too late'. By virtue of the fact that the TVET college in the study was a community college serving a predominantly rural area, this negatively impacted both learners and parents.

4.5.4.3 *Sub-theme 3: Distance.*

The TVET college investigated during the study was in a semi-rural area and predominantly served a catchment area (for cohorts) that was predominantly rural. The data from the interviews revealed that learners had had to travel from far distances to attend the college, with some learners travelling distances more than one hundred kilometres (100kms) from their homes. Coupled with the socio-economic status of parents from rural areas, the physical distances involved placed a hindrance on parents being involved with the college. Learner participant 1 indicated, that the physical distance of their hometown was preventing their parents from being involved in their education at the college. The learner believed that their parents would not be in any position to travel from their hometown to where their child studied. They had the following to say:

“They are staying at Greytown, Greytown, yes. Yes, it’s too far. I can say it’s because they are far away from, from, from Ladysmith and also if they like to, they can’t always travel to come here and they can pass just to be involved in my studies.” [LNR 1]

This view was repeated by learner participant 2 who highlighted the point that the distances had a cascading effect on time and financial costs. They were of the opinion that even if the TVET college in the study were to involve their parents, they could not envisage their parents participating, as the distance that their parents would have to travel was approximately one hundred and sixty kilometres away. Learner participant 2 felt that the costs involved in their parents having to come to

the college would not be of benefit in lieu of time constraints. To illustrate their argument the learner stated:

“You know we are coming from different places, are far from here. If my parents are involved, I make [an] example. If my parents are involved maybe let’s say there will be school meeting here. They can’t come from there Kranskop and travel all alone to attend the meeting here of maybe of three hours or two hours and going there. A waste of money that.” [LNR 2]

During the interviews, learner participant 3 revealed that they always asked their parent to come and visit and see where they studied, but the distance and financial cost implication placed a huge burden on their parent. They remarked:

“One of the days [my father] says to me that if I can think that, when he, when he arrived at home, how much to go to Johannesburg and come back here.” [LNR 3]

Learner participants 5 and 9 respectively who were also from other towns also shared the same view, and had the following to say:

“So, since, like the distance, either from Estcourt others from Maritzburg, it’ll be like a, a difficult for like involvement of parents.” [LNR 5]

“Ah, it’s too far. My mom is staying too far from where I am studying. I think she’ll not afford to always come, go back. I don’t think she would afford to do that.” [LNR 9]

Distance as a factor was also discovered during the focus group with lecturers. Lecturer participant 5 highlighted the fact that many learners left their parents homes to reside in alternative accommodation which were in close proximity to the college. Therefore, the lecturer felt that parents of such learners would experiences challenges in involvement. The lecturer said:

“You find it difficult we don’t do it, involving the parents because like I said before most of them, they not staying with their parents. They are renting somewhere.” [LEC 5]

Lecturer participant 3 also believed that the parents of learners who resided in deep rural areas in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, for example, may not be able to attend parents’ meetings owing to the complexities of access to transportation. They further added:

“Considering, also the distance that we have students from Msinga, we have students from Vryheid, you know. Even though there are those from that there Mtashana, but we’ve got students from Bergville and stuff. So, if you are talking about having a formal meeting with the parents, it becomes complicated because of the traveling that is required.” [LEC 3]

Both learner and lecturer participants indicated that learners and their parents had to deal with the factor of distance as many learners and their parents were from other towns or from rural communities. This is in line with research conducted by Lowe and Dotterer (2018), who found that distance is a factor during the transition to college to meet the specific developmental requirements of developing adults. The data gathered revealed that some parents resided in areas whereby it would take them a three-to-four-hour commute to get to the TVET college. This was also exacerbated by the fact that the learners and their parents used public transport, which did not necessarily afford them an opportunity for convenient travel to the college and back.

4.5.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Occupational constraints.

Findings of this study revealed that the time available to parents to attend to educational matter of their children was limited due to their occupations. There exists a cascading effect in that parents must prioritise their time based on importance, which in this case results in, earning a living taking on a higher level of importance and ultimately precedence. This is evidenced by the following remarks by parent participant 1 who had the following comments:

“My side, I’m always busy. I’m a busy man. I’m always at my job.” [PAR 1]

This was also evidenced by the views presented by learner participant 3 who, with regards to his parent said:

“I would have so much difficulties because then he [parent] will say I can’t be there. I’m busy and you know other things.” [LNR 3]

“He say, ai I don’t have time.” [LNR 3]

When probed by the researcher as to what they believed was the reason his parent was unable to attend, the learner concluded:

“It’s his job.” [LNR 3]

Learner participant 6 indicated that it would be improbable that their parent would be able to be involved given the parent’s occupation, and the long hours worked by the parent, as evidenced by:

“You can say her job is. First things first here it’s her job. Her job is like. She works from six, six to six actually. Every day for, for, for, for 8 days and she’s off for like 4, 4 days and that’s it. So that means if maybe there’s a there’s a meeting in a particular day, but she has to go to work.” [LNR 6]

During the interview with learner participant 5 it emerged that their sole parent was an informal trader. For this learner participant, such meant that they also could not foresee their parent really being involved due to the unstable nature of the parent’s employment. Learner 5 said:

“It’s that even my mom is like trying to make a living for me to live better ‘cause she’s like a businesswoman. She’s trying to make means end and pay rent pay for rates. So that’s like a, a small chance for her to be involved.” [LNR 5]

The same viewpoint was presented by learner participant 4, that their parent was only available on the weekends, at a time when the TVET colleges were closed. They said:

“Like my mum is always working. When she is available on the weekends, then colleges are not available on the weekend.” [LNR 4]

Lecturer participant 2 also highlighted the same concern that it would be difficult for parents or for the extended family members to be involved, given work commitments they were involved in, when they said:

“Yeah, and while we on that also, we must be mindful of the backgrounds that our students come from. Most of them are not coming from two parent homes, some are living with their grannies, their sisters, their brothers and because of financial situations and stuff like that. If we say we want to have a parent meeting with their, I'm just giving an example the sister. The sister has other commitments to do. You cannot take off from work to pitch up for a meeting.” [LEC 2]

The data revealed that with some parents, there exists a work-family conflict due to their socio-economic status. These views are in line with Ntekane (2018) who said some parents have had to find employment in much larger towns and cities. In some cases, parents are even having to work multiple occupations to be able to send money back home to the rest of the family. Ntekane's view, which also resonated with the views of the participants was that parents have had to prioritise employment, given their socio-economic status, resulting in a lack of time to become involved in their children's education.

4.5.4.5 *Sub-theme 5: Generational differences.*

Findings of this study also revealed that another factor preventing parents from being involved in the TVET college were a result of the generation gap that existed between the parents and their children. These differences manifest themselves due to the age

and educational level of the parents. Parent participant 5 for example indicated that their old age and its accompanying health related complexities were a factor which they felt would impede the degree to which they could be involved. The parent participant felt that due to their health, they preferred to be near their residence, unless there were errands which were compulsory. This is evidenced by:

“I think maybe it's my age because I don't go out a lot you know. So, I just go as far as AK's [a shopping centre] and back, groceries and back.” [PAR 5]

Age as a factor was also reported by learner participants 2 and 10 respectively. They stated:

“Hmmm, I don't think. They are too old my parents.” [LNR 2]

“Yes, because my parents are too old. They do not have time.” [LNR 10]

The data also revealed that parents' understanding of current academia could also present challenges. Learner participants 2 and 5 respectively felt that their parent(s) would not be able to comprehend the functioning of the educational institution and education related matters when they said:

“Because even now they don't know how what, what, what subject you should do, or stream like commerce or science at school to become educated.” [LNR 2]

“Cause she like don't understand, the settings of the college, the setting. Like maybe I will tell her I qualify and she's like, 'okay, what's that'. 'Okay, so when you write all your marks, all your assignment, assessment, they put it together and you must qualify'. Like every time I must explain to her what's happening doing this, doing that.” [LNR 5]

Lecturer participant 5 also shared the same notion and ascribed these to the level of literacy that existed in rural areas in the province. The lecturer felt that in most rural areas experienced literacy and language barriers, which would present a challenge

to how much these parents could be engaged with. However, the lecturer also felt that this challenge was something that could be overcome and suggests that even lecturers themselves should be agents of change in this regard. They had the following to say:

“Our catchment area, where we are fishing our students from, most of them are coming from deep rural areas. The level of literacy with the guardians is very low. And then, when coming from those backgrounds, it’s kind of difficult for parents to do a follow-up in their children’s education. But we are not saying it cannot be done. There should be some sort of awareness with those Gogo’s or Mkhulu’s. You know, come, and visit the school. Even if you cannot read, come, and say hello or check with the senior lecturer, kuthi is my child still attending school, is everything fine. You know what I’m trying to say is the background might also be contributing slightly, because if most of them are from rural, illiterate backgrounds, we might find it difficult, even if we try ourselves.” [LEC 5]

Lecturer participant 3 had the same to say and raised the point that the low level of parental education becomes more apparent in courses that involved science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The lecturer felt that in courses like *Information Technology* and *Engineering*, parents might struggle to understand technical jargon and scientific concepts. They said:

“If you look at the pool of the students that we attract at the college, if we believe as the government is funding students at the college that they are coming from the poor backgrounds and whatever. It may simply mean that they are not coming from the background where you will find that there will be people who are well equipped to assist them in terms of the content of what we’re teaching here. So, when a student goes back home, he’s the first one to learn I.T [Information Technology], he is the first one to talk about whatever it is that you talk about in I.T. So that, that level of involvement of the parent will be limited in any way because you know we, we are talking about new things that she’s the first to know within the family and stuff.” [LEC 3]

The comments made by learner and lecturer participants revealed that the differences in age, education and language were all factors that hampered parents from becoming involved in the TVET college. This data is consistent with the findings by Hornby and Blackwell (2018) who found that a parents' own educational level and negative experience of schooling are shown to be barriers to parental involvement. Lecturer participants also drew attention to the fact that TVET colleges offer courses and curricula that a parent may not be familiar with and as such may experience difficulties.

