

**THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN GUIDING PERFORMANCE
OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP (DBL)

in the subject

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL DYNAMICS

at the

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROFESSOR: N. T. NGWENYA

NOVEMBER 2022

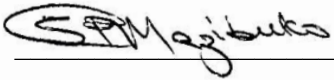
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ABSTRACT

Globally, technical vocational education and training (TVET) is an essential sector in the economic development of any country as it provides skills required by the workplace. However, the sector, in many countries, especially developing countries, is beset by challenges which impede its performance. Thus, countries like South Africa have embarked on a series of educational reforms to transform the sector to ensure that it is elevated to the required level. Yet the performance of most public TVET colleges in South Africa has not met the required standard. This has raised questions about the role and practice of leadership, especially strategic leadership, in these public colleges. Since the college principal is fully responsible for the organisation's effective and efficient functioning, this study explored his/her strategic leadership role in guiding the performance of the public college. The study investigates the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance higher education institutions from the perspective of public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. The study includes a literature review of strategic leadership, the TVET sector and organisational performance, from local and international perspectives. A qualitative case study inquiry of the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance from the perspective of leaders of public vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal was conducted. Data were gathered from two department officials, seven college principals and twenty-two deputy principals, who were regarded as information-rich participants, by means of individual in-depth interviews. In total, thirty-one participants were interviewed individually. Data were analysed thematically, discussed and synthesised. The findings demonstrated that public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal face many challenges. The performance of public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal is below par because college principals do not fulfil their strategic leadership role effectively. Compounding the problem is the lack of support and training from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to public colleges and lack of understanding of strategic leadership and its importance by college leaders. This hinders the performance of public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal to the detriment of economic development and societal well-being. Based on the findings, recommendations for improving the strategic leadership role and subsequently the performance of public colleges are proposed.

KEY WORDS

College principal

Department official

Deputy principal

Higher education

KwaZulu-Natal

Leadership

Organisational performance

Qualitative research

Strategic leadership

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Vocational

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

cf.	Compare
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CBD	Central Business District
DBL	Doctor of Business Leadership
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRDCSA	Human Resource Development Council for South Africa
Km	Kilometre
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
n.d.	No date
NATED	National Accredited Technical Education Diploma
NBI	National Business Initiative
NCHE	National Council on Higher Education
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NCV	National Certificate Vocational
NPHE	National Plan on Higher Education
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PLP	Pre-Vocational Learning Programmes
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACPO	South African College Principals Organisation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SBL	School of Business Leadership
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNEVOC	International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNISA	University of South Africa
VTE	Vocational Technical Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey to the completion of a doctoral degree is long, demanding, arduous and exhausting but very rewarding. It requires commitment, motivation, dedication and perseverance from the student and above all, it requires encouragement and support from many individuals. My journey when doing this doctoral degree was no exception. Without any doubt, I would not have been able to, alone, reach the finishing line. The help and support of many people, who helped me directly and indirectly along the way in my research process, are fully acknowledged here. Unfortunately, they are so many that I would be unable to mention all of them. I think it would be proper for me to apologise beforehand to those whom I have not mentioned by name. Nonetheless, I truly value their unwavering help and support. However, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the following persons:

- Professor N.T. Ngwenya, my Promoter, for his invaluable support, guidance and encouragement throughout all aspects of this study. Thank you so much, Mtimande, Bambolunye for your constructive comments that assisted me to complete this thesis.
- The Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL) Programme Administrator, Ms Tumelo “Tumi” Seopa, for her administrative astute professionalism and support.
- The Ethics Committee at the Graduate School of Business Leadership at the University of South Africa (UNISA), for granting me permission to conduct this study.
- The academic and support staff of the Graduate School of Business Leadership at UNISA, especially the members of the Colloquium Committee, for their constructive comments, feedback and guidance.
- All UNISA library staff in the Durban branch, not only for their assistance with the research material, but for always being supportive.
- The Division for Student Funding (DSF) – Postgraduate Bursaries, for assisting me financially. Without these funds, I would have been unable to continue with my studies. I also wish to thank the bursary team for their outstanding work.
- Doctors G.A. Chapman and D.M. Ntshangase, for assisting in various ways. Thank you so much, Dr Chapman, for your ready willingness to lend an ear and provide advice and support whenever asked.
- Doctor M. Muthusamy, for all the support that he rendered and more importantly, for sharing information so generously.
- All my colleagues, past and present, not only for supporting me in all my endeavours, but also for contributing to my professional and academic growth and development.

- Professor J.N. van Wyk, for her support, encouragement and belief in me, since we have known each other.
- Professor E.M. Lemmer, for her assistance with editing of the manuscript. Thank you so much, Madam, for your excellent work.
- Doctor C. Israel, for her assistance with final editing and polishing of the manuscript. Thank you so much, Madam, for your professional and outstanding work.
- The KwaZulu-Natal Regional Manager of the Department of Higher Education (DHET), Dr S.J. Nzimande, for giving me permission to conduct this research at all nine public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.
- College principals, deputy principals of all nine public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal and department officials (DHET), for sharing with me their experiences, perceptions and expectations regarding the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges, as well as other educational reforms or changes taking place in the TVET sector. Surely, without your support this study would not have been possible.
- All college principals' and deputy principals' personal assistants (PAs) at all nine public TVET colleges, for always making it possible for me to meet their supervisors.
- The principal of Thekwini TVET college, Mr N.E. Mchunu, for persuading some of his counterparts (college principals) to participate in this study when I had given up hope.
- All my friends, for their encouragement, for giving me a space and for supporting in different ways during this study. Thank you so much, Bashokobezi, for being part of my life.
- A special appreciation goes to my best friend, Johnny Nxumalo, for taking my youngest daughter, Khwezi to school, whenever I was attending classes at the SBL in Midrand.
- A special appreciation also goes to Messrs. Barry Lelong, Erick Ngidi, Sikhumbuzo Ndlovu and Nkanyiso Mncwabe, for inspiring me when we were doing the Master of Business Leadership (MBL) degree, which shaped and paved the way for this second doctoral degree.
- My sister, Thandiwe and my niece, Philile, for their encouragement and moral support all the time.
- My dear children, Sithembile, Nqobile, Siyanda and Khwezi, for their understanding, love and believing in me. You are the most precious things that God gave me.
- Lastly and most importantly, my dear and best friend, Nonhlanhla Mbongwe, for her unwavering support, motivation and enduring love. No words can adequately express my appreciation for your support.

Without your support, collectively, I would not have been able to achieve this milestone.

DEDICATION

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to the following:

My children:

Sithembile, Nqobile, Siyanda and Khwezi.

The deceased:

- My mother, Thokozile, for everything, especially for making me realise that education is the key that opens the doors of ignorance. You may be gone, but you will never be forgotten, and you will always have a special place in my heart. I will always remember you saying, *Ngeliny'ilanga ngiyohamba, Siph*o (One day, I will go or die, Sipho). Although I knew that you were telling me the truth, it was difficult for me to swallow those words. Indeed, one day came and off you went. *May your soul rest in eternal peace.*
- My loving sister, Gugu, who decided to leave us immediately after the passing of our mother. As if the pains of our mother's passing were not enough, you followed her so soon, rubbing salt in wounds that we were still trying to nurse. "Rest in peace, Malal'ephenduka".
- My father, Gideon "S'kebhe Mketule". You left us too early, Nzima, and did not see us growing up.
- My grandmother, Esther Nonsonyama, and my aunt, Ntombikayise, for always being there for me. Without your support, I would not be what I am today.
- My uncles Mandlenkosi, Johannes and Abednego "Bhansela", for being good and sincere always.
- Lastly, all those who were close to me, especially my friends who are no more: "Rest in peace, guys". You will always be missed, but not forgotten. I did this second doctoral degree for you.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Globally, governments or policymakers struggle not only to create employment opportunities for the youth in their respective countries but also to address numerous challenges facing young people, including crime and poverty (Seeli, Baby & Rengma, 2020; Ugwoegbulem, 2022). Jumpah, Ampadu-Ameyaw and Owusu-Arthur (2020) maintain that policies and programmes that aim at tackling the challenges facing the youth, particularly unemployment, have yielded few results because these policies and programmes ignore some fundamental issues. Since any change in any country can be driven by education, the technical vocational education and training (TVET) sector is seen as a major solution to youth unemployment, poverty and the problem of skills development (Oviawe, 2018; Shefiu & Ayika, 2019; Mutebi & Kiplagat, 2022; Shi & Bangpan, 2022). However, Paterson, Herholdt, Keevy and Akoobhai (2021) argue that although the sector should provide work-relevant skills to the youth, the capacity of the labour market to absorb the young people is limited. Paterson et al. (2021), citing South Africa as an example maintains that employers, are of the view that the majority of work-seekers who may have technical skills lack employability skills, and this compromises their chances of employment.

The White Paper on Post-School Education, stressing the essential role of the TVET sector in South Africa, states that public TVET colleges should address the continuing unemployment rate through providing relevant education and training (Republic of South Africa – RSA, 2013; Sibiya & Nyembezi, 2018; Du Plooy & Du Preez, 2022). Not only can such training provide skills to students for the workplace and entrepreneurship, it can also help in sharpening the skills for those who are already employed and/or those individuals contemplating going into the job market. These public colleges help in addressing the socio-economic challenges facing South Africa. However, these colleges require strong, innovative and visionary strategic leaders not only to realise their intended goals and objectives, but also to remain competitive in this ever-changing world (Cortes & Herrmann, 2020; Abdullah, Nor, Abd Hamid, Harun, Koswara, Stapa, Mustapa, & Ahmad, 2021; Kılıç, 2022). Jaleha and Machuki (2018) maintain that

strategic leadership becomes more essential during times of uncertainties or when the organisation is confronted with challenges. Ojogiwa (2021) concurs that the performance of any organisation is influenced by the quality of its leadership. Research shows that leadership, particularly strategic leadership, is the catalyst for the success of any organisation (Hadrawi, 2018; Mjaku, 2020).

The increasing importance of TVET colleges worldwide compels the leaders and managers of these institutions to be well-informed about the developments and changes taking place (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). Studies show that the role and practice of leadership in the success of any organisation, including TVET colleges cannot be over-emphasised (Akpapere, Jengre & Mogre, 2019; Dube, Maradze, Ncube, Ndlovu & Shava, 2022). Undoubtedly, leadership should ensure that colleges, like other organisations transform in the right direction. Research argues that leadership is key in deciding the destiny not only of the TVET college but also of any type of organisation (Al Khajeh, 2018; Gachunga, Karanja & Kihara, 2020). Ogola (2019) states that organisations, irrespective of the type and/or orientation (profit or non-profit), triumph or fail to succeed because of the quality and ability of their leaders. Scholars acknowledge that the fate of any organisation is largely determined by the role its leaders (Mjaku, 2020; Nandasinghe, 2020). Because the performance of any organisation is dependent on the quality of its leadership, skills and capabilities required to ensure that leaders perform their tasks effectively should be identified and developed accordingly. Yet, Badenhorst and Radile (2018) claim that in South Africa, public TVET colleges are failing because of poor leadership and management skills among those assigned to lead and manage these institutions. Therefore, those that are tasked to lead these colleges in South Africa should be well-equipped with the necessary leadership skills and competencies, so that they can lead their colleges competently. Sobratee and Bodhanya (2018) posit that global challenges require leaders and organisations to adapt promptly to the ever-changing circumstances. The leaders of TVET colleges are no exception and they should ensure that all employees work towards the same goals for the success of their institutions. Elkhdr (2019) concurs that leaders should direct, encourage and inspire all people to ensure that the individuals keep focused on organisational goals. In addition, Elkhdr (2019) argues that any organisation that does not have an effective leader can hardly achieve its set goals.