4.5.4.6 *Sub-theme 6: Bursary as a contributing factor.*

Parent and lecturer participants emphasised that the bursary allowance was also a significant contributor to the non-participation of parents in the TVET college. It has been alluded to that all learner participants were part of the bursary scheme, which provided financial assistance for the learners' tuition and other related expenses. The argument made by lecturer participant 2 is that when parents are the only entity that is financially responsible for a child's education, parents show a greater level of concern and involvement. They had the following to say:

"Yeah, like going back to when we were studying. Umm, we had to, we were accountable for our studies. Our parents wanted, they were paying for the study, so they wanted to know, what was your progress in school and in college and university." [LEC 2]

Parent participant 2 shared this perception and cited that as soon as learners received their bursary money, they stopped attending their classes. They said:

"I think that could help the college, because what I've noticed in most cases with TVET colleges, we find that students register at the beginning of the year once they have, they get paid their NSFAS and all that, they sit back and they move out." [PAR 2]

The same contention was put forward by lecturer participant 3, who felt that parents displayed a nonchalant attitude simply because it was not their money being used to educate their children. The lecturer felt that if parents had a vested financial interest in their children's education or progress, parents would anticipate feedback on the progress of their children. However, given that the bursary covered that aspect, the lecturer participant felt that parents displayed reluctance in becoming involved. They had the following sentiments:

“The mere fact that the students are being paid for by NSFAS is also a cause from the side of the parents’ reluctance to maybe get involved. Or the inactive part, to play an inactive part, because you are not really forking money from your own pocket. For parents who are paying for the students it becomes an issue not to know how your student is performing, how your child is performing, because you know the money comes straight from your pocket. So, the fact that they’re being paid for by the government and stuff it’s like they’re not really wasting money, because it’s not from their actual parents’ pocket, you know it is a contributing factor, quite a lot.” [LEC 3]

Generally, the literature has lauded the government and DHET in providing a bursary to learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. According to Wildschut, Rogan and Mncwango (2020:1) “NSFAS’ core intent is to support those students who cannot afford higher education, to create more equitable opportunities and access, as well as to shift the inherited skewed racial profile of higher education participation”. However, this study also revealed that the bursary system itself presents a challenge to PI. Looking at the participants’ remarks, it is clear that the bursary plays a significant role in a parents’ lack of involvement. Mathevula (2022) concurs with this view as they found that the bursary also affects teaching and learning. In Mathevula’s study, it was also revealed that bursary payments are made directly into a learner’s bank account, and once the learner receives the lump sum, they simply dropout. The findings of this study were that since parents were not directly responsible for tuition fees, there existed a nonchalant attitude on their side. This is also compounded by the fact that these bursary payments are made directly to learners, and parents are not notified in lieu of this.

4.5.4.7 Sub-theme 7: Learners as parents.

From the focus group interview with lecturers, it emerged that some learners that were enrolled in the TVET college could be classified as adults and parents themselves. Lecturer participant 3 attributed this to the adult nature of learners that were in the TVET college sphere, given that the TVET college was an institute of higher learning. To strengthen their argument, lecturer participant 3 raised the point that there were learners who were formally employed but were also studying at the college. Their view was that in a case where a learner was employed and was above the age of eighteen, it stands to reason that they are independent and thus if the college were to have a meeting with parents, it would be unreasonable to expect the student to bring their parent. They said:

“It’s because of this broader scope of when you say student. My wife could be registered who’s working somewhere and be a student. So, when you put them put them all together in one basket are you going to say if maybe if Mrs [Lecturer Participant 2] is registered here doing computer practice, N4 or N6. When you want to put together a parents meeting, are you going to expect her to bring a parent here?” [LEC 3]

The viewpoint that when a person reaches the age of eighteen years, they are viewed as an adult and independent was also raised by lecturer participant 4 and learner participant 7 respectively, as evidenced by the following statements:

“They are over eighteen they stand on their own, signing of documents they do on their own.” [LEC 4]

“I know when you’re 18 you think you have the right. You sign for everything, right. You have, legally you’re, you’re older to do something for yourself like signatures or doing something like that.” [LNR 7]

Lecturer participant 3 reiterated their argument that it was a challenge to involve parents especially given that there was somewhat of a grey area where-in learners could also be classified as parents. They said:

“Because now, when students register at the beginning of the year, if they are above twenty-one, we don’t need consent and signing of the parent and whatever, so they simply submit their own details. So, you send a message and invite for a parents meeting it is received by the very same student who’s supposed to bring a parent here.” [LEC 3]

Lecturer participant 1 concurred with lecturer participant 3 and had the following to mention:

“The people we are dealing with at the college at the TVET, they are. They are old enough to be parents themselves. So, you see it, it will be a challenge again to say hey, let us call the parents. And you tell the student, you give it to them a letter to call their parents. Then the students say I am a parent myself. So, if you call the parent, you calling me. You understand.” [LEC 1]

According to Statistics South Africa (STATSSA, 2017), during the 2016 academic year, 8.3% of all TVET learner enrolments in the National Certificate Vocational (NCV(V) programme were in the age category of thirty-five (35) and older. This, translates into a figure of more than fifty thousand who can conclusively be categorised as being in middle adulthood which, is suggestive of adults who can also be classified as being both a learner and a parent. During the interviews, lecturers alluded that there were instances where learners were old enough to be classified as parent themselves, based either on age or because these learners have offspring. The study discovered that this created confusion and a conflict of interest as such learners could also be regarded as parents.

4.5.5 Theme 5: Interventions that can be used to overcome barriers to parental involvement.

Parents and institutions alike would be able to see the value of being active in their children's education and the potential benefits that may follow if appropriate measures for fostering parental involvement were used. With an overall aim to improve parental involvement in the TVET college under study, participants

recommended the use of the following strategies: conducting parent meetings, facilitating communication, conducting open days, and requiring parents to acknowledge receipt of progress reports.

4.5.5.1 *Sub-theme 1: Parents meetings*

The interviews with all three categories of participants revealed an overarching strategy that the TVET college should have regular parents' meetings. It was common knowledge however that the TVET college in the study did not have such meetings. Parent participant 1 said:

“By the meetings, I'm sure. Yeah, they need to.” [PAR 1]

This opinion was also concurred with by parent participant 2 who felt that it would be important to include parents in the functioning of the institution. Parent participant 2 felt that as a parent who had a vested interest in the institution, due to their child attending, they would be able to understand some of the challenges facing the college as well as being able to assist and contribute to the institution. They said that:

“Parents can say like we would like to have an open parent meeting or whatever. So that we get an understanding what are the challenges that the college is having? What is it that we can contribute toward the college improvement? I think that those things would assist a lot.” [PAR 2]

When the researcher probed the parent participant to investigate which entity should begin to initiate this process, the parent believed it was the responsibility of both parties. However, the parent also believed that the college should extend an olive branch and send an invitation to parents. Parent participant 2 responded as follows:

“I think. It's intertwined, even though it's much difficult, but I think the TVET should bring that academic involvement of the parents through the college because we, as much as I understand that the colleges have the board members. But anyway, mostly you find that board members are not parents

to the kids that are in the college and therefore it takes time for your parents to know what is happening with the child, studies and all that or the happenings in the college.” [PAR 2]

Learner participant 8 also felt that the college needed to not only introduce parent meetings but these meetings needed to occur on a regular basis so that parents would be well informed of their child’s academic progress. They said:

“College must maybe every term. In the term they must call parent, parent there like they must have meeting so that we can, that parent can see how are we doing so far.” [LNR 8]

Learner participant 10 also felt that this strategy should be employed in a much more regular interval, in addition to the meeting encompassing the governing body of the TVET college as evidenced by:

“Maybe they can call a meeting week by week for a governing body just to update parents about their performance of their children's here.” [LNR 10]

Parent participant 3 also suggested the same strategy, which the researcher believes was informed by her frustration, owing to a lack of information and communication from the side of the college. The parent explained:

“Well, we could have teacher parent, teacher parent or teacher lecturer meeting. Uh, we could be more involved in, you know, with our child. If a child is lacking in the, in the college, could be, umm, I'm going to say be informed of the child's lack of you know his academic progress or whatever even if he has no like if, if he's not done a subject or hasn't handed in a project, or an assessment or missed, a test then a parent should be notified, because sometimes parents are not notified.” [PAR 3]

Parent participant 3 felt that rather than waiting for some dire consequences to occur, parents should also be called to meetings when learners were frequently absent or had missed important assessments. Parent participant 5 believed the college was in

a position to be able to have parents' meetings at least twice in the academic year given that it had registration and enrolment process that unfolded twice in an academic year. They said:

"I think, yeah, I think they should have a meeting. Maybe you know twice a year or something to involve parents. Call up a parent meeting, you know? Surely, they, they can do that." [PAR 5]

Learner participant 2 also believed that the suggested parents' meetings were crucial and an inductive part of any academic calendar and should be held at both the start and the end of the year. They suggested that:

"If, if like when we going to end of the year like maybe we should have parents meeting, and even if we you know if we going to start a whole school open again, yeah, they should be some meetings. And school government bodies together with SRC. They can do something together." [LNR 2]

Learner participant 4 also concurred with other participants and inadvertently revealed why the involving parents was of importance. They said:

"I think the college should have parent meetings maybe once a month. Or every after two months. and they, they, they, they, they should call the, the parents to see our academic performance is because we, we don't show them either." [LNR 4]

Learner participant 1 also had the same suggestion, however they were concerned about how their parents would be able to attend. The suggestion made by learner participant 1 was that in addition to hosting a parents meeting, the college should, where possible, assist with transportation in some way for parents who resided further from the college. They said:

"In my way I can say that the campus maybe can, as we are having parents far away from us, maybe they can meaning to have a transport just to fetch them and come here in the campus just to attend." [LNR 1]

The data revealed that all participants agreed that it would be prudent for the college to start having parents' meetings. This strategy is in line with research by Muleya and Mupeta (2019) at a university in Zambia. Their research suggested the use of bi-annual consultative meetings with parents and the institution, for reflection on challenges and successes, discussing aspects for the future and best practices that the institution should consider in order to meet the continually changing needs to society. It was mentioned by the participants in this study that this strategy would be of a benefit to both the institution and the learner, in matters related to academic performance and attendance.

Furthermore, this strategy can also take on the form postulated by the fifth type of parental involvement in Epstein's (1987, 1996, 2009) typology of parental involvement, which is one of the theoretical frameworks used in this study. According to the framework, type five refers to decision making, which posits that educational institutions facilitate the establishment of parent-lecturer associations or committees to help with the facilitation of parental involvement at the college.

4.5.5.2 *Sub-theme 2: Communication channels.*

As alluded to previously, the data from the interviews identified a lack of communication as one barrier that impeded parental involvement. The literature study has also revealed the consequences of educational institutions having insufficient communication with parents. Participant data revealed the view that the TVET college should attempt to establish effective communication with stakeholders. Participants suggested a number of ways they believed the college should try in order to open the channels of communication.

Parent participant 2 suggested that the college should at least once a term phone parents to provide a short up-to-date review of their child's status in the college. They said:

“To get yes, maybe if they can. no we, we not saying to call us almost every day. So yes, maybe once a term because we understand it's a college. Maybe once a term to review to see an all that is happening.” [PAR 2]

As interviews continued, it became evident that learner participants shared the same view. The response by learner participant 6 indicated that they suggested the college made use of electronic and telephonic communication to inform parents of important information such as meetings and the release of progress reports which suggests the importance they placed on regular and open communication as evidenced by:

“I think taking the numbers of parents so that maybe if there's something that they want to do at the college, maybe. Uh, there's a meeting, they can inform them, or maybe if. The progress reports are coming out. They can maybe send like an email to them. Showing them how the student is progressing and everything, so yeah.” [LNR 6]

Parent participant 4 suggested the use of the WhatsApp messenger platform to communicate with parents. The parent was of the opinion that there had been more communication between educators and parents in recent years, thanks to the increased usage of new media and information technologies such as WhatsApp and the D6 communicator. Parent participant 4 highlighted the use of these technologies in mainstream schools and pointed out its effectiveness. She said:

“I think you should have that, that WhatsApp group. I mean, the primary schools have it and the high schools have it. The WhatsApp group does help, also with the communication.” [PAR 4]

Using new media technologies to communicate with parents was also suggested by lecturer participant 1. The lecturer suggested the use of local and community media resources such as radio stations and community newspapers, given that these had a far greater audience and would be able to access areas where the college could not. They said:

“We can also use the local radio stations to communicate. The college can communicate with the parents using the local radio stations. Even like these DSTV channels, you know the KZN TV. Most of the parents is going to watch those channels. They can use those channels to communicate with the parents.” [LEC 1]

Learner participant 5 also suggested that the college could make use of the telephone and electronic mail systems to converse with parents. They said:

“But at least maybe strategies regularly like a telephone. Or like speak to the parents via telephone via email, via fax, yeah. Yeah, email. Yeah, mainly do use telephones.” [LNR 5]

Lecturer participant 5 suggested that the college provide lecturers with resources for them to be able to call and speak to parents as evidenced by their remarks:

“We can also communicate with parents directly, like calling. We must be given the opportunity if we want to speak to a parent to call them. And the college must provide such facilities. We have interns. We can put them together and say this week we're calling parents.” [LEC 5]

Lecturer participant 5 furthermore drew an example of how during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, people were telephoned. The lecturer felt that the college could be able to provide a similar such service, especially in the cases of parents who lived in other localities where cascading information would take some time. They said:

“The college can do that as well. Have that time for calling parents. We inviting them because sometimes we can't give students letters. The parent is in Newcastle. The student is only going to see the parent month-end or when the college closes. There should be those facilities, where all the interns or lecturers can assist or administer the call, or if you have a problem with a specific learner in class. You should be given access to a telephone system to contact the parent or guardian directly concerning that particular case of that child.” [LEC 5]

In response to lecturer participant 5, lecturer participant 4 emphasised that the college should also be cognisant of language barriers when communicating with parents. They added:

“And the issue of language is also, which in terms of strategies that we use to involve parents. I mean there are Venda’s and as we are an English medium centre. But now, we must now have information about our language community, so that when we are communicating with the parent, we use a, a particular language, in which the parent will be able to understand.” [LEC 4]

Furthermore, lecturer participant 1 suggested that the college could consider making use of a newsletter to engage with parents to inform them about the plethora of educational matters with regards their child’s education at the college, such as assessment dates, submission dates and bursary information. They said:

“Yeah, that’s, let’s see, that’s easy. One of us mentioned the newsletter. Yes yeah, the newsletter, that we can use to involve all the dates that are important for the parents and the students like for an example the pay-outs of bursaries, when the bursaries are going to be paid and maybe the, the, the actual parents meeting with the with the students and the lecture can be included in the newsletter, that maybe a only in June, this week from this time to this time, a parent can walk into a campus and ask for the lecturers that are teaching the his or her students. I mean, all those things. The exam dates, the registration dates.” [LEC 1]

This suggestion was also shared by parent participant 4 who mentioned that:

“I think when they doing, the personal details they should take down the email as well and not only trust that the newsletter when you give it to the student gets home, but to email the parenting the newsletter as well.” [PAR 4]

And concluded their remarks by also suggesting that in addition to the newsletter, the college could invite parents to simply visit the college. They said:

“I don't know, besides the newsletter. If the school wants us to come and have tea or come in and like, after school I don't know.” [PAR 4]

Epstein's (1987, 1996, 2009) framework emphasises the need for communication for a functional relationship between the educational institution and families, as the second type of her typology of parental involvement. The participants emphasised the suggestion that the college ought to have made an extra attempt to open communication channels with parents. They suggested methods that could be employed to engage with parents from simple telephone calls to technologies such as WhatsApp. In addition, the findings revealed that participants suggested that a partnership could be fostered if the college made use of a college newsletter which would essentially serve as a link between the class and the home. This is in line with Vi, Suh, Lorenzo, Martinelli, Arriola and Lee (2022) who contend that newsletters, phone calls, and the use of workbooks are some strategies educational institutions can use for involving parents.

In addition, one of the lecturers highlighted that the process of communication would only be effective when the recipient interpreted the message as intended by the sender and suggested the use of vernacular language(s) with parents. The views of the participants are also in line with research by Chase and Valorose (2019) whose research has shown that trust, two-way communication, and technology are the three keys to an effective communication strategy.