According to Makgato and Moila (2019), the TVET sector is being promoted globally because it is viewed as the lynchpin for addressing unemployment, crime and poverty facing the youth worldwide. As a result, policymakers are putting more emphasis on these TVET colleges as they

are seen as panaceas for job creation and poverty alleviation (Joo, 2018; Bullem & Akpama, 2021). Allen (2020) maintains that no nation can grow in the absence of well-equipped technical and vocational institutions to train people, especially the youth, on practical skills. Policymakers place more attention on TVET colleges, hoping that these colleges will assist in national development through providing the required skills. Therefore, leaders of these institutions should acquire necessary leadership skills to enable them lead effectively (RSA, 2013; Shankar, 2021). Strategic leadership has become crucial to ensure that college leaders are able to provide effective leadership in times of uncertainty and environmental turbulence. However, some college principals or leaders struggle to lead their colleges effectively, probably because of the historical background of these colleges and/or the quality of leadership of those leading these colleges. Some of South African public colleges require support and interventions to enable them to perform optimally (RSA, 2013; Department of Higher Education and Training – DHET, 2018a). Hence, policymakers have intervened to assist those public colleges that are struggling to improve and perform effectively and efficiently. For these colleges to perform effectively and efficiently, they require competent leaders who would make appropriate decisions that would prevent the organisation from failing (Atthirawong, Bunnoiko & Panprung, 2021; Robescu, Fatol, Pascu & Draghici, 2021). Consequently, this would lead to effective and efficient organisational performance. Outstanding strategic leaders who would assist colleges to achieve their goals and objectives and succeed during these demanding times are essential.

Institutions, including public TVET colleges, require great leaders who do not only bring order out of chaos, but who also leave a mark after they have left the organisation (Pradeep & Prabhu, 2011; Shankar, 2021) and are crucial for the high performance and sustainability of their organisations. Everyone in the organisation needs to understand the role of their leaders to avoid ambiguity in the organisation and such understanding will enable people to work towards the common goals. Mubarak and Yusoff (2019) expect leaders to provide direction, guidance, support and good leadership to their subordinates, so that organisations can accomplish their goals and objectives successfully. Boughey and McKenna (2021), citing the changes that have engulfed the higher education sector globally, posit that if circumstances shift, leadership should also transform to influence and lead the subordinates accordingly. Leaders should be constantly developed and trained so that they cannot only see the need for change but they can also cope with the everchanging and demanding circumstances (Suklun, 2020; Shankar, 2021).

Organisations including TVET colleges can enhance their performance optimally through strategic leadership. Leaders should be strategic thinkers who cannot only look at the organisation holistically, but who can also identify and predict the expected or anticipated future needs of the organisation (Al-Basel & Soliman, 2020; Abdullah et al., 2021; Piórkowska, Witek-Crabb, Lichtarski, Wilczyński & Wrona, 2021). Abdullah et al. (2021) further state that strategic leaders are innovative thinkers who ensure competitiveness and continued success of their organisations. Literature reveals that successful organisations are those that are under the leadership of strategic leaders who have the ability to guide and utilise the human capacity to its fullest for the organisation to perform effectively (Hadrawi, 2018; Nyong'a & Maina, 2019). For any organisation to achieve the competitive advantage during these challenging times, leaders must be able to assess the situation or context in which they operate, know when to inspire their employees and know when to listen to them. As Benmira and Agboola (2021) put it, how well the leader handles different situations or contexts under different circumstances determines the effectiveness of the leader of that particular organisation. Literature alludes that an effective leader should be able to identify factors that can influence the organisation to perform effectively because effective leadership is fundamental to the success of any organisation (Issah, 2018; Akparep et al., 2019; Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

Central to assessing and measuring the performance of organisations are effectiveness and efficiency; increased effectiveness and efficiency ensure that the organisation achieves and maintains its strategic competitive advantage (Wilson, Wnuk, Silvander & Gorschek, 2018; Taouab & Issor, 2019). Alkaf, Yusliza, Saputra, Muhammad and Bon (2021) concur, arguing that efficiency and effectiveness are crucial in the performance of the organisation. Therefore, leaders should ensure that their organisations are not only effective, but also efficient in order to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors. Leaders, especially strategic leaders, play a significant role through their decisions and actions in influencing their subordinates to achieve organisational goals. Kerubo and Muturi (2019) regard strategic leadership as a significant factor in the performance of an organisation. Since organisational performance is dependent on employee performance, leaders should guide their subordinates (employees) in a manner that ensures that they understand the dynamics and complexity of their institutions. Gupta (2018) regards effective strategic leaders as those who can successfully encourage and motivate employees to follow their ideas. Such leaders create commitment among the employees for the successful performance of an organisation (Gupta, 2018; Waris, Khan, Ismail, Adeleke & Panigrahi 2018; Srour, Zein & Akhras, 2022). Although strategic leadership is regarded as a glue that holds the organisation together or a vehicle for controlling systems in an organisation,

Kabetu and Iravo (2018) opine that studies suggest that most organisations do not have strategic leaders with strategic skills and this affects the effectiveness and efficiency of these organisations.

Meanwhile, Rahman, Dey and Al-Amin (2019) state that organisations need flexible and adaptable leaders in order to achieve performance efficiency and effectiveness during these challenging times. For instance, effective strategic leaders are required to deal with the major changes in governance and policy that confronted the TVET sector, since South Africa became a democratic country in 1994. New ways of thinking and operating became important in the place of work; they emphasise the moulding and nurturing future leaders for both life and labour (Robertson, 2015; Starr, 2021). Robertson (2015) further states that leaders of TVET colleges should take cognisance of circumstances, challenges, demands and difficulties, which are brought by their new roles amidst change and transformation in higher education. Serfontein and Hough (2011b) argue that some TVET college principals are facing impediments that deter them from performing their tasks meticulously. Thus, a need exists to explore how strategic leaders can influence the performance of tertiary institutions, especially TVET colleges in general and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular, because they are very important in the development of nations globally. Needham (2019) argues that, in spite of the view that the sector is the panacea for economic challenges facing South Africa, little has been done to ensure that the sector fulfils its mandate. Realising the role that the sector plays or is supposed to perform in the socio-economic development of any nation, it was deemed necessary to investigate the leadership role played by the leaders of these colleges to enable them to achieve their set goals and objections. As a result, the researcher decided to undertake a study on the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province. Public vocational colleges are commonly known as public or state-owned TVET colleges. Thus, in this study, public vocational colleges refer to public or state-owned TVET colleges.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Higher education globally has been under tremendous pressure to transform over the past few years, South Africa being the most affected country because of its past history. In South Africa, the process of transformation started with a number of summits and other activities or engagements immediately after a democratic government was elected in 1994 (Adonis & Silinda, 2021; Prinsloo & Roberts, 2022). One of the major priorities has been to address the

inequalities and other remnants of apartheid in all spheres including the sector of higher learning. Meetings and summits of the sector of higher learning were not only aimed at addressing past imbalances but also at preparing for drastic changes in the sector. Consequently, many policies addressing the inequalities witnessed during the past era in tertiary institutions have been developed.

Discriminatory policies during the apartheid era limited access to certain groups, especially blacks, to higher education and reforms endeavour at accommodating those who were previously disadvantaged. However, Mzangwa (2019) argues that attempts at changing higher education policies have not benefitted most of those who were victims of apartheid with reference to access, equity and participation in tertiary education. Compounding the problem is the poor implementation of policies and poor monitoring of compliance with policies (Menon & Castrillon, 2019; Mzangwa, 2019). As a result, attempts to transform the system of higher education in South Africa have not been successful. Frantz, Marais and Du Plessis (2022) propose that higher education institutions should equip staff, especially leaders with new leadership skills in order for them to address challenges facing their institutions, including lack of funding, improving access and improving quality. Frantz et al. (2022) maintain that this could be done through leadership development programmes for academic and professional leaders. Suitable and effective programmes should be developed for these leaders to enable them guide and lead this particular sector competently. In 2009, the Department of Education was divided into two departments, namely, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The new established Department of Higher Education resulted in the creation of a single department that caters for all post-school institutions, including private and public TVET, universities and universities of technology, levy-grant institutions and related regulatory institutions (RSA, 2013; Ward, 2018). These institutions, including the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the National Skills Fund (NSF), workplace-based skills development systems, are required to work cooperatively. Although universities and TVET colleges are all regarded as higher education institutions, TVET colleges focus on vocational training and universities focus on teaching and research (RSA, 2013; Adetiba, 2019).

Mesuwini and Bomani (2021) state that TVET colleges are recommended because they focus on delivering skills, which industries require. For example, Oviawe (2018) states that the TVET focuses on learning by doing, which is practical work, instead of theoretical work. As accentuated in the White Paper on Post-School Education, the importance of the TVET sector is

to ensure that TVET colleges address high unemployment and other social ills such as crime, poverty, which are major concerns for both policymakers and the labour market alike in this country (cf. 1.1). Mesuwini and Bomani (2021) regard this sector as essential for the economy of any country because it provides technical skills to the learners, which prepare them for contributing to socio-economic and technological development or changes. Unemployment is closely linked to lack of skills and hence reskilling is considered a solution to unemployment (Allais & Marock, 2020; Habiyaemye, Habanabakize, & Nwosu, 2022). For Reddy, Wildschut, Luescher, Petersen and Rust (2018), unemployment is caused by a lack of skills in general or by the lack of appropriate skills to meet the necessary employment requirements. Maskaeva and Msafiri (2021) argue that the shortage of skills is a universal challenge facing most countries globally. However, this problem is more prevalent in developing countries. Hence, most countries are revitalising the TVET colleges, regarding them as a panacea to their challenges.

The skills shortage has negatively affected the growth of the economy in South Africa. Asmal, Bhorat, Culligan, Hofmeyr, Monnakgotla, Oosthuizen and Rooney (2020) attribute this shortage issue to various factors, including structural inequalities. Most economic and social challenges, which South Africa is experiencing currently, are the remnants of the apartheid era. For example, under apartheid, different races had different education systems, and education offered to black people was extremely inferior; this resulted in many social ills. To address the inequalities of the past, the country has introduced a number of reforms, including providing equal education for all. However, these attempts or policy amendments have not always been translated into reality for those who were marginalised during the apartheid era, who happen to be in the majority in South Africa (cf. 1.2). Mzangwa (2019) attributes the failure to achieve the intended goals, amongst other things, to poor implementation and lack of monitoring. Allais, Kgalema, Marock, Schöer, Sibiyi and Ramulongo (2020) agree, arguing that the failure of policies introduced to transform the education in South Africa was partly due to poor conceptualisation, which led to many unintended consequences. Unfortunately, these unintended results do not benefit the intended recipients.

1.2.1 The present system of higher education institutions in South Africa

Presently, the system of higher education in South Africa consists of universities that are Traditional, Comprehensive, or Universities of Technology, as well as TVET colleges, called higher education institutions (RSA, 2013; HRDC, 2019). The DHET oversees all activities of

these institutions of higher learning. These institutions (universities, universities of technology and TVET institutions) are all under the umbrella of DHET.