4.5.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Acknowledgement of progress reports.

Generally, the purpose of a signature is to affirm that the signatory is confirming having read a document and understands its contents therein. The interviews revealed that the progress reports issued by the TVET college did not require a parent to confirm and acknowledge receipt thereof.

Participants suggested that since progress reports were such crucial documents, which usually indicated academic progression, parents should avail themselves to collect or sign to acknowledge receipt of such documents. Learner participant 7 also

felt that this would encourage a consultative process to discuss the challenges facing the learner, and had the following to say:

“Yeah, I think, I think the college should, if they issue out the report, the final year report, which the parents should come fetch the report. So, they can speak, and say you see, your son is lacking here and here and here. I think we should improve this and this.” [LNR 7]

This point of view was also shared by lecturer participant 4 who suggested that the academic report should provide for a parent to sign acknowledge of receipt. However, the participant also felt and acknowledged that this might require the verification of signatories. They said:

“I was off the opinion that when students write assessments, I thought we have a provision for a guardian or a parent signing he or she has seen, doesn't matter the age of the student, but the loophole is you never know if that is the real guardian or the real parent, but signing is an acknowledgement that the parent has seen the assessment and is involved in the education of the student.” [LEC 4]

The current status quo regarding progress reports issued by the TVET college under study was that they were disseminated to learners. The college did not have any mechanisms in place to determine if parents indeed received their child's progress report. The participants suggested including some sort of mechanism whereby parents could acknowledge having received and seen their child's progress report.

4.6 SUMMARY

The data analysis and study findings from the participant interviews, which were divided into themes and sub-themes, were presented in this chapter. The research revealed the stakeholders understanding of the concept and benefit of parental involvement, ways parents were involved and strategies that could be used to improve parental involvement in the TVET college under study. The findings show that there was very limited parental involvement in the TVET college given several

barriers. Participants also suggested strategies that could be used to improve parental involvement. The discussion of key findings, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations are covered in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis and presentation of the research findings were provided in chapter four. A summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations are provided in this chapter. The researcher's fourteen years of experience as a lecturer at the TVET college where it was observed that parents were not typically involved in their children's education, sparked the interest in this research topic. The underperformance, academic throughput rate and behavioural problems of some learners at the TVET college had also consistently been a point of contention.

Investigating factors influencing parental involvement in a TVET college in the uThukela district served as the study's primary objective. The researcher worked within the realm of qualitative research and the interpretive research paradigm during this investigation. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological systems theory of human development served as a foundation for the study's theoretical framework. Colemans (1988) social capital as well as the theory of the overlapping spheres of influence by Epstein (2001) also influenced the study. Furthermore, the study also provided potential strategies in dealing with such factors. To foster long-lasting parental involvement in education at the TVET college, the study's recommendation is also given consideration. The study's limitations are also outlined to show where future research initiatives are needed. Considering what has been learned, the chapter ends by suggesting a way forward.

5.2 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter One: The first chapter introduced the study, framed the contextual background and inspiration behind the study. Furthermore, the problem statement, aims and objectives, research questions and data collection strategy were explained. This was followed by a discussion on the theoretical framework underpinning the research inquiry, together with applied research methodology. The data collection

and analysis approach were also explained, and the chapter concluded with key terms and acronyms as used in this study.

Chapter Two: A review of the literature related to parental involvement was included in the second chapter. The literature outlined how parental involvement is defined, understood, as well as providing a historical overview of how parental involvement evolved in the South African education system. Challenges facing the concept of parental involvement, the benefits that parental involvement offers education as well as strategies for improving parental involvement were also discussed at length.

Chapter Three: This chapter explained the research design and methodology, in particular the chosen research paradigm, research approach and research design. Furthermore, the manner and criteria used to select participants and how data was collected and analysed, together with ethical considerations and trustworthiness were detailed.

Chapter Four: The penultimate chapter comprehensively detailed the analysis of the data and research findings which were categorised into five major themes and sub-themes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a focus group, with parents, learners, and lecturers of a selected TVET college in the uThukela district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The findings of the study revealed that there were a myriad of factors that influenced parents' involvement in the TVET college.

Chapter Five: This chapter provides a discussion, summary and recommendations of the study including limitations and delimitations. Furthermore, it offers conclusions and suggestions derived from the research findings as well as suggestions for additional research.

5.3 SUMMARISED RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this research investigation was to gain an understanding into the factors influencing parental involvement in the education of their children at a TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal. The summary of the research's findings is provided in

terms of the emergent themes, in relation to the following four research sub-questions that were posed by the researcher to direct the inquiry in order to fulfil the study's objectives namely:

1. How is the concept of parental involvement understood by learners, parents, and the lecturers?
2. What are the benefits for the TVET college if parents are involved?
3. How is parental involvement in the TVET college perceived by learners, parents, and the lecturers?
4. What are the barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college?
5. What strategies can be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college?

RQ 1: How is the concept of parental involvement understood by learners, parents, and the lecturers?

5.3.1 Stakeholder understanding of the concept of parental involvement.

The stakeholders understood the concept of parental involvement as parents who were aware, communicative, participative, and collaborative in their children's education at the TVET college.

5.3.1.1 Awareness

The stakeholders understood the concept of parental involvement as parents being conscious of the importance of an education for their children, and that parents had to be involved in their education. This study has shown that the stakeholders' understanding was in consensus that parents needed to be aware of the academic interests of their children. The stakeholders had understood parental involvement, as parents being aware of what occurred in the educational life of their child. They mentioned that parents needed to know the particular courses that their children studied at the TVET college. Stakeholders also believed that as a parent, one needed to be interested in their child's physical, social and emotion well-being and functioning whilst they were engaged in studying.

5.3.1.2 *Communication*

The data also revealed that parental involvement was understood as a communicative process. Participants understood parental involvement as a two-way interaction between parents, learners, and the educational institution for the following purposes.

- Being informed of important dates of academic activities such as enrolment dates, college holidays and assessment days.
- Being informed of a learner's academic progress through a report card or progress report.
- Being informed about a learner's behaviour, discipline, and overall class attendance.

5.3.1.3 *Participating*

Stakeholders also understood that taking part in academic activities, by assisting with tasks and project, offering support and encouragement, providing guidance, providing financial assistance, showing empathy, ensuring that learning took place and providing resources to support and enhance learning was what constituted an involved parent.

5.3.1.4 *Collaborating*

Notwithstanding the above, the stakeholders also understood that parental involvement as a process also involved other stakeholders which included the principal, the lecturers as well as the parent. This study found that participants believed that collaboration between the various stakeholders would also allow for greater sharing of resources.

5.3.1.5 *Controlling*

Lastly, the learners and lecturers understood parental involvement as being a control and punitive measure in relation to matters such as attendance, discipline and academic achievement.

RQ 2: What are the benefits for the TVET college if parents are involved?

5.3.2 Benefits of parental involvement for the TVET college

Findings from the study revealed that involving parents can provide benefits to the TVET college such as an increase in participation by learners, reduction in the drop-out rate and increased accountability of learner's, lecturers, and the institution.

5.3.2.1 Increased participation

According to the findings, parents, learners, and lecturers agreed that parental involvement would result in more active participation in teaching and learning which would not only benefit learners' progress but would be crucial for the institution. Parents revealed that if they were involved, their children's academic performance would increase. The same data was revealed by the learner participants. Firstly, learner participants indicated they would participate more in their studies and not absent themselves from lessons because they would not want to disappoint their parents. Furthermore, they also indicated that they would draw on the knowledge and experience of their parents to assist them in their learning. Secondly, learner participants also indicated that the ethics, morals, and values that their parents had passed on to them result in them making a concerted effort to do well academically.

Thirdly, the study also revealed that since some learners were entrusted with greater freedom and autonomy, having parents involved would result in a decrease of absenteeism. Fourthly, learners believed that parents' constant support and encouragement provided them with a positive learning experience at the TVET college. After some deliberation, lecturer participants agreed with the consensus shown in literature that an increase in parental involvement in turn would affect the attendance rates of learners which would ultimately allow for an increase in academic achievement.

5.3.2.2 *Increased accountability*

Findings from the study further revealed that participants believed that an increase in parental involvement would result in an increase in accountability. In this regard, the researcher noted that it was parents who felt that it would increase the accountability of their children towards their studies as well as increasing the accountability of the institution (and by extension the accountability of lecturers) towards parents and learners.

Learners also held the view that if their parents were to be involved, it would provide them with a platform to hold lecturers accountable for their learning as they could report non-attendance of lecturers to their parents, who could then take the matter up with the institution. It emerged that the lecturers also concurred with this view and shared their perceptions that sometimes learners were inclined to assign blame to lecturers whereas the learner might be the guilty party. Lecturers felt that involving parents would provide a balancing effect to the power dynamics that existed. Although, some benefits for the educational institution were mentioned and highlighted, the researcher however noted the limited responses by all participants.

RQ 3: How is parental involvement in the TVET college perceived by learners, parents, and the lecturers?

5.3.3 Ways in which parents are involved in their children's education at the TVET college.

The study found that parents were indeed involved in the educational lives of their children at the TVET college, albeit minimally. This challenges the anecdotally held perception that parents are not involved in their children's academic and educational success at the college selected for participation in the study. Although parents had relinquished some of their rights and responsibilities in favour of independence and

autonomy, the study found they were still involved, in many other ways, which are also of equal importance.

5.3.3.1 Influencing decision making

The findings have shown that parents and extended family were quite influential in decision making, with some parents having directly decided that their children should come to study at the TVET college. Although some of the learners made their own choice to attend the TVET college to pursue an education, it also emerged that the advice given to them by parents and family members greatly influenced their decision to come and study at the college.

5.3.3.2 Enrolment assistance

The study discovered that quite a few parents typically accompanied their children during the enrolment and registration period at the college. During this time of the academic calendar, lecturer participants indicated that there was some engagement with parents. According to the data from lecturers, these engagements took on the form of either career, course, or subject advice.

5.3.3.3 Financial assistance

The study also indicated that parents were involved in matters related to financial assistance. Although the participant learners were part of the NSFAS bursary scheme, the data from participants showed that monies provided were at times insufficient to cover accommodation and related costs such as electricity and water, travelling and food costs. In some cases, parents and/or extended family members provided monies to supplement for either accommodation, electricity, and/or travelling costs.

5.3.3.4 Encouraging and inspiring careers

According to the study, parents believed their children could succeed in their studies, furthering their studies at university levels, and pursuing fulfilling careers. This was evident through the support, encouragement, and aspirational capital they provided to their children.

5.3.3.5 *Concerned engagement.*

Furthermore, it was evident from the study that the selected parents showed concern with regards to their children's education at the college. Ways in which this manifested itself included enquiring about exams, requesting their children's progress reports, and enquiring about graduation.

RQ 4: What are the barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college?

5.3.4 Barriers to parental involvement in the TVET college

This research study discovered a significant number of barriers at the TVET college impeding parental involvement, these are discussed below.

5.3.4.1 *Poor communication channels*

Communication or lack thereof was discovered to be an obvious flaw in the way that the stakeholders interacted with each other and the institution. This study found that poor communication was a significant obstacle to involving parents in the TVET college in the study. Parents expressed frustration as they indicated the TVET college was not directly communicating with them. Instead, communication was facilitated through their children. Given the vast number of communication channels available to educational institutions, it was surprising to the researcher, that parents expressed such sentiments.

The study revealed that learners felt that since the college was not communicating important aspects of their education to their parents, some parents did not entirely trust the communicate that their children were bringing home. The participants' comments indicated that there was a pressing need to enhance channels of

communication between the institution and the parents and vice versa, since this has an impact on the partnerships that could be fostered between the college and parents/families/communities. Participant data also revealed that English was the primary language of communication in schools. This presents a challenge to most parents in townships as they find it extremely challenging to interact with schools since they are unable to speak with teachers and other important educational stakeholders in a medium, they are not fluent in.

5.3.4.2 Lack of opportunities

According to the participants, the TVET college in the study did not offer parents an opportunity to be involved in the education of their children. The approach adopted by the TVET college in engaging with the parents was reactive in nature and typically one sided. The data revealed that it was parents who approached the college to enquire about their children's academic progress and not the college that alerted the parents. Furthermore, the study found that the college did not provide a platform for engaging parents. The data showed that the college did not engage in parents' meetings, college open days or extracurricular activities where parents could be invited.

5.3.4.3 Distances

Most learners that attend the TVET college were largely from rural areas. Data from the learner participants revealed that six out of the eleven learners resided in distant towns. The learners indicated that given the long distances and the cost of travelling, this presented a major obstacle in their parents being involved in their education. Participants felt that it would not be economically feasible for parents to commute the long distances involved to attend meetings or consult.

5.3.4.4 Parents occupations

Given that most learners were from low socio-economic backgrounds, their parents have had to find occupations in larger urban areas, to be able to financially provide for their families. The data revealed that constraints imposed by working in towns and cities that were far away, limited the available time that parents had to engage

in their children's educational lives. Furthermore, it was revealed that some parents worked five days a week and were only available on weekends when the college was typically closed, thus indicating that the majority of parents would be unable to attend to college events simply because they worked late.

5.3.4.5 Generational differences

Even though many parents wanted to help their kids, the age differential posed a challenge. The data collected showed that some parents were pensioners and given their age, their health conditions did not facilitate easy engagement in their children's academic interests. In addition, participants felt that because of the age difference, parents, particularly in rural areas, would find it challenging to carry out their tasks and responsibilities as required in the TVET college especially on the science and technology programmes where parents themselves lacked sufficient education. The apparent lack of literacy and communication in vernacular were cited as posing a challenge to parents.

5.3.4.6 Bursary as a contributing factor

Another finding that was discovered was that participants felt parents were not interested in being involved in their children's education as they were not ultimately financially responsible for the tuition costs of the respective courses their children were studying. Participants felt that since the NSFAS bursary was paying for the tuition costs of the programmes at the TVET college, there was no incentive for them to be involved as they were not using their limited supply of financial resources.

5.3.4.7 Age and maturity of learners

Findings from the data revealed that with the TVET college, some learner participants were over the age of eighteen. Findings from the literature study also showed that there were indeed learners who were over the ages of thirty-five. This presents a unique challenge as the learners themselves could also be deemed parents. Participants felt that this unique situation presented a challenge as it was

precarious to engage 'a parent when the learner is a parent themselves'. Furthermore, the study revealed that since some learners were over the age of twenty-one, by law, they did not require the consent of their parents to enrol at the TVET college.

RQ 5: What strategies can be recommended to improve parental involvement in the TVET college?

5.3.5 Interventions that can be used to overcome barriers to parental involvement.

This participants in this research study suggested the use of the following strategies to mitigate some of the challenges surrounding parental involvement.

5.3.5.1 Parents meetings

The study has found that parents were willing and wanted to be involved in their children's education at the TVET college, however they were unsure as to how to accomplish this. The participants felt that if the college were to initiate meetings with parents, this strategy would provide an opportunity to improve the academic performance of learners. According to Mbatha (2018) only during meetings, which foster open, frequent dialogue and respect for one another, can there be a close relationship between teachers and parents. The study revealed that participants suggested that meetings should occur twice in an academic year, once before the start of formal teaching and learning and at the end of the academic year. Holding such meeting during these dates was deemed crucial given that parents may not reside at their home addresses due to occupational constraints, may arrive at their homes later, or would not be available during weekdays the scheduling of such meetings presents a challenge. Participants also highlighted that when such meetings occur, cognisance should be taken with regards to language as most parents were more versed in vernacular as opposed to English and if possible, for the provision of transport.

5.3.5.2 Use of communication channels

This study found that there was a lack of communication with parents and such was a barrier to effective parental involvement. Thus, participants suggested the use of communication channels in order for parents to be kept up to date with regards to their children's academic progress and for parents to prepare for any events at the college. Chase and Valorose (2019) purports that the three components of successful communication with parents are trust, two-way communication, and technology. Furthermore, communication channels are essential for encouraging parents to improve their children's academic achievement at home and at the educational institution (Chase & Valorose, 2019; Epstein, 2009). The suggestions from the data indicated that participants felt the TVET college could make use of phone calls, electronic mail, WhatsApp messenger, newsletters, and local community radio stations to open the lines of communication with parents. Findings from the interviews revealed that participants felt that the TVET college should make use of these communication platforms to inform parents about important educational matters, like assessment information (test, assignments, and exams), bursary information and any other extra-curricular information deemed important.

5.3.5.3 Signed acknowledgement of progress reports

In the study, it was found that progress reports are issued to learners by the TVET college with the presumption that such information is cascaded to their parents. Participants indicated that this was sometimes not the case. According to Schneider (2016), the contact between parents and educators increases when their children used progress reports. Since the TVET college is already using progress reports, participants suggested that the TVET college should provide a mechanism for parents to sign an acknowledgement of receipt of progress reports.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The study looked at a phenomenon that could be considered useful in addressing problems with parental involvement in TVET colleges in South Africa. It explored

factors that influenced the way parents were involved in their children's academic pursuits at a particular TVET college.