Currently, there are 26 universities in South Africa, which can be categorised as follows: six universities of technology focused on vocationally oriented education; nine comprehensive universities offering a combination of academic and vocational diplomas and degrees, and eleven traditional universities offering theoretically oriented university degrees (Cloete, Bunting & Van Schalkwyk, 2018; Ittmann, 2018). Traditional universities offer basic formative degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and the universities of technology offer mainly vocational or career-oriented undergraduate degrees and diplomas, including a limited number of Masters and Doctoral programmes (Cloete et al., 2018; Wilson, Wnuk, Silvander & Gorschek, 2018). On the other hand, TVETs offer programmes that are more practical (cf. 1.2). Private institutions also offer higher education, and these institutions do not get funding from the state. Private institutions are obliged to register with DHET and their programmes require accreditation from the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The importance of private TVET institutions in complementing the public TVET institutions and in addressing the shortage of skills in South Africa is well recognised (Akoojee, 2016; Ward, 2018). In South Africa, there are 627 private colleges, which operate alongside 50 public colleges (Ward, 2018; Zulu & Mutereko, 2020). However, the private colleges do not form part of this study.

In 1997 and 1998, the Higher Education Act of 1997 and the Further Education and Training (FET) Act of 1998 were passed, and these Acts revolutionised the landscape of South African higher education (RSA, 2013; Ward, 2018). As part of significant change, public universities in South Africa were reduced from 36 to 26, with three new universities established. Likewise, a number of private institutions of higher learning also emerged and this changed the nature and form of the higher education system in the country. Meanwhile, the passing of the FET Act of 1998 resulted in the formation of 50 public TVET colleges after 152 technical colleges had been merged. The 50 public colleges are found throughout the country and are distributed as follows: (i) Eastern Cape – eight colleges; (ii) Free State – four colleges; (iii) Gauteng – eight colleges; (iv) KwaZulu-Natal – nine colleges; (v) Limpopo – seven colleges; (vi) Mpumalanga – three colleges; (vii) Northern Cape – two colleges; (viii) North-West – three colleges and (ix) Western Cape – six colleges. Statistically, KwaZulu-Natal with nine colleges, has the highest number of public colleges and the province with the lowest number, which is two, is the Northern Cape,

despite the province being the largest province in the country. Since private TVET colleges do not form part of this study, the number of these colleges is not included in this study.

According to the Human Resource Development Council for South Africa (HRDCSA) (2014a), the provision of private TVET colleges is mainly skills development and short courses, which consist of 42% of their programmes; occupational qualifications consist of 41% of the programmes. Meanwhile, public TVET colleges offer the Report 191 (previously known as the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma/NATED) programme and National Curriculum Vocational (NCV) offerings, as well as some short skills programmes. The number of public TVET colleges per province after the merger are shown in Figure 1.1. However, private colleges are not included because they do not form part of this study.

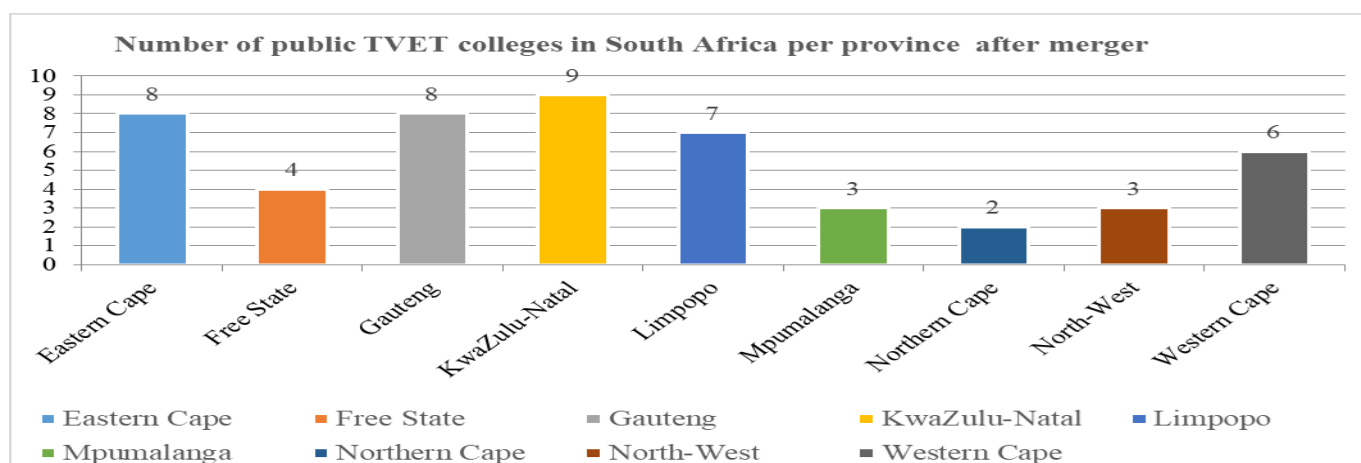


Figure 1.1: Number of public TVET colleges in South Africa per province, (Source DHET, 2017)

1.2.2 Contextualisation of TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal

Although the province of KwaZulu-Natal has many private TVET colleges, the focus of this study was only on public TVET colleges in the province. Therefore, no attempt had been made to discuss the private colleges because they do not form part of this study. Presently, KwaZulu-Natal province has nine state-owned TVET colleges.

Public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal are not unique in the country. Like other public colleges, they offer a variety of programmes at different levels and the dominant programmes

are found in Report 191 (NATED), which consists of N1 to N6, and the NCV programme, consisting of Level 2 to Level 4. The NCV programme was introduced in 2007 at public colleges in South Africa to address the skills shortage gap (Buthelezi, 2018; Engelbrecht, Spencer & Van Der Bijl, 2018; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018; Sebola, 2022). In spite of TVET colleges' intensified marketing strategies and vigorous marketing of the introduction of NCV programme in 2007 per government mandate, the NCV programme was not as attractive envisaged (Buthelezi, 2018; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2018). Compounding the problem of not meeting the expectations, the NCV programme lacked acceptance by industry and other relevant stakeholders (Buthelezi, 2018; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2018). Although the introduction of the NCV programme was meant to replace N1 to N3, the Department of Education forced by pressure from various sectors decided to halt the decision of phasing out N1 to N3 engineering programmes (Terblanche, 2017; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018).

Public TVET colleges also offer programmes like short skills courses, beside Report 191 and NCV programmes, but these short programmes are offered based on demand. Successful TVET systems should provide lifelong learning whereby people of all ages acquire knowledge and skills that are required to be, inter alia, economically productive citizens (Shaharuddin, Mokhtar & Isa, 2021; Sigdel, 2021). Like in all other provinces in the country, public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal have central offices and a number of campuses (sites). Central offices are a nucleus of the individual college, whereas campuses are centres (sites) for teaching and learning, where the academic staff is located. The management of the college located at the central office generally consists of the principal, three deputies (academic services, corporate services, and finance), and eight assistant directors (also known as assistant managers) for the following portfolios: curriculum, finance, human resource (HR), marketing and communication, quality, student support services (SSS), supply chain management (SCM) and TVET management information systems (TVETMIS). The college senior management team (SMT) consists of the principal and three deputy principals (academic services, corporate services & finance). The college principal fills the highest leadership position within the college structure and is responsible for providing leadership in all strategic areas at the college (Coastal KZN TVET College, 2020; Sithole, Wissink & Chiwawa, 2022).

The highest governing authority of the college is the college council, consisting of a majority external council member from various stakeholder constituencies, senior management (leaders) of the college (principal, deputy principals, the chief finance officer, and two employees, one

representing academic staff and another representing non-academic staff) and two members of student representative council (SRC). These two SRC members are the president of the student representative council and usually the secretary of the SRC (RSA, 2006; Sithole et al., 2022). The college council, as the highest decision-making body, performs or should perform an oversight role in terms of all the functions necessary to govern a public college, including organising and developing a strategic plan with certification rate/performance targets, the management staff of the college is responsible for the day-to-day running of the college (RSA, 2006; Sithole et al., 2022). Campus managers, as part of the college management team, oversee and monitor teaching and learning at a campus level. Campus managers stationed at campuses or sites are responsible and accountable for managing activities taking place at a campus level.

All public TVET colleges in all nine provinces in the country have almost the same structure. TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province, as in other provinces, are faced with various challenges. These include shortage of resources, lack of partnership between the public colleges and industry, inadequate funding and poor leadership. These challenges highlight the need to study this sector (Terblanche, 2017; Sithole et al., 2022).

1.3. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Major reforms and challenges facing higher education institutions globally place a heavy demand on those who lead these institutions (Robertson, 2015; Olo, Correia & Rego, 2021). These institutions require strong and effective leaders to address these challenges successfully. However, Field, Musset, and Álvarez-Galván (2014) posit that in South Africa, attempts to prepare college leaders or principals to carry out their tasks effectively have not yielded positive results. This is a major challenge on the social and economic development of the country because without proper training, college leaders will lack the capacity to introduce the necessary intervention policies to deal with the scourge of unemployment (Robertson & Frick, 2018; Boadu & Fatunbi, 2020). According to the European Union (2011), limited research has been conducted on leadership in TVET colleges. Although this gap was identified in 2011, there are still too few studies conducted on strategic leadership in the TVET sector (Rono, Bomet & Ayiro, 2019; Smit & Bester, 2022). More research on leadership, especially strategic leadership in TVET colleges, should be conducted. Different scholars have stressed the importance of strategic leadership in enhancing performance of any organisation, irrespective of whether the organisation is a profit or non-profit organisation (Simsek, Heavey & Fox, 2018; Bose &

Ndegwa, 2019; Ragul, 2021). Although literature revealed that strategic leadership can enhance the performance of non-profit organisations if utilised well, strategic leadership in the TVET sector has been neglected (Kitonga, Bichanga & Muema, 2016; Gachunga et al., 2020). The limited number of studies on strategic leadership in the TVET sector necessitate that more research should be conducted to investigate the role of strategic leadership on the performance of this sector, as a non-profit sector (Phipps & Burbach, 2010; Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). An enquiry into the role of strategic leadership to guide the performance of institutions of higher learning, especially public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, would assist in filling this void.

1.4. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

In view of the context and source of the problem stated, the aim and objectives of this research are identified as follows:

The primary research aim is to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions from the perspective of public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4.1. Research objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- (i) To identify and describe the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges;
- (ii) To identify and describe aspects of strategic leadership that contribute to the success of state TVET colleges;
- (iii) To determine stakeholders' perceptions regarding the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions, especially TVET colleges;
- (iv) To determine how these findings can contribute to strengthening the role of strategic leadership to guide and ensure that higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges, comply and perform accordingly.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

To accomplish the aim and objectives given above, the following research question and research sub-questions are formulated. The primary research question is as follows: What is the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions with particular reference to public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal?

1.5.1 Research sub-questions

The primary research question has been divided into sub-questions to make it manageable. Resolving the sub-questions subsequently results in answering the primary research question (Babchuk, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Wisse & Roeland, 2022). Thus, the researcher has formulated the below sub-questions:

- (i) What is the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions, especially TVET colleges?
- (ii) Which aspects of strategic leadership contribute to the success of a public TVET college?
- (iii) How do people perceive the role of strategic leadership in relation to guiding performance of public TVET colleges?
- (iv) How can these findings contribute to strengthening the role of strategic leadership to guide and ensure that higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges, comply and perform accordingly?

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

To enable the researcher to manage the research problem, he demarcated or limited it. Theofanidis and Fountouk (2018) maintain that boundaries of the problem must be established and/or the researcher must confine the problem area, so that the aim and objectives of the study can be achieved. Adhikari (2020) argues that a research problem or topic that is too broad or too narrow cannot be easily researched. While researching a too broad topic can be too cumbersome, researching a too narrow can be a challenge to the researcher as it can be difficult for him/her to find adequate literature (Rogers & Earnshaw, 2015; Adhikari, 2020). Therefore, the researcher should narrow down the research topic or problem so that it can be thoroughly or

effectively researched. As Adhikari (2020) suggests, a broad topic should be narrowed down to a specific topic that is suitable to research. Demarcating or limiting the problem made it easier for the researcher to manage it because he/she simple focused on the areas that have been identified. Following this idea, the research problem was demarcated, as discussed next.