The major findings of the study revealed that among barriers that impeded parental involvement in the TVET college were poor and, in some cases, a complete lack of communication with parents. It also appeared that the college did not provide any opportunities for parents to share and contribute to the college community. Additionally, there seemed to be a lack of interest both locally and nationally to provide for any opportunities/platforms for parents to become involved. Another major factor that impeded parents was the distances where parents resided, which typically made it improbable for them to become involved. Lastly, the age and educational level of parents, insufficiency of the funds provided through the NSFAS bursary as well as parents wanting to engage, were shown to be influencing parental involvement.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the qualitative study are specific to this research group, but the information garnered from it may aid lecturers, college managers and other stakeholders in TVET colleges in their efforts to promote and increase parental involvement. It is the researcher's fervent view that involving parents in the TVET population may assist in mitigating some of the many challenges that the TVET sector has faced since its inception. A useful place to start for the college to use to implement parental involvement would be Epstein's (1995) framework of the six categories of involvement. Thus, the study recommends that the TVET college formulate policy that guides how parents should be involved, engage in parents' meetings, host open and exhibition days and open channels of communication.

5.5.1 Policy formulation

The executive management of the TVET college, in conjunction with local managers and lecturers of campuses and other important stakeholders can brainstorm the creation of a college policy to address the concept of parental involvement. This policy should be concise and relevant to addressing the involvement of parents in

the education at the TVET college, and must promote, inclusivity, fairness. When the issue of involving parents is given the priority of being mandated by policies and procedures, such policy would be the cornerstone of parental involvement in the institution.

5.5.2 Parents meetings

Parents need to be given an opportunity to express their expectations, nuances, and concerns to improve parental participation in college related activities. This can be accomplished through using parents' meetings. These meetings should be the platform and space where parents can voice their suggestions about how to contribute and help the college solve issues. This would dispel some of the incorrect assumptions that exist about parental involvement in TVET and provide parents with a communal sense of ownership of the college, thereby investing in it more and/or better. Furthermore, it would also provide an opportunity to dispel the myths and notions surrounding the TVET system in South Africa, as well as the notions surrounding the NC(V) programme. Lastly, the TVET college should recognise its importance in the education system as well as its position as a public service organisation, and thus should as far as is logistically possible, arrange for such meetings to be flexible for all parents. It is suggested that parents' meetings take place on weekends, preferably on a Saturday or Sunday.

5.5.3 Open days, workshops, and seminars

This study found that the college had no functions, activities or after school events that would have introduced parents, or at the very least drawn the attention of parents and the community. As a result, institutions always place the blame for students' poor behaviour and absences on parents. Since, the college conducts planning for the next academic year, it is recommended that the planning committee endeavours to include events such as open days, sports or workshops and seminars where parents can be invited to share in the college. The college should host events and activities to strengthen the bond, and improve morale between parents, lecturers, and learners.

5.5.4 Open channels for communication

In the study, it was shown that the lack of proper communication made it difficult for parents to be truly involved in their children's education. During the time of this study, the college had an online presence in the form of online applications, a functioning website, and social media presence. These channels need to be dynamic and need to be extended further so that parents can access them, to facilitate communication. Communication with parents should not be limited to times when there are issues, as is the status-quo.

Given that the majority of parents had mobile phones that they could use to contact the school, new technology should be employed to interact with them. Lecturers indicated the importance of using social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp for communicating important information.

Likewise, lecturers can create a WhatsApp group with parents of the learners in their classes for the sole purpose of communicating learning progress. Using the community radio station and newspaper to reach parents was another suggested option that the college could embrace. However, when communicating using such channels, it is imperative to use language that the majority of parents can understand. Effective communication would assist parental involvement to improve student academic achievement in the college.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, this research was undertaken at only one campus of the TVET college, thus its findings cannot be generalised across the other campuses of the selected TVET college. In addition, the study did not include members of the management team and governing counsel, who are also important stakeholders. The researcher suggests that campus managers, deputy principals and principals, council members and even student bodies be included in the population of any additional studies.

The research project was carried out using a qualitative research approach. An obvious limitation of the study was the small sample size, which is typical in

qualitative research. In general, qualitative research does not aim to generalise its findings, however a larger and perhaps mixed methods study using a larger sample of the TVET population, could yield results that could inform other TVET colleges and DHET on the academic benefits that involving parents in the TVET sector can bring.

5.7 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The strength of this study lies in the use of the intended research design employed in qualitative research. This allowed the researcher to gain valuable insight from important stakeholders in the TVET population. Conducting qualitative research had the benefit of enabling the researcher to get in-depth descriptions from the participants. The researcher's knowledge and understanding of parental involvement in their children's learning was improved by the richness of the collected data.

5.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher suggests additional research be done to expand on the current study and it should be based on investigations in the following areas:

- Finding strategies that can be implemented in TVET colleges to ensure meaningful parental involvement and improved student academic performance.
- Investigating strategies that may be used to get parents involved in colleges and overcome the obstacles they face, to improve student academic achievement.

5.9 FINAL WORD

Given the practical, vocational, and artisanal skills that TVET colleges are expected to produce, there exists an assumption that TVET education is much easier in comparison to university. Statistics presented in chapter 1 indicate that TVET colleges are experiencing challenges as far as results are concerned. Since lecturers

are not able to do everything on their own, it is important for parents to be involved in their children's education at TVET colleges.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Request letter to conduct research in a public college



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DHET 004: APPENDIX 1:
APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

1. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1.	Title (Dr /Mr /Mrs /Ms)	Mr	
1.2.	Name and surname	FAHEEM ABDUL WAHAB GAFFER	
1.3.	Postal address	42 JASMINE ROAD LADYSMITH 3370	
1.4.	Contact details	Tel	NONE
		Cell	078 63 38427
		Fax	NONE
		Email	48446327@mylife.unisa.ac.za
1.5.	Name of institution where enrolled	UNISA	
1.6.	Field of study	EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT	
1.7.	Qualification registered for	Please tick relevant option:	
		Doctoral Degree (PhD)	
		Master's Degree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Other (please specify)	

2. DETAILS OF THE STUDY

2.1.	Title of the study	UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TURT COLLEGE IN THE KWA-ZULU NATAL PROVINCE
2.2.	Purpose of the study	

DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

3. PARTICIPANTS AND TYPE/S OF ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE COLLEGE

Please indicate the types of research activities you are planning to undertake in the College, as well as the categories of persons who are expected to participate in your study (for example, lecturers, students, College Principals, Deputy Principals, Campus Heads, Support Staff, Heads of Departments), including the number of participants for each activity.

		Expected participants (e.g. students, lecturers, College Principal)	Number of participants
3.1	Complete questionnaires	a) N/A	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
		e)	
3.2	Participate in individual interviews	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a) PARENTS	5
		b) NCV LEARNERS	11
		c)	
		d)	
3.3	Participate in focus group discussions/ workshops	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a) NCV LECTURERS	5
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
3.4	Complete standardised tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)	Expected participants	Number of participants
		a) N/A	
		b)	
		c)	
		d)	
3.5	Undertake observations Please specify	N/A	
3.6	Other Please specify	N/A	

DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

4. SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE COLLEGE

<i>Please indicate the type of support required from the College (Please tick relevant option/s)</i>			
Type of support		Yes	No
4.1	The College will be required to identify participants and provide their contact details to the researcher.		✓
4.2	The College will be required to distribute questionnaires/instruments to participants on behalf of the researcher.		✓
4.3	The College will be required to provide official documents. <i>Please specify the documents required below</i>		✓
4.4	The College will be required to provide data <i>(only if this data is not available from the DHET)</i> . <i>Please specify the data fields required, below</i>		✓
4.5	<i>Other, please specify below</i> PROVIDE A SPACE WHERE THE INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS CAN BE CONDUCTED	✓	

5. DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION

<i>The following 2 (two) documents must be attached as a prerequisite for approval to undertake research in the College</i>	
5.1	Ethics Clearance Certificate issued by a University Ethics Committee
5.2	Research proposal approved by a University

6. DECLARATION BY THE APPLICANT

I undertake to use the information that I acquire through my research, in a balanced and a responsible manner. I furthermore take note of, and agree to adhere to the following conditions:

- a) I will schedule my research activities in consultation with the said College/s and participants in order not to interrupt the programme of the said College/s.
- b) I agree that involvement by participants in my research study is voluntary, and that participants have a right to decline to participate in my research study.
- c) I will obtain signed consent forms from participants prior to any engagement with them.
- d) I will obtain written parental consent of students under 18 years of age, if they are expected to participate in my research.
- e) I will inform participants about the use of recording devices such as tape-recorders and cameras, and participants will be free to reject them if they wish.
- f) I will honour the right of participants to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and respect for human dignity at all times. Participants will not be identifiable in any way from the results of my research, unless written consent is obtained otherwise.
- g) I will not include the names of the said College/s or research participants in my research report, without the written consent of each of the said individuals and/or College/s.
- h) I will send the draft research report to research participants before finalisation, in order to validate the accuracy of the information in the report.
- i) I will not use the resources of the said College/s in which I am conducting research (such as stationery, photocopies, faxes, and telephones), for my research study.
- j) Should I require data for this study, I will first request data directly from the Department of Higher Education and Training. I will request data from the College/s only if the DHET does not have the required data.
- k) I will include a disclaimer in any report, publication or presentation arising from my research, that the findings and recommendations of the study do not represent the views of the said College/s or the Department of Higher Education and Training.
- l) I will provide a summary of my research report to the Head of the College/s in which I undertook my research, for information purposes.