The study looks at the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions from the perspective of public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Although 50 public TVET colleges exist in South Africa, this study was limited to only one province, that is, KwaZulu-Natal. Since KwaZulu-Natal was the only province involved in this study, one cannot rule out the possibility that a different picture could be obtained if all nine provinces in South Africa were involved in this study.

Various limitations, including financial constraints, limited time and resources, proximity and personal commitments, led to the researcher's choice to conduct a study only in one province. The other limitation for this study was the involvement of only senior managers/leaders. Obviously, their views of the sector (TVET) might be different from those of the non-managers. The afore-mentioned were limitations to the study. These limitations would have been addressed if more colleges, both public and private, and more participants in the province had been included in this study. However, the sample of chosen organisations (TVET colleges) and participants to be interviewed was consistent with qualitative research, which was used in the study. The researcher believed that this small sample would provide an in-depth understanding of the topic through the eyes of the participants (Mazibuko, 2003; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Smith & Little, 2018; Subedi, 2021).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Omodan (2020) regards research methodology as the steps that are taken by the researcher to address the research problem. It is a way of solving a problem systematically (Patel & Patel, 2019; Balwan, Balwan & Saba, 2022), and the science of studying how research is to be carried out. In essence, the means used by researchers to go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena is called research methodology. One may regard it as the study of methods through which knowledge is gained. Methodology is the work plan of research. Gray (2019) believes that various factors influence the researcher to choose a particular research methodology, depending on what the researcher wants to achieve with his or her study. Biasias

and Pollalis (2018) emphasise the importance of a suitable research methodology because it enables the researcher to conduct effective scientific research.

The researcher thought that qualitative research was appropriate for exploring the perceptions of various stakeholders, so that he could determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, especially state TVET colleges. A qualitative research method allowed the researcher to understand how participants interpret and make sense of their experiences in strategic leadership on the performance of TVET colleges (Mohajan, 2018; Robert, 2020; Tuckerman, Kaufman & Danchin, 2020). This suggests that the researcher should approach and comprehend the topic from the participants' perspective. The researcher was of the opinion that semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews would be appropriate for gaining a comprehensive understanding of this particular topic. He conducted individual interviews with senior public TVET college leaders. For the purpose of this study, principals of public TVET colleges and their deputies, as well as two DHET officials from KwaZulu-Natal Regional office were interviewed. In total, individual interviews were conducted with 31 participants (seven principals, 22 deputy principals, and two department senior officials).

According to Nassaji (2020), qualitative research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and non-numerical data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. It seeks to understand and explore the phenomenon in its natural setting. Sperling (2022) regards it (qualitative research) as a means for exploring, examining, describing and understanding the meaning that the individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem from the participants' world view. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) argue that, in spite of qualitative research having many approaches, all qualitative methods have two common foci: phenomena that occur in natural settings, that is, in the real world and involve the capture and study of the complexity of those phenomena.

Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to several strategies that share characteristics, which makes it difficult to define (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Mohajan, 2018; Young & Babchuk, 2019; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Smith and Sparkes (2020) regard qualitative research as a rich, varied and changing field whereby data gathered, analysed and interpreted is rich in its description of people, places and conversations that cannot be easily handled statistically. To understand the subject from the participants' point of view, the researcher used qualitative research. This concurs with what Ajjawi (2022) postulates:

qualitative research is concerned with understanding social phenomenon from the participants' perspective in a natural setting.

To gather data, qualitative researchers have to interact with the participants and there is no way that a qualitative researcher could understand the perspective and world of the participants, without intimate and extensive interaction with the participants during the study process (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Aspers & Corte, 2019; Abuhamda, Ismail & Bsharat, 2021). In addition, this is accomplished by using data collection research methods like interviews and observations whereby there is a continuous interaction between the researcher and the participants. In accordance with Mohajan (2018), a small number of participants was used and data were analysed inductively. This is the approach that the researcher adopted in this study. As the research methodology has been discussed in more detail in chapter four, a brief outline of the main methodological concerns of the study is provided here.

1.7.1 Research design

Research design is considered as a master plan that is used to specify how the study will be conducted starting from the research purpose or questions to the outcomes of the study (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Asenahabi, 2019). It provides the methods and procedures of how the needed information will be collected, analysed and presented. It is a plan that guides the researcher when collecting and analysing data needed to increase the understanding of a research topic or to assist the researcher in answering the research question (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Chivanga & Monyai, 2021). Once a research question has been formulated, the researcher should develop a research design. Careful planning of the overall design results in successful research. The researcher should decide on a plan and develop a plan indicating how he/she would conduct the research or study. A research design provides the overall structure for the procedures the researcher follows, the data collected, and the data analyses the researcher conducts (Ngozwana, 2018; Asenahabi, 2019).

Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) regard designing the research as an important step in conducting the study. The research design outlines procedures that the researcher has to follow when carrying out the study that answer questions such as when data be collected, from whom and under what conditions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Asenahabi, 2019). It indicates how

the study or research was set up, what happened to the participants and which methods of data gathering were used. In this study, a case study design was employed to explore and describe the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.

A case study was used in this study because a detailed and exhaustive study of the purposely selected group of information-rich participants would yield the intended outcome. This was in accordance with Chowdhury and Shil (2021), who postulate that a case study in qualitative research enables in-depth investigation of the research phenomena in context. In addition, the researcher opted for a case study because he wanted to interact with the participants intimately.

1.7.2 Population in the study

Since the intention of this study was not to generalise to a population but offer an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon, the researcher purposefully and intentionally selected individuals and sites to increase the credibility of the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Renjith, Yesodharan, Noronha, Ladd & George, 2021). The researcher used purposefulness to select the sample and the researcher based his decision on the fact that the selected individuals were knowledgeable about the undertaken topic (Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018; Luciani, Campbell, Tschirhart, Ausili & Jack, 2019). He purposefully selected nine public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province out of 50 public TVET colleges in South Africa. As college principals and their deputies are located at the central offices (head offices) of these TVET colleges, the arrangement was that the study was conducted at these respective central offices (head offices). No attempt was made to visit different campuses not only because public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province have campuses scattered all over the province but also because this study focused only on the principals and their deputies.

As already stated, the research studies the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, with particular emphasis on public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal from a South African perspective. The population for this study was from the perspective of the public TVET sector in KwaZulu-Natal. The target population for this study was the senior managers (principals & deputy principals) of the public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the department officials in the regional office. The number of public TVET colleges and the manner in which they are scattered over the whole province made it extremely difficult to

have a larger population. The researcher was aware that if more participants, for example, managers at the lower levels were involved in the study different findings might be obtained. Similarly, if all 50 colleges in South Africa (i.e. all nine provinces) were involved in the study, different findings might also have been obtained. Since all participants speak English, this language was used for interviews. The individual interviews took one hour on average and the maximum was 90 minutes.

1.7.3 Sampling method

According to Casteel and Bridier (2021), a sampling method is the approach that researchers use to obtain members of the sample. Selecting an appropriate study sample is very important: an appropriate, unbiased and robust sample can yield unbiased and robust outcomes. As Moser and Korstjens (2018) put it, the researcher should be careful when choosing key participants, and should be very careful when choosing the sample population (key participants), bearing in mind unforeseen circumstances. In this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling because it was a viable alternative due to the limitation of time and cost. This sample was selected based on the researcher's experience, his knowledge of the group selected, as well as the objectives of the study (Shaheen, Pradhan & Ranajee, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

The researcher in this study selected purposeful sampling to select participants and sites to learn and understand the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions focusing on public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. These participants were chosen on the basis that participants and sites would assist the researcher in understanding the phenomenon, as they were regarded as information-rich participants. In accordance with what Kyngäs, Mikkonen and Kääriäinen (2019) postulate, the researcher chose participants who he deemed knowledgeable about the research subject and could offer in-depth understanding and insight into the findings because of their positions and experiences in the education sector.

Likewise, Casteel and Bridier (2021) concur that individuals are selected because they have specific characteristics that attract the researcher. For this particular study, the researcher had identified public TVET colleges and their leaders (senior managers) in KwaZulu-Natal who met the needed features. Therefore, the study focused on state-owned TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher visited the college principals in person at their colleges to request

permission to conduct the research at their respective colleges; to ask them to participate in the study and to explain the nature of the research project. Follow-up letters detailing the nature of the research and assuring the protection of their privacy and the maintenance of confidentiality were then delivered personally to the participants by the researcher.

The emphasis of this research was on the strategic leadership role; individuals who were in a good position to have the overall picture of the institution were principals and their deputies. The researcher included these individuals in this study because the research required the involvement of people who operate at a high, strategic level in the institution. These individuals should know and understand what is required for the organisation to perform optimally. On the other hand, senior officials from the Regional Office (DHET) were included because they monitor the implementation of the policies, which are formulated at the national level. These individuals should not only know what is expected of college leaders, they should also provide support to the colleges. Middle managers (portfolio managers) and other employees were not included in this study as participants, because they operate at a lower level and their knowledge and understanding of strategic leadership may be limited. As a result, portfolio managers and other employees were not regarded as information-rich individuals for this particular study and were excluded in this study.

Guided by the title of this research, the researcher selected and conducted individual interviews with the following:

(i) Nine public TVET college principals. These principals were chosen because they were in charge of their respective colleges and were considered to be key stakeholders who possess in-depth knowledge about the TVET sector, as they are accounting officers, leaders, and managers. Principals were chosen, as they were thought to have knowledge not only about what was happening at their college, but also about external factors that may influence the performance of their respective colleges. Since these individuals were in-charge of these institutions, they were in a position to provide the desired information. However, seven college principals, instead of nine, participated in the study.

(ii) Twenty-eight (28) TVET deputy principals. Deputy principals are second in charge of their institutions. As a result, they were regarded as the most knowledgeable individuals of the key critical issues and areas and being in a better position to provide the necessary information. However, twenty-two deputy principals, instead of twenty-eight, participated in the study.

(iii) Two senior officials from the Regional Office (DHET) who are responsible for TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province. Interviews with two officials were conducted to ascertain what training and/or support were being offered to college senior management to assist colleges cope with changes taking place in higher education successfully. Officials from the department were also included in this study to cross-check or triangulate the information obtained from the college principals, as well as the information collected from deputy principals.

In total, 31 participants (seven college principals, twenty-two deputy principals, and two senior regional officials) took part in this study. These participants were not only chosen based on the accessibility and willingness of their organisations, but also because they would be able to provide useful information.

1.7.4 Data collection

Gundumogula (2021) regards the following as qualitative data collection methods or strategies: document reviews, interviews (individual & focus group interviews), open-ended surveys and observations. However, Thelwall and Nevill (2021) assert that the most prevalent methods for collecting data in qualitative research are interviews. In accordance with this line of thinking, the researcher conducted individual interviews.

Since in qualitative interviewing, the researcher is expected to ask open-ended questions, he prepared himself thoroughly for conducting these individual interviews. As already indicated, he chose individual interviews as data gathering strategies for this study. He concluded that personal interviews would be appropriate because they would allow both him and the participants flexibility to divulge more information, which would assist him in acquiring more information on the research questions (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Alamri, 2019). As a result, the researcher would be able to dig deeper to acquire the exact meanings that participants give to phenomena, experiences and social events. Individual interviews were conducted with the following participants: (i) seven TVET college principals, (ii) 22 deputy principals from TVET colleges, and (iii) two department senior officials responsible for TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. In total, 31 participants were interviewed individually (cf. 17). These participants were interviewed separately to allow them to express themselves freely and truthfully.

To ensure that all important issues were covered during the individual interviews or during the discussions with the participants, an interview guide was used. This interview guide was used just as a guide and did not dictate the shape of the interviews; participants were allowed not only to express themselves freely but also to bring up issues as they saw fit.

1.7.5 Trustworthiness of the research

According to Carcary (2020), qualitative researchers should establish the trustworthiness of their studies through using specific facets or criteria, which are fundamental aspects of qualitative research. Such criteria not only assist in checking the accuracy of the findings but they also assist the researcher in ensuring that the approach that he/she used is consistent across different studies and projects (Amin, Nørgaard, Cavaco, Witry, Hillman, Cernasev & Desselle, 2020; Carcary, 2020). According to Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020), qualitative research emphasises the importance of accuracy and credibility of information gathered by the researcher. Consequently, the researcher met the following criteria as a means of ensuring trustworthiness of this particular study: (i) credibility; (ii) dependability; (iii) transferability; (iv) confirmability and (v) authenticity. Korstjens and Moser (2018) regard these as the quality criteria for all qualitative research, which demonstrate the soundness of the study if properly applied. The researcher discussed these five elements (criteria) of trustworthiness comprehensively in chapter four, on the research methodology.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with different participants in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. He is of the view that conducting interviews with different individuals would help establish the credibility, honesty and rigour of the study. The use of individual meetings with different participants and observing their behaviour before and during the interviews, helped the researcher to determine the trustworthiness of the research. The researcher administered individual interviews with thirty-one (31) participants who were considered to be information-rich participants. He believed that the selection of information-rich participants should be considered as the first step to ensure that the study is trustworthy.

1.7.6 Ethical considerations

Wa-Mbaleka (2019) maintains that qualitative researchers must uphold the highest ethical standards in planning and conducting their studies. Ethical considerations should be used as a yardstick to ensure that the researcher's study is planned within the moral parameters. In this study, there are four important ethical issues considered: (i) informed consent – which means that potential participants should be fully informed about the process, procedures and risks of participating in the study and participants should give their consent; (ii) voluntary participation – this means that prospective participants should not be forced to participate in the study but should participate on their own volition; (iii) right to privacy or confidentiality/anonymity – this refers to protecting the privacy of the participants, not disclosing participants' names and those of their institutions, and (iv) truthfulness to professional colleagues – meaning that the researcher should report the outcomes of the study entirely and truthfully (Arifin, 2018; Wa-Mbaleka, 2019).

Wa-Mbaleka (2019) cautions that because of the nature of qualitative research, qualitative researchers should be extra careful with ethical considerations. Therefore, qualitative researchers should not only understand the importance of ethical standards but should also comply with them. In this study, participant and organisations' names and identities were protected by using pseudonyms. The researcher wrote official letters to the college principals requesting permission not only to conduct a study in their organisations, but also to ask them to be part of the study. Both the letter and the ethical clearance were hand-delivered. All participants were issued with consent forms requesting to confirm that they were not coerced to participate in the undertaken project, but they participated willingly.

Participants were offered the choice to decide if they were willing to participate in the study (Mazibuko, 2007; Xu, Baysari, Stocker, Leow, Day & Carland, 2020). Thus, participation was voluntary, and participants were advised that they could pull out from the study if they so wished, as their participation was not compulsory but voluntary. The researcher guaranteed the participants' confidentiality, which meant that their names and those of their colleges would remain anonymous. He tried to earn the trust of the participants by remaining honest with them throughout the study. This was done with the hope that participants would share honest responses and valuable information that they may have been more reluctant to divulge if they did not trust the researcher (Thurairajah, 2019; Kang & Hwang, 2021). To ensure that

participants express their views freely without fear of any kind of judgment during the interview process, a harmonious relationship with all participants before and during the interviews was created and maintained.

Ethical considerations will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

1.7.7 Data analysis

Akinyode and Khan (2018) stress the importance of providing detailed procedures when analysing qualitative data so that the qualitative results can be understood better by the reader. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) suggest that because of the voluminous amount of qualitative data, the qualitative researcher must be selective when deciding what to present in the study because not all data gathered through interviews can be presented. It was against this backdrop that after data had been gathered from the field, the researcher organised data into descriptive themes, analysed and interpreted data, and subsequently presented the findings in a written form. As a result, the collection of data does not end when data have been gathered, as the collected data still need to be analysed and presented. Data analysis in this research was done according to the nature of the tools employed in collecting data. This was in accordance with Hennink et al. (2020), who suggest that the analytic approach, procedures and decisions should be clear and transparent in order for readers, including those who are unfamiliar with qualitative data analysis, to follow the analytic approach leading to the conclusions presented by the reader. Archer (2018) maintains that data analysis does no longer rely on manual analysis but there are many qualitative software systems for coding and theme finding that the qualitative researcher can utilise.

Data analysis entails working with data, organising it, searching for patterns, synthesising it, and deriving what is important (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Taherdoost, 2020). The process of analysis involves the following: immersion in the data; coding; creating categories; identification of themes, and conceptualisation (Hennink et al., 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2021). In this study, data consist of the transcripts and notes taken before, during, and immediately after the interviews. In analysing the data, the researcher initially read the transcripts and the notes repeatedly to gain familiarity with them. Reading the transcripts and notes repeatedly assisted him in the search for commonalities, patterns, and regularities. After identifying emerging trends, the researcher then

developed themes, categories, and sub-categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Raadabadi, Ranjbar, Hashemi, Bahariniya & Zarezadeh, 2022). Data were organised through colour coding to come up with categories. Williams and Moser (2019) refer to coding as identifying, assembling or grouping, categorising, sorting and organising and putting together those portions of data that the researcher feels provide the same meaning or describe the same concept. He decided to split data into categories, so that he would be able to work efficiently with the data gathered. For personal reasons, no qualitative software was used to analyse data for this particular study.

1.8 THEORY UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Strategic leadership theory is the leading theory for this study. House and Baetz postulated this theory in 1979 (Kabetu & Iravo, 2018; Onchiekua & Ragui, 2019; Simiyu, Wanyama & Aliata, 2022). Özdemir, Çoban and Bozkurt (2020) maintain that strategic leadership theory developed by Hambrick and Mason in 1984 for the upper echelons shows that strategic decisions taken by senior managers impact significantly on the performance of the organisations. Strategic leadership theory claims that organisations perform effectively and efficiently if strategic leaders create and communicate clear vision and support the employees in the implementation of such a vision (M’Mugambi, Okeyo & Muthoka, 2021; Neyişci & Erdoğan, 2022). Thus, a theory of strategic leadership posits that leaders who are at the helm of an organisation are the ones on which the performance of an organisation and its long-term survival rest (Rono et al., 2019; Asif & Basit, 2020).

Yukl (2008) maintains that strategic leadership theory should include relevant aspects of the situation that influence the actions and decisions of top executives. Yukl (2008) believes that the theory should consider how multiple leaders in an organisation share power and interact to influence performance. Strategic leadership gives organisational leaders the ability to create and re-create reasons for the organisation’s continued existence. Strategic philosophies of leadership concern themselves with leadership of institutions, looking at the evolution of the organisation as a whole, including its changing aims and capabilities (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Farhan, 2021). Strategic leadership focuses on those activities with overall responsibility for the organisation that includes ceremonial heads of the organisation and members of what is referred to as the top management team or dominant coalition (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; O’Shannassy, 2021; Yun & Lee, 2021).

As employees not only replicate strategic decisions made by their leaders but also follow the vision set by these leaders, decisions and vision made by the strategic leaders influence the organisational performance (Özdemir et al., 2020; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Munga and Gakenia (2022) assert that strategic leadership theory assumes that organisations are reflections of their leaders. Thus, the values and beliefs of the leader frame how issues are interpreted and acted upon. The choices that leaders make then affect organisational performance. However, strategic leadership theory has come under severe attack, and several new theories have emerged as a result. For example, transformational leadership theory has become very important in the field of leadership. Peng, Liao and Sun (2020) postulate that transformational leadership has a major effect on the job satisfaction, commitment, motivation and performance of the employees. Since transformational leadership theory was developed by Burns in 1978, it has not only turned to be the most important theory but has also attracted more research attention than all other leadership theories combined (Chitiga, 2018; Harb & Sidani, 2019; Usman, 2020).

Regarding whether to use one of these new theories, especially transformational leadership theory, the researcher was of the view that one did not need to use it. In spite of transformational leadership theory having gained popularity over the past decades, Eisenberg, Post and DiTomaso (2019) warn that this theory is not suitable for all situations and should not be taken as a one-size-fits all theory. Chaplin-Cheyne (2021) concurs that transformational leadership theory ignores the impact of situational and contextual factors. Yukl (2008) argues that strategic leadership theory emphasises the necessity of vital elements of financial performance influencing a company: efficiency, innovative adaptation, and human capital. One form of influence is the use of task, relations, and change-oriented leadership behaviours. Another type of influence relates to management decisions about strategy, programmes and systems and organisational structure. Despite several new theories having emerged after strategic leadership theory, strategic leadership theory was considered as the most appropriate theory for this particular study because the researcher wanted to investigate how the top management of the public colleges influence strategic decision-making at their colleges (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017; Asikhia & Mba, 2021; Ragul, 2021). This theory helped to understand the effective communication of strategic direction on the performance of an organisation (Kabetu & Iravo, 2018; Munga & Gakenia, 2022; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research looked at the role of strategic leadership in giving direction to the performance of higher education institutions, especially performance of public TVET colleges and the researcher is of the view that the study would help to shed more light on the role strategic leadership has or should have in guiding people, processes and performance at these colleges. The researcher hoped that the study would elucidate how strategic leadership is aligned or should be aligned to organisational performance. Serfontein (2010) asserts that not many studies have been undertaken on strategic leadership in South Africa, except for a minimal number of doctoral degrees. However, none of these studies has focused directly on the impact of strategic leadership on the operational management and performance of public organisations in South Africa. Although Serfontein's work (a thesis) was done many years ago, very little has since been done to address this gap, especially on strategic leadership and TVET colleges, both in the local and international spectrum. This study was seen as a point of departure for further studies on this topic, so that programmes can be developed to better capacitate the leadership at colleges.

The researcher hoped that this study would also help policymakers, TVET college fraternity, business experts, and other researchers, become aware of the role that strategic leadership has or should have in guiding the performance of TVET colleges. Findings could assist policymakers, scholars, educational practitioners and experts, including other relevant key stakeholders working on TVET to gain a better understanding of how leadership can contribute to achieving the objectives of TVET policy (European Union, 2011; Robertson & Frick, 2018). This would assist in ensuring that those with an interest in TVET colleges understand the influence of strategic leadership not only on the performance of TVET colleges, but also on the socio-economic development of the country. The researcher identified a gap in knowledge on strategic leadership and its role in guiding the performance of institutions of higher learning, especially TVET colleges. This research, therefore, attempted to address this knowledge gap by focusing on the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges, which has not been done previously.

Consequently, the study would not only add to the canon of literature, but would have value to the South African context, which is lacking in the area of strategic leadership, especially in TVET colleges. This is in accordance with Lear's (2012) findings that there was a great need for

more research studies on strategic leadership, especially within the South African context. The study would help to equip present and future strategic leaders with the necessary skills and competencies required to achieve and sustain competitive advantage for their organisations and to deal with ever-changing contexts, environments and technologies.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

To clarify the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges, unpacking of concepts that have a strong bearing on the research topic was necessary, especially terms or concepts that readers may not be familiar with or to which the researcher may have ascribed specific meanings and interpretations in the study. Kumaramkandath (2021) suggests that concepts that might have confusing meanings must be defined in an operationalised manner or how they would be empirically measured. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) opine that concepts should be defined and clarified to avoid any possibility of them being misconstrued. Without a keen understanding of specific ideas or terms, readers may find it difficult to determine whether the researcher successfully addressed the proposal in the problem statement. One should note, however, the lack of absolute unanimity when it comes to definitions or explanations of concepts. Definitions were chosen because of how the researcher intended to use them in his/her research. For the purpose of this study, TVET colleges, organisational performance, and strategic leadership were clarified (defined), as they are key concepts in the research topic:

TVET colleges

According to Obidile, Obi and Ikpat (2020), TVET is a type of education and training that prepares and equips students by providing them skills required by the labour market so that these individuals can gain employment or to acquire self-employment. Oviawe (2018) states that the TVET sector provides the individual with the required and skills for an individual to enter and progress in a particular field of work in the workplace. The TVET sector prepares students for skilful performance on practical tasks. The sector provides skills, which are required to address the unemployment problem faced by the youth across the globe. The TVET sector has been recognised throughout the world as a tool for empowering people. Effective TVET colleges can help in preparing people with skills, so that they can be employable, alleviate poverty and increase the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country (Ali Asadullah, 2019; Iro-Idoro, Jimoh & Jolaade, 2020; Bello & Muhammad, 2021; Ike, Okanya & Opeyemi, 2020). On

the basis of these definitions, therefore, for this study, TVET colleges are regarded as institutions that can change the socioeconomics of the country by providing individuals with skills and knowledge required for employment purposes. These colleges provide or should provide vocational training and relevant skills to ensure that graduates are employable or they become entrepreneurs.

Organisational performance

Lee and Kim (2020) argue that different definitions of performance have been put forward by organisational and management fields based on their perceptions and experiences. According to Conțu (2018:398), performance refers to the degree to which then, with some informational, financial and human resources, positions itself effectively on the business market". Doval (2020) asserts that organisational performance is when then has achieved its goals and objectives. However, Demeke and Tao (2020) argue that there is no single agreed upon definition of the concept of performance because of its subjective nature. In this study, performance is regarded as the extent of how then meets and/or fulfils the goals and objectives that it has set for itself. It means assessing and analysing the performance of then against its set goals and objectives. It refers to comparing the projected outcomes and the actual outcomes achieved. It looks at how effective and efficient the performance of an in the achievement of its set goals and objectives (Rehman, Mohamed & Ayoup, 2019; Evwierhurhoma & Oga, 2020; Bunteng, 2022). In other words, the performance of an determines its success or failure.

Strategic leadership

Different definitions or clarifications of the concept of strategic leadership based on different intellectual orientations exist (Bhattacharyya & Jha, 2018; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Alayoubi, Al Shobaki & Abu-Naser, 2020). Alayoubi et al. (2020) regard strategic leadership as the ability of the leader to develop a strategic vision for the entire institution and to unpack that vision and mission to the employees for them to understand in order to create a strategic change, as well as to mobilise all resources towards achieving the vision of the organisation. Mjaku (2020) concurs, saying that strategic leaders have the ability to create an enabling environment and/or ethos that would influence the attitude, motivation and behaviour of the employees to work towards accomplishing the goals and objectives of the organisation. The strategic leader should have a clear understanding of the entire organisation, including the surroundings within which

strategic leaders operate. However, literature suggests that strategic leadership is not always a one-person show; other members play a critical role either directly or indirectly (cf. 1.8). For this research, strategic leadership involves not only being at the forefront of changes but also being proactive and having abilities and competencies to guide and direct the subordinates in the right direction at all times. Therefore, the ability of the leader to influence, encourage, motivate and inspire employees to work towards achieving the goals and objectives of the organisation is of paramount importance (Susilo, 2018; Noviyanti, Syofyan & Evanita, 2019; Willis, Kinyua & Muchemi, 2022).

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study has six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: Chapter one offers an orientation to the problem, problem formulation, aims and methodology to be followed. It is the general introduction and overview of the study.

Chapter Two: This chapter comprises a literature review that gives a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. Chapter two examines studies and theories of leadership, particularly strategic leadership and how strategic leadership influences the performance of public institutions of higher learning. Emphasis was placed on how strategic leadership influences public vocational colleges because this was the core of this study. Thus, the influence of the role of strategic leadership on the performance of public institutions of higher education, especially public TVET colleges are explored in this chapter.

Chapter Three: This chapter also focuses on literature, specifically that dealing with a theoretical background of the institutions of higher learning, particularly the TVET sector. It looks not only at the transformation that is taking place, but also at how it is perceived globally. Again, the focus is on TVET colleges and the role these colleges, particularly public colleges play in the economic development of the country. This chapter also explores the background of TVET colleges.

Chapter Four: This chapter focuses on the research methodology and the procedures that were followed in the study. It discusses the approach followed when the study was conducted, and focuses on the collection and analysis of data. In short, the chapter provides the steps that were followed to investigate the research problem.

Chapter Five: In this chapter, an exposition of data analysis was given. An analysis of data collected is offered, and the findings of the research are presented.

Chapter Six: This final chapter deals with the synopsis of the findings arising from the study. Problematic areas of the study were discussed. A conclusion on the study is drawn, and possible areas for further study are suggested.

1.12 SUMMARY

Several public TVET colleges in the country, including some in KwaZulu-Natal, have been put under administration because of mismanagement and mal-administration. Evidence suggests that although there are some excellent colleges, the performance of some public colleges in South Africa are below the expected and required performance (cf. 1.1). Lack of necessary skills, for example, leadership competencies in some college leaders, are considered one of the significant attributes that leads to underperformance. Perceptions are rife that many senior TVET college leaders do not invest significantly in the strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and review, and that this has an impact on the performance of these colleges. It is argued that some if not most college leaders spend most of the time attending operational matters because they are more comfortable with operational and management roles rather than strategic ones. This is in accordance with what Castellanos and George (2020) postulate, that generally most Chief Executive Officers focus on strategic management, instead of focusing on strategic leadership. Castellanos and George (2020) are of the view that Chief Executive Officers prioritise management over leadership because they are uncomfortable and do not have confidence in dealing with strategic issues. Although one cannot use a blanket approach, this is also true with some college principals.

This study endeavoured to explore questions regarding the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges. The researcher opted for a qualitative approach using individual interviews to collect data. The data gathering was limited to public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, it was imperative that a literature review of relevant scholarly studies be conducted locally as well as internationally. This assisted the researcher in establishing how the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of institutions of higher learning, especially public TVET colleges, in particular, is viewed both locally and internationally. The review of literature is conducted in chapters two and three.

CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The complexity of changes, challenges and uncertainties that face institutions of higher learning globally have placed severe pressure on the leadership role, especially the strategic leadership role of these institutions over the past years. Focus has been turned not just to strategic leadership but to strong and effective strategic leadership because it is viewed as a catalyst for the successful performance of any organisation, including the higher education institutions which are faced with dynamic and complex challenges (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Rahman, Othman, Yajid, Rahman, Yaakob, Masri, Ramli & Ibrahim, 2018). “Every company or organisation of any type must have and require a strategic leader and/or the highest manager who must run the leadership and/or management wheel for the company as a whole” (Christian, Christiananta & Koesmono, 2018:923). The focus of this chapter is not merely on what strategic leadership is, but the impact it has on higher education institutions, all stakeholders, especially students and employees, and its strategic leadership role in ensuring that the challenges facing institutions of higher learning, are addressed (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Khera, 2018).

This research focuses on the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of public higher education institutions, specifically, TVET colleges. However, the focal point of this chapter and the study as a whole, is strategic leadership in the non-profit sector, that is, the public TVET sector, and the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of this sector. As Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015:6) argue, “educational leaders are the driving force behind the growth of the nation”. This theoretical debate is to investigate the context of strategic leadership and its success on improving non-profit organisations, particularly the higher education sector.

2.2 THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR THE PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

The strategic leadership framework serves as the frame of reference and the basis for all the decisions and actions of any organisation concerning leadership (Davies & Davies, 2004; Mistarihi, 2021). The framework provides direction and guidance to ensure that the desired organisational performance and goals are achieved (Davies & Davies, 2004; Rosea, Hongb, Munapc, Baayah, Ahmadd, Akhirf, Hamidg & Cayzerh, 2019). Starr (2018) claims that although varied reasons lead to the adoption of a strategic leadership framework, the provision of a common language is one of the important reasons for adopting a strategic leadership framework. According to Starr (2018), a framework is important because it presents a fundamental structure which assists in understanding the complex reforms in leadership meanings and approaches. Furthermore, a framework provides a way to assess and monitor differences in leadership approaches that can improve organisational performance (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Lola & Paul, 2018; Starr, 2018).

Without a framework, there is a possibility of falling into intentional blindness and omitting critical factors in articulating the problem frame cognitively (Bhardwaj, Crocker, Sims, & Wang, 2018; Starr, 2018). Clearly, the adage that leaders are born, is fading. Nowadays, a good leader should possess knowledge, commitment, and the ability to deal with different situations successfully and skills to interact and negotiate effectively with different people at different levels (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Folarin, 2021). Supporting the view that leaders are made, not born, Eydman (2019) states that effective leaders are made through continuous and various training, education, different experiences and circumstances. Therefore, to handle the uncertainties, complexities and the ever-evolving challenges, leaders in both profit and non-profit organisations need to sharpen their leadership skills continuously. This will ensure that leaders execute their respective tasks competently. Schutte, Barkhuizen and Swanepoel (2014) stress the importance of strategic leadership competence, which forms a basis for assessment and training policies for job compliance, including the building of capacity to anticipate the internal and external environments of organisations.

According to Schutte et al. (2014), this concept relates directly to the changing modalities of organisational performance appearing in the early 1980s. For higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges to perform effectively, these institutions need to pay more

attention to the competence or ability of their members. Guillot (n.d.) argues that no individual can possess all the necessary competencies that are required for strategic leadership, but one of the outstanding skills is vision, because vision allows the strategic leader to focus on the future and on building the organisation for that future. It is important to build a framework of understanding of what strategic leadership comprises (Davies & Davies, 2004; Belias & Trihas, 2022). Schutte et al. (2014) concur, noting that complexities, uncertainties and the ever-changing challenges are forcing all organisations, including the public sector, to reconsider the manner in which they operate. For any organisation to operate successfully in this technological world, strategic leaders need to have a global mind-set (Hitt, Haynes, & Serpa, 2010; Schoemaker, Heaton & Teece, 2018; Subrahmanyam, 2018; Islam, Osman, Othman & Raihan, 2019; Shankar, 2021). Donkor, Dongmei and Sekyere (2021) argue that leaders and managers should adopt appropriate leadership behaviours to improve the performance and commitment of the employees.

Hitt et al. (2010) assert that because of global changes, those in leadership positions, especially strategic leaders must take cognisance of the implications of their decisions, as well as the manner in which they deal with global challenges, because whatever these individuals do must ensure that their organisation fits within a global competitive landscape. Serfontein and Hough (2011b) maintain that the major challenge facing most leaders, is the absence of succession plans in most organisations and when takeover takes place, new leaders struggle to handle non-performance and poor results. Robertson (2015) concurs, arguing that there are no leadership programmes designed for leaders in the TVET sector in South Africa. Inevitably, without proper and adequate training and development in the necessary competencies, TVET college leaders will struggle to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively.