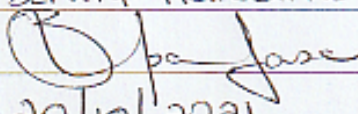
I declare that all statements made in this application are true and accurate. I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.

SIGNATURE	
DATE	20/10/2021

DHET 004: APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM FOR STUDENTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC COLLEGES

FOR OFFICIAL USE

DECISION BY HEAD OF COLLEGE

Please tick relevant decision and provide conditions/reasons where applicable	
Decision	Please tick relevant option below
1 Application approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2 Application approved subject to certain conditions. <i>Specify conditions below</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Findings to be shared with college management	
3 Application not approved. <i>Provide reasons for non-approval below</i>	
NAME OF COLLEGE	
Mnambithi TVET College	
NAME AND SURNAME OF HEAD OF COLLEGE	
BEATRICE MPANGASE DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: ACADEMIC SERVICES	
SIGNATURE	
	
DATE	
20/10/2021	

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
& TRAINING
MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE

20 OCT 2021

CENTRAL OFFICE
FINANCE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX B: Requesting permission from principal to conduct research.

Request for permission to conduct research at MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE: LADYSMITH CAMPUS

Title of the title of your research **UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE.**

Date: 13/10/2021

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: ACADEMIC
MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE
036 631 0380
Beatrice.Mpangase@KZNTVET.EDU.ZA

Dear Ms Mpangase

I, Faheem Abdul Wahab Gaffer am doing research under supervision of S. P Mokoena, a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management, College of Education towards an M. Ed (Masters Degree in Educational Management) at the University of South Africa. We have a bursary funding from the University of South Africa for my tuition and research purposes. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled, "Understanding Factors Influencing Parental Involvement In The Education Of Their Children At A Tvet College In The KwaZulu-Natal Province".

The aim of the study is to:

- To examine the concept of parental involvement.
- Identify factors influencing parental involvement in TVET Colleges.
- Identify strategies to improve parental involvement in TVET Colleges.

Your college has been selected because I have identified the NCV learners, parents of NCV learners and NCV Lecturers at the Ladysmith campus as the potential research population for my study and am seeking your permission to conduct the research study there.

The study will entail focus groups, with lecturers and learners together with individual interviews with parents and learners. The interviews will be conducted as open-ended conversations and will be audio-recorded for authenticity purposes. Interviews with open-ended questions will be used to collect data as well as field notes by the researcher to supplement the data gathered with interviewing. This research approach will allow the collection of evidence of participants' feelings, opinions and perceptions that are shared and experienced by people who are in a similar situation.

The benefits of this study are improved communication, improved functioning and accountability, improved relations between, parents, lecturers and the TVET College. For learners, the benefits are improved class attendance and improved social behaviour.

Potential risks could include emotional discomfort by learners, when discussing matters related to parents/family structures/loved ones, where they have experienced loss of life, especially given the Covid 19 pandemic. Furthermore, another potential risk is that participants could be infected by the

researcher that might be asymptomatic/symptomatic, therefore all contingency protocols in dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic shall be adhered to, such as the compulsory wearing of masks, use of hand sanitizer and the required social distancing.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail a detailed report of the findings sent to you via email once they have been finalized.

Yours sincerely



FAHEEM ABDUL WAHAB GAFFER

STUDENT: 48446327

APPENDIX C: Requesting permission from manager to conduct research.

Request for permission to conduct research at MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE: LADYSMITH CAMPUS

Title of the title of your research **UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE.**

Date: 28/11/2021

CAMPUS MANAGER
MNAMBITHI TVET COLLEGE
LADYSMITH CAMPUS
036 631-3169
Eugene.Prinsloo@KZNTVET.EDU.ZA

Dear Mrs. Prinsloo

I, Faheem Abdul Wahab Gaffer am doing research under supervision of S. P Mokoena, a Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management, College of Education towards an M. Ed (Masters Degree in Educational Management) at the University of South Africa. We have a bursary funding from the University of South Africa for my tuition and research purposes. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled, "Understanding Factors Influencing Parental Involvement in The Education of Their Children at A Tvet College in The KwaZulu-Natal Province".

The aim of the study is to:

- To examine the concept of parental involvement.
- Identify factors influencing parental involvement in TVET Colleges.
- Identify strategies to improve parental involvement in TVET Colleges.

Your college has been selected because I have identified the NCV learners, parents of NCV learners and NCV Lecturers at the Ladysmith campus as the potential research population for my study and am seeking your permission to conduct the research study there.

The study will entail focus groups, with lecturers and learners together with individual interviews with parents and learners. The interviews will be conducted as open-ended conversations and will be audio-recorded for authenticity purposes. Interviews with open-ended questions will be used to collect data as well as field notes by the researcher to supplement the data gathered with interviewing. This research approach will allow the collection of evidence of participants' feelings, opinions and perceptions that are shared and experienced by people who are in a similar situation.

The benefits of this study are improved communication, improved functioning and accountability, improved relations between, parents, lecturers and the TVET College. For learners, the benefits are improved class attendance and improved social behaviour.

Potential risks could include emotional discomfort by learners, when discussing matters related to parents/family structures/loved ones, where they have experienced loss of life, especially given the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, another potential risk is that participants could be infected by the

researcher that might be asymptomatic/symptomatic, therefore all contingency protocols in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic shall be adhered to, such as the compulsory wearing of masks, use of hand sanitizer and the required social distancing.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail a detailed report of the findings sent to you via email once they have been finalized.

Yours sincerely



FAHEEM ABDUL WAHAB GAFFER

STUDENT: 48446327

APPENDIX D: Participant research information and assent form
PARTICIPANT RESEARCH INFORMATION AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE KWA-ZULU NATAL PROVINCE.

RESEARCHER NAME: Faheem Abdul Wahab Gaffer
CONTACT DETAILS: Email: 48446327@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Cell phone number: 078 633 8427

What is RESEARCH?

We say that research is a creative and systematic way of doing some work in order to increase the knowledge that we have. It involves the collection, organisation, and analysis of information to increase understanding of a topic or issue. We use research studies to help us find out more about, values, beliefs, perceptions, human behaviour and even interactions between people. Research also helps us to find better ways of understanding complex relationships and to seek solutions to them.

What is this research all about?

The purpose of this research study is to explore the topic of parental involvement that exists in TVET Colleges. In particular:

The aim of the study is to:

- To examine the concept of parental involvement.
- Identify factors influencing parental involvement in TVET Colleges.
- Identify strategies to improve parental involvement in TVET Colleges.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research inquiry?

I have invited you to participate in this research inquiry because you are an NCV learner enrolled at Mnambithi TVET College. You are also invited to participate in this study because your views and experiences on your parent's involvement in your studies could add value to this research, to your academic success and to the development of the college.\

Who is doing the research?

This research is done by Mr FAW Gaffer as part of his studies to complete a Master's degree in Educational Management.

What will happen to me in this study?

Firstly, the researcher will seek your permission to be a participant in this research. You need to participate in a single interview – (this will be done on campus).

Can anything bad happen to me?

No. The research is interested in you sharing your experiences. The interview and what will be discussed will be kept confidential and will NOT be shared.

Can anything good happen to me?

Yes. You will be contributing valuable data about TVET student's experiences of parent support. Your experiences can help to assist policy makers to understand the importance of parents as partners of the TVET College. Your views and shared experiences on Parental Involvement can also provide a framework to understand the relationship between the student – parent and even assumptions can be derived about the TVET student community.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Yes. You will be expected to participate with other students in a focus group session; thus, your co-participants will know who are in the study. However, I am bound by a confidentiality clause thus your name and the information that you share with me during the interview will be confidential. Interviews will be conducted privately in one of the classes on campus.

Who can I talk to about the study?

Mr Faheem Abdul Wahab Gaffer 078 633 8427

What if I do not want to do this?

Your participation in this research is voluntarily. You will not get paid for exchange of information. You are however a valued participant and can withdraw from the study at any time.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

- I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.
- I agree to the recording of the interview.
- I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print)

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX E: Interview guide with parent participants.

Semi-structured Interview guide and schedule, with parent participants.

(Establish rapport and solicit verbal consent for interview and recording)

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Please tell me your name, surname?
2. Can you tell me about your qualifications and what is your current highest qualification?
3. Briefly indicate your employment status.
4. Who is currently the breadwinner in the family?

SECTION B: PARENTAL ROLE

1. What is your understanding of the term parental involvement?
2. Do you think being involved in your child's education at college will have a positive or negative effect on their studies? (Parent to elaborate further)
3. Do you think there is a relationship between parental involvement and academic success?
4. Who do you think should bring about parental involvement, the TVET College or parents?
5. How are you informed about your child's current academic status in college?
6. Are you satisfied with the way the college communicates with you?
7. Kindly indicate if you have attended any parent meetings at college?
 - a. If yes, how many times in a year would you say you were invited?