2.2.1 The scope and organisation of strategic leadership

Guillot (n.d.) asserts that it is extremely difficult to define the scope of strategic leadership in its totality. Likewise, Lear (2012) states that it is always a challenge to define the scope of strategic leadership because of its broadness and complexity. As Guillot (n.d.:10) puts it, it is easier to recognise strategic leadership in action than defining or describing it. Irtaimah (2018) regards strategic leadership as the capability of the leader to anticipate, envision and maintain flexibility and to empower others to create strategic change as necessary. Lear (2012) sees a strategic leader as a person who thinks strategically and works with others to initiate changes for the

betterment of the organisation. Irtaimeh (2018) regards strategic leadership as a complex form of leadership in organisations, since strategic leaders need to have the ability to manage through others. Previously, strategic leadership was viewed as the activity belonging to the upper management levels, whereby the upper management was expected to provide strategies and long-range forecasting for their organisations (Olaka, Lewa & Kiriri, 2017; Tao, He, Wang & Ke, 2021). Boal (2004) regards strategic leadership as a series of decisions and activities, both process-oriented and substantive in nature, through which, over time, the past, the present and the future of the organisation coalesces. Thus, strategic leaders must acknowledge where their institutions come from, where they are and where they would like to be. In so doing, they have to be honest and realistic about their strengths and weaknesses, so that they can deal with threats, organisational risks and take opportunities to take their organisations forward. Therefore, it is necessary for periodic reporting and reviewing the organisational performance against its strategic goals and objectives.

Research shows that the major role of all strategic leaders is to develop ideas and a clear vision for the organisation (Asif & Basit, 2020; Kılıç, 2022; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). As Mjaku (2020) puts it, for the successful performance of any organisation, strategic leaders have a significant role, as they plan, support, provide direction to the organisation and evaluate its performance. Certainly, effective strategic leaders must be capable of interacting and accommodating others both internally and externally, so that the organisation can achieve its goals in complex and uncertain environments (Asif & Basit, 2020; Belias & Trihas, 2022). Schaedle, Graf-Vlachy and König (2021) maintain that scholars acknowledge the role of strategic leadership during times of uncertainties and turbulence, including managing organisational crises during difficult times; strategic leaders develop strategies to tackle the unknown. Schaedler et al. (2021) conclude that because of the importance of strategic leaders' role in organisational crises, scholarly interest in strategic leadership has increased substantially. According to Guillot (n.d.), this type of leadership involves watching things keenly and carefully in order to ensure that everything goes accordingly in an organisation. Nyong'a and Maina (2019) regard strategic leadership as a multifaceted activity because it does not only encompass the management of people through others, it also ensures that organisations are able to deal successfully with changes that are at centre stage globally. Amos (2006) states that strategic leadership is about understanding not only the entire organisation but also the environment wherein the organisation operates, and being able to make strategic changes using other people, so that goals of the organisation are accomplished and the organisation is able to compete successfully in a global world. Gupta

(2018) is of the view that it helps organisations to perform effectively and efficiently in highly competitive environments.

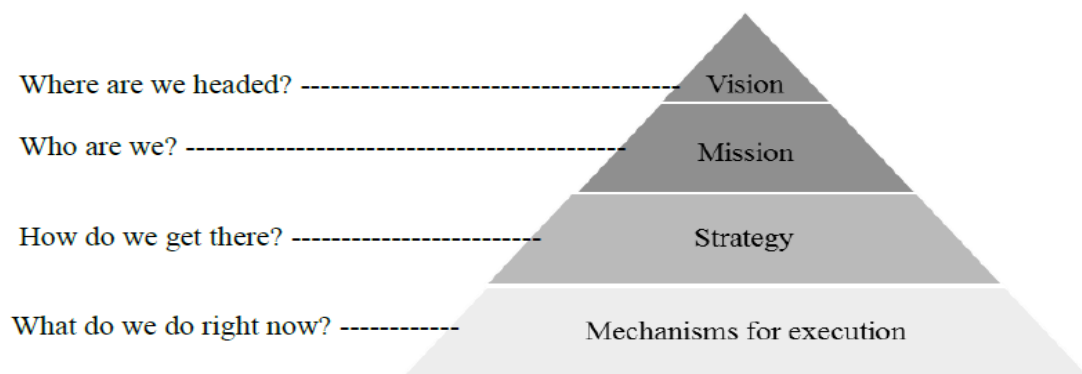
Like most other concepts, strategic leadership can be only understood well, if one looks at it in the context in which it is being organised. According to Mjaku (2020), an organisation can only be transformed through strategic leadership whereby the strategic leader uses a positive vision, values, culture and right strategies to transform the organisation. Ogola (2019) regards strategic leadership as the style used by top leaders to articulate purpose, objectives and influence strategic decisions that have significant impact on effective strategy implementation to ensure competitive advantage. According to Elkhdr (2019), strategic leadership is considered to be:

- (i) Wide in scope – Strategic leaders view the organisation in its totality and what happens in the organisation, including actions and decisions taken in one section, part of the organisation or department within the organisation affects the other parts, section or departments; as a result, the organisation is seen as interdependent and interconnected;
- (ii) Future-oriented – Although strategic leaders work in the present, their main focus is on the future and they always want to integrate short-term goals with long-term goals. Strategic leaders are goal-oriented and they motivate their subordinates to work aggressively, so that such goals could be achieved and
- (iii) Change focused – Strategic leaders always focus on making changes or delivering new things in the organisation because they do not want their organisation to remain stagnant. They do not only drive organisational change but they also ensure that such changes are cascaded to the people at all levels, so that everyone understands the change and its implications.

Irtaimh (2018) regards strategic leadership as one of the key solutions to respond to the various levels of unprecedented situations, emanating from increasing environmental turbulence. Irtaimh further states that the majority of organisations struggle to cope with the increasing uncertainty, complexities and complicated demands because leaders lack the necessary skills and competencies. In South Africa, several public TVET colleges have been put under administration because of various challenges, including maladministration, because of poor leadership (cf. 1.12). If strategic leaders want to succeed in exercising their strategic leadership role, they should be able to interact and work with all stakeholders, both internal and external, for the benefit of the organisation (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Alayoubi et al., 2020; Belias & Trihas, 2022). This is in accordance with what Dahri, Amin and Waseem (2019) state, that internal and external aspects have a major bearing on strategic leadership. While the

organisation's structure, vision, values, goals, strategy, students, employees and management style are regarded as internal elements, parents, community members, employers and partners such as SETAs, competitors, donors and government are considered as external elements (Dahri et al., 2019; Mjaku, 2020). Therefore, strategic leaders should have strategies to ensure that there is a harmonious balance between what is happening inside the organisation and what happens outside the organisation. Strategic leaders should ensure that there is harmony between the organisation and the surrounding environment (Bhardwaj & Jain, 2019; Shah & Agarwal, 2020; Munga & Gakenia, 2022). Without a clear understanding and proper application of these domains (concepts), manager's efforts to exercise strategic leadership are fruitless (Daft, 2018).

Stumpf and Mullen (1991) maintain that vision, mission, strategy, and execution can help managers in answering the following questions: (i) Why are we doing what we are doing? (ii) Where do we want to be in the future? (iii) What do we need to accomplish, and by when? and (iv) How are we going to get there from here? Daft (2018) is of the view that organisations need a clear vision for the future, if they want to achieve long-term goals. TVET colleges are no exceptions. Figure 2.1 shows the domain of strategic leadership, including the levels that make it up. Each of the levels in Figure 2.1 is critical to support the others to function effectively (Daft, 2018).



Adapted from Daft (2018:398)

Figure 2.1: The domain of strategic leadership, adapted from Daft (2018:398).

According to Goettler Associates (2019), strategic leadership ensures that all efforts of the organisations are directed towards achieving the vision of the organisation. Goettler Associates (2019) further state that the benefits of strategic leadership are huge to the organisation. The organisation should bring its vision, mission, and goals into alignment with its plans and

practices to: (i) Take ownership of its future vigorously – instead of allowing history and habits to drive it forward; (ii) Evoke contributions by developing strategies to use in order to gain support of all stakeholders, (iii) Ensure that the available resources are adequately and appropriately organised for the benefit of the organisation and the community at large; (iv) Improve its performance in critical areas, and (v) Become a den for producing new leaders.

2.2.2 The essence of strategic leadership

Whether in a developed or emerging economy, an astute leader is needed to steer an organisation through the murky waters of the ever-changing, complex, and uncertain competitive environment (Hitt & Ireland, 2002; Mahdi & Almsafir, 2014). For organisations to navigate these challenging environments successfully, it is imperative that those who are leading these organisations at all levels must recruit capable individuals, develop them and manage them and all resources effectively (Hitt & Ireland, 2002; Mahdi & Almsafir, 2014). Hitt and Ireland (2002) state that it is not enough to understand how to manage resources; strategic leaders must manage the available resources well for their organisations to achieve competitive advantages over their competitors. Because all managerial activities and workload for the executives revolve around managing resources, managing resources should be regarded as the essence of strategic leadership (Hitt & Ireland, 2002; Mahdi & Almsafir, 2014). According to Hitt and Ireland (2002), human capital and social capital are essential resources that strategic leaders have at their disposal when performing their duties. Mahdi and Nassar (2021) find that human capital is about knowledge and skills of the entire workforce in an organisation. Mjaku (2020) argues that no organisation can transform successfully if the strategic leader as well as the entire workforce does not have proper strategies to transform that organisation.

According to Ireland and Hitt (1999), the magnitude to which strategic leaders exercise their strategic leadership role helps these leaders not only to outsmart but also to outperform their counterparts. Rowe (2001) concurs, stating that effective strategic leaders can influence others to work willingly to ensure that the institution yields the intended results. Organisations, including TVET colleges, can manage to achieve their agreed-upon goals if their leaders can influence their subordinates to perform optimally. Undoubtedly, strategic leaders should be able to bring about changes, using the abilities and talents of others in an organisation (Amos, 2007a; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Therefore, the strategic leader's role is to make sure that the vision for the organisation is created, strategies are developed, and a culture for change among the

subordinates is established. Nyong'a and Maina (2019) posit that strategic leadership is the driving force behind the vision, the direction and the improvement of an institution because strategic leaders influence the attitudes and behaviours of the employees.

The three cornerstones of strategic leadership, which are the capacity to learn, the capacity to change, and managerial wisdom are all parts of the essence of strategic leadership (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Wong, Gerras, Kidd, Pricone & Swengros, 2003). Boal and Hooijberg (2001) believe that the essence of strategic leadership lies in a leader's ability to develop these three capabilities in the organisation; strategic leaders can only be effective if they develop managerial wisdom and create and maintain absorptive and adaptive capacities. Absorptive capacity refers to the ability to resist or be insensitive to disturbances; adaptive capacity refers to the ability to adjust to changing conditions (García-Sánchez, García-Morales & Martín-Rojas, 2018; Yu, Schoon, Hawes, Lee, Park, Rao, Siebeneck & Ukkusuri, 2020; Rudberg & Karpouzoglou, 2022). Zaluski, Hedlund, Cordeiro and Sausen (2022) state that absorptive capacity is the ability of an organisation to learn, acquire, assimilate and take advantage of external knowledge. On the other hand, adaptive capacity tries to explain how an organisation can use its internal advantages and resources combined with the advantages that exist in the market. Organisations need to be flexible and should have adaptive capacity, so that they could be able to adapt (García-Sánchez, García-Morales & Martín-Rojas, 2018; Zaluski et al., 2022). Strategic flexibility is very important in the performance of an organisation because it allows an organisation to respond proactively and promptly in addressing challenges facing the organisation (Liyanaige & Weerasinghe, 2018; Umam & Sommanawat, 2019; Herhausen, Morgan, Brozović & Volberda, 2021; Wang, Cao, Xi & Chen, 2021).

Lazenby (2014) regards the essence of strategic leadership as the ability to think, make things happen, and to engage the support of employees and other people. Boal and Hooijberg (2001) contend that absorptive capacity can be found at both the individual and organisational levels because knowledge gained through learning and observation is used for the benefit of the organisation. Ragul (2021) states that the responsibility of ensuring that the organisation achieves its set goals falls on the shoulders of the strategic leader who should not only have vast knowledge about the organisation but should also be able to instill such knowledge into the subordinates because he/she has acquired adequate and appropriate skills and capabilities, which should enable him/her to inspire and encourage the employees or members towards achieving the set goals. Amos (2007a) believes that top-level executives should have strategic leadership

capabilities in order for them to formulate, change and implement strategy successfully. Many activities that are done successfully are attributed to strategic leaders and these individuals perform various roles, such as strategic decision-making, creation and communication of a vision for the future of the organisation; development of critical competencies and capabilities; development of organisational structures, processes, and controls; management of multiple constituencies; selecting and developing the next generation of leaders; sustaining a productive organisational culture, and the infusion of ethical value systems into the organisation's culture (Boal, 2004; Singh, Singh & Pandey, 2019). Serfontein and Hough (2011a) argue that great leaders are judged not only by their achievements during their tenure but also by what they eventually leave behind.

Ireland and Hitt (2005) opine that during the times of uncertainties and ever-changing challenges organisations need effective strategic leaders who would ensure that these organisations are able to enhance their performance in order to complete significantly in the turbulent and unpredictable environments. Ireland and Hitt (1999) doubt if any organisation can confront global challenges significantly without effective strategic leadership (cf. 1.1). Hidayah, Sule, Wirasasmita and Padmadisastra (2015) agree, stating that effective strategic leadership can be a solution to ensure that organisations succeed in a turbulent and uncertain environment. Hitt et al. (2010) state that the new technologies and increasing globalisation in the 21st century have brought changes that require strategic leaders to deal with turbulence and uncertainties that accompany these changes. These uncertainties and ambiguities force organisations and their strategic leaders to rethink the manner in which they formulate and implement their strategies of dealing with these revolutionary changes in order for these organisations to survive (Ireland & Hitt, 2005; Asri & Darma, 2020).

Although the success of any organisation is dependent on numerous factors, effective leadership is a major factor to the success of an organisation (Mata, Ghanib, Nazri & Jaafarc, 2019; Benmira & Agboola, 2021; Akinniyi & Adebakin, 2021). In spite of effective leadership, especially effective strategic leadership being stressed for the success of any institution of higher learning, evidence suggests that programmes for developing strategic leaders are scarce and this creates an impression that theory on development in strategic leadership caters only for the for-profit sector (Phipps & Burbach, 2010; Kitonga et al., 2016). Durie and Beshir (2016) raise concern about this scarcity, saying such scarcity can cost dearly, as these tertiary institutions cannot deal with the new challenges effectively. Undoubtedly, this can have negative effects on

the performance of these institutions and would result in their struggle to compete globally. It is, therefore, incumbent upon higher education institutions to prepare their leaders by providing them appropriate expertise, so that they are able to confront the ever-increasing challenges successfully (Dalcher, 2020; Frantz et al., 2022). Therefore, leadership development programmes should be offered in order to enable leaders to influence the performance and commitment of the employees positively (Roupenel, Rinfre & Grenier, 2019; Donkor et al., 2021).

Naidoo (2009) states that studies suggest that only a combination of managerial and visionary leadership can bail out these higher education institutions from this impasse. Lazenby (2014) concurs, adding that the qualities of managerial leaders and visionary leaders support each other, and successful organisations are led by leaders who possess expertise in both types of leadership.

2.2.3 Differences between managerial and visionary leadership

For strategic leadership to be effective, it should combine both managerial leadership and visionary leadership (Rowe, 2001; Nakir, Djati & Arafah, 2020). Although managerial leadership and visionary leadership cannot be seen as opposite sides of the same coin, they can and should coexist, as they complement each other. According to Rowe (2001), while managerial leadership is concerned with stability, order and the preservation of the existing order, visionary leadership is future-oriented, concerned with risk-taking. Visionary leaders take decisions independently but are influenced by what they anticipate for the future and they are not confined by their organisations. Atthirawong et al. (2021) state that visionary leadership is the ability to create and communicate the vision of the organisation, through guiding and directing the people to accomplish the goals of the institution successfully. Meanwhile, managerial leadership is important not only for employees but also to create conditions for continuous improvement and cooperation in the organisation (Gbemudu & Okoh, 2019; Čižikienė & Urmanavičius, 2021).

Managerial leaders are responsible for day-to-day activities and these leaders, being concerned with the areas of their functionality influence the actions, activities and decisions of their subordinates (Naidoo, 2009; Redmond, 2015; Ajila & Ibukun, 2019; Tipurić, 2022). Rowe (2001) asserts that managerial leaders are neither creative nor innovative; their role is to manage

what has already been created. Olaka et al. (2017) concur, stating that managerial leaders do not desire or dream about goals of the organisation, but they manage the activities of those whom they supervise, so that goals of the organisation are successfully achieved. Olaka et al. (2017) add that the main concern for the managerial leaders is to see that there is order in the organisation and all activities of the organisation are conducted efficiently. In contrast, visionary leadership influences how people should think and act (Rowe, 2001; Tipurić, 2022; Willis et al., 2022). Likewise, Olaka et al. (2017) denote that visionary leaders, unlike managerial leaders, are innovative and more proactive in shaping ideas and these individuals, more often than not, exert influence in determining the direction that the organisation should take in order to achieve its goals. These leaders do not shy from taking risks and are willing to venture out because they have a vision for the organisation (Olaka et al., 2017; Dunn & Jensen, 2021). Redmond (2015) maintains that managerial leaders are most likely to be seen as those who implement procedures, ensuring the organisation complies with the policies and regulations, rather than being creative, innovative and proactive to what the organisation may require to gain its competitive advantage.

Meanwhile, visionary leaders being dreamers develop their visions and sell them to their colleagues, so that such visions can be shared and adopted by the others and can change the thinking of colleagues towards a particular direction for the benefit of the organisation (Ani Marlia, Fahmy, Lukito, Prima Lita & Rahim, 2020; Willis et al., 2022). Redmond (2015) maintains that visionary leaders, as future-oriented leaders, focus on prolonged goals. Meanwhile, managerial leaders, tend to be reactive to situations and usually enforce decisions that have already been made somewhere else or by someone senior (Redmond, 2015; Tipurić, 2022). Naidoo (2009) claims that managerial leaders are always concerned about ensuring that the existing order is maintained and these leaders pay little attention to creativity and innovations to bring new organisational changes to improve the effectiveness of the organisation for the future. Visionary leaders are long-term thinkers and these leaders are not only concerned about bringing new changes, but they are also keen to strengthen the effectiveness of the organisation for future purposes. However, Rowe (2001) postulates that visionary leadership and managerial leadership should go hand-in-hand, if the organisation has to function effectively. Most organisations do not readily embrace visionary leaders if not supported by managerial leaders.

Likewise, Olaka et al. (2017) caution organisations to blend these types of leaderships (visionary leadership & managerial leadership) to avoid the danger of failing to reach their short-term

goals, instead of using one at the expense of the other. Alaka et al. (2017) further states that successful organisations are those organisations that combine both managerial leadership and visionary leadership. This supports what Naidoo (2009) propagates that a combination of the two leadership abilities would not only provide strategic leadership, but would also promote organisational effectiveness with maximum performance in the long-term, while ensuring short-term stability. This is in accordance with what Rowe (2001) states, that a strategic leader is a combination of a managerial leader who has no time to dream about the future and a visionary leader who always dreams about the future. Visionary leaders do not only dream, but they do something about their dreams to ensure that such dreams become a reality (Rowe, 2001; Ani Marlia et al., 2020). The key features of managerial and visionary leaderships are found below:

Table 2.1: Key features of managerial and visionary leadership

Managerial leadership	Visionary leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactive, unassertive attitude towards goals. Goals arise out of necessity, not desires and dreams. Goals are based on past events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive, shapers of ideas, changers of thoughts about desirabilities, possibilities, and necessities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sees the enabling process of work, which involves combining and interacting with people and ideas to establish strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work develops new choices, fresh perspectives on long-standing questions, evaluate, and take risks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are related to dependents on their status in decision-making processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas are important; relationships are based on empathy and intuition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of self is dependent on status in the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of self is not based on work status.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions and decisions are influenced by colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitudes and opinions influence others within the organisation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned with situations and day-to-day activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxious about ensuring the future of the organisation, manages and develops others.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern and comfort in functional areas of responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifunctional and integrative attitude to duties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert knowledge of their functional roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less knowledge than required in their functional areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to offer decisions based on value judgments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable making value-judgemental decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve in and supportive of goals set for a shorter period as a means to organisational performance enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that investment in human resources, innovation, and creation and maintenance of an effective culture ensures long-term viability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on management of the exchange and combination of overt knowledge and ensuring compliance with standard operating procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation for implicit knowledge and able to develop strategies as communal forms of tacit knowledge that promote enactment of a vision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise linear thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise non-linear thought.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterministic, namely, guarded by internal and external environments when making choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic thinkers, namely, always dreaming about making a mark in their respective organisations and the environment.

Extracted from Rowe (2001:87)

2.2.4 The importance of strategic leadership as a combination of managerial leadership and a visionary leadership

Scholars shifted their attention on leadership to top executives as they were seen as individuals who could strongly influence the formulation and implementation of a strategy, as well as the organisational performance at any sector (Sosik, Jung, Berson, Dionne & Jausi, 2005; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Ogola, 2019; Willis et al., 2022). Kabetu and Iravo (2018) regard leadership as a linchpin for the success of most if not all organisations. Certainly, leadership cannot be a panacea for improving the performance of organisations and/or ensuring that organisations adapt to new changes and challenges; leadership, however, plays a critical role in the performance of

any organisation. Ragul (2021) opines that strategic leaders should amass all the necessary and critical resources required, so that the organisation can accomplish its set goals. Hence, strategic leaders should have access to all key resources, such as winning the hearts of stakeholders and building great teams for human capital so that the organisation can perform effectively (Hitt & Ireland, 2002; Abbas, 2021).

Rowe (2001) states that people who work with strategic leaders are organised and more productive and this assists the organisation to accomplish its goals in less time. Rowe (2001) further states that those who work with strategic leaders acquire job satisfaction, they become creative and innovative and above all, they are prone to taking risks, knowing that their actions can enhance long-term sustainability. Gupta (2018) provides the characteristics of strategic leaders as follows: (i) Harmonious combination of managerial and visionary leadership; (ii) Emphasis on ethical behaviour and encourage value-based decision-making; (iii) Supervise daily activities and maintain long-term strategies to ensure the survival; (iv) Develop and execute strategies for short-term and long-term goals and preserving long-term goals; (v) Have the same firm, positive expectations of performance from self and all others, including superiors and peers; (vi) Ensure that strategic and financial controls are in place and preserved; (vii) Ensure implicit and explicit knowledge used and interchanged on individual as well as on different levels of the organisation, and (viii) Use holistic approach thinking patterns

These characteristics suggest that strategic leaders are crucial in addressing