SECTION C: CHILD

1. Who decided that your child attends a TVET college?
2. How is your child coping with their studies at the college?
3. Do you have specific academic goals for your child? (academic performance in assessments)
4. Do you ask your child about their experiences at college?

SECTION D: FACTORS

1. Are you involved in any activities at your child's TVET college?
2. What factors are influencing your involvement with your child's education at the TVET college?
3. Do you believe the college is providing you with opportunities for involvement?
4. What do you think are some strategies that the college can use to increase the involvement of parents?

APPENDIX F: Interview guide with learner participants.

Semi-structured Interview guide and schedule, with learner participants.

(Establish rapport and solicit verbal consent for interview and recording)

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

5. Please tell me your name and surname and indicate your age?
6. Are you currently residing with your parents during your studies?
 - a. If not, where are you residing and who is funding your accommodation?
7. What do your parents do for a living?
8. How do you travel to college?
9. Tell me about your family unit. (Parents, siblings, and extended family)

SECTION B: LEARNER

5. Who decided that you should study at a TVET College?
6. Did any members of your family or extended family have any influence in the decision to study at the college? (Ask for elaboration).
7. Who is funding your studies?
8. What can you tell me about your academic performance at the college?
9. Has your lecturer(s) ever asked to see or communicate with your parents? If so, elaborate further.

SECTION C: PARENTAL SUPPORT

8. What is your understanding of the term parental involvement?
9. Do you think parental involvement benefits a learner's education?
10. Are your parents currently involved with your education at college?
 - a. If so in what ways are your parents involved with your education at the college?
 - b. If not, how would you like your parents to be involved?
11. Do you discuss your college life and experiences with your parents?
12. Do your parents ask to view your college progress report? (Ask for elaboration).
13. Do you think that the college provides opportunities for your parents to be included in your education? (Parent meetings, open days, Sports etc)
14. Do your parents have specific academic aspirations for you?
15. Do you think that there is a relationship between parental involvement and academic success?

SECTION D: FACTORS

1. What are the factors that influence parental involvement in TVET Colleges?

2. What strategies can you recommend to improve parental involvement in Colleges?

APPENDIX G: Focus group interview guide for lecturers

Focus group interview guide for lecturers.

1. What is your understanding of the term parental involvement?
2. Do you think there is a relation between parental involvement and academic success?
3. When you were studying to become an educator, did you ever encounter parental involvement as a topic in your studies?
4. Are you aware of any legalisation or policies relating to parental involvement in TVET Colleges?
5. Who do you think should be responsible for bringing about parental involvement at college?
6. Have you ever communicated or engaged with your learner's parents? If so in what ways?
7. Would you like to communicate with the learners' parents more often?
8. Why do you think it is necessary to have regular parent meetings?
9. Do you think the college is providing parents with opportunities for parental involvement?
10. Do you think you are providing an opportunity for parents to be involved?
11. What are the factors that influence parental involvement in TVET Colleges?
12. What strategies can you recommend to improve parental involvement in Colleges?

APPENDIX H: Ethical clearance certificate



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/11/10

Ref: **2021/11/10/48446327/17/AM**

Dear Mr FAW Gaffer

Name: Mr FAW Gaffer

Student No.:48446327

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10

Researcher(s): Name: Mr FAW Gaffer
E-mail address: 48446327@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 078 6338427

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof S.P Mokoena
E-mail address: mokoesp@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 082 675 6155

Title of research:

**UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE
EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE KWA-ZULU NATAL
PROVINCE.**

Qualification: MEd Education 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 2021/11/10 to 2024/11/10.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/11/10 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 will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. 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.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/11/10**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2021/11/10/48446327/17/AM** 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
EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX I: Example of a coded transcript

Appendix I includes the coded transcript of an interview conducted with learner participant 6 [LNR6] on Wednesday, 1st December 2021. The codes assigned to the text are listed in the comments to the right. To preserve the participants anonymity, some alterations have been made to the transcript.

Audio file

[20211201_32586.mp3](#)

Transcript (.....)

00:04:47 Researcher

Calculus? I don't know what you guys do.

00:04:49 LNR6

Calculus is my favourite, but we didn't do it this time because of Covid.

00:04:57 Researcher

Have you tried using the resources on the Internet?

00:05:00 LNR6

Yes, many times.

00:05:04 Researcher

So maths, is a challenging subject.

00:05:08 Researcher

Has any of your lecturers asked to speak to your parents?

00:05:13 LNR6

No.

00:05:14 Researcher

Do you think there's a reason for that?

00:05:17 LNR6

Mainly, maybe because I am a good student. I'm not mischievous.

00:05:25 Researcher

Is that true?

00:05:26 LNR6

Yeah.

00:05:27 Researcher

OK, So what, what are you saying, that if the only time the lecturer will ask to see your parents is?

00:05:33 LNR6

Yeah, it's because you. You did something wrong, yeah, or maybe your marks are not great.

00:05:46 Researcher

Do you think having parents is some sort of like a control thing or a punishment thing?

00:05:53 LNR6

No, you can say that it would be a motivational thing you know.

00:06:02 LNR6

Because involving a parent in a child's academic can like, mainly because. If, like a student fears his parent or her parents. He can like one to not getting lies on his bad on his parents bad side

so he will like boost his marks so that she will not like hit him or something. If he's failing, you know he will always have higher marks because of his parents.

00:06:32 Researcher

Thank you. I want us to specifically talk about this topic.

L.O.C – Lack of Communication - No communication from lecturer to parent

P.P.I – Punitive Parental Involvement - Perception that if lecturer calls parent, has to be about discipline

P.P.I

00:06:43 Researcher

What is your understanding of parental involvement?

00:06:47 LNR6

My understanding is that parental involvement is Whereby a parent is involved in a student's academic performance at school. And she must always have like. Maybe the record of what the student is actually doing at school. How is he performing. Or maybe how is he behaving in class too.

C.P.I – Learner's understanding of PI

00:07:24 Researcher

Do you think if parents are involved learners would perform better in school?

00:07:32 LNR6

Excuse me?

00:07:34 Researcher

I'm saying, do you think if parents are involved, will it benefit a learners education?

00:07:40 LNR6

Yes.

00:07:42 Researcher

In what ways?

00:07:45 LNR6

Well, as I explained before that if the parent is involved in, in this tourism.

00:08:00 Researcher

Sorry, I think I was asking you if parents are involved, will it benefit the learners?

00:08:08 LNR6

I said yes, right?

00:08:10 Researcher

Yeah, you did say yes. I was just looking for some elaboration. In what ways?

00:08:14 LNR6

In what ways, I, I think that if a parent is involved in the student's academic performance. As I said before, it will help them. Like maybe know what the student is doing at school, and how is he progressing? Yeah.

B.P.I – Benefits of PI

00:08:35 Researcher

Do you think it will affect attendance?

00:08:39 LNR6

No, not at all. It will actually boost the attendance, because if a parent knows when the student is like going to school, he will not be absent. Due to maybe like, he doesn't want to go to school and he, he, he won't have like an excuse as he has right here in school.

B.P.I – Benefits of PI – Attendance

00:09:00 Researcher

Just a side question, do you think if students attended or if that student attendance was high, do you think that students will perform better?

00:09:10 LNR6

It may depend on the lecturer himself or herself. If the lecture is like giving a great lecture or explaining things more accurately than the students may learn, because like students have different ways of learning, you know, a student can learn by just listening to to the lecturer just once. Or maybe some others are self-learners themselves, so they need to be, not be at the lecturer's attention to learn something.

00:09:48 Researcher

OK.

00:09:50 Researcher

Maybe another side question. Do you think if parents are involved it will improve lecture attendance?

00:10:02 LNR6

Uhh, yes, but I don't have an explanation for that one, but it would.

B.P.I – Lecturer accountability

00:10:10 Researcher

Are you parents currently involved with your education here at the college?

00:10:15 LNR6

Umm can you please elaborate.

00:10:17 Researcher

Is your mum involved in your education in anyway at the college?

APPENDIX J: Turnitin similarity report

UNDERSTANDING FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT A TVET COLLEGE IN THE KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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SIMILARITY INDEX

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APPENDIX K: Certificate Of Language Editing



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Proof of editing

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Date: 03 April 2023

This is to certify that I have edited the dissertation of the following candidate:

Names and Surname: Faheem Abdul Wahab Gaffer

Student number: 48446327

Title: Understanding factors influencing parental involvement in the education of their children at a TVET college in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

Dr ST Maseko
Director
STMbondvo editing services

Confidentiality: *In editing academic documents, I understand that I have access to confidential data, that information contained in documents is confidential and for that, I agree not to divulge, publish, make known to unauthorized persons or to the public the data in documents.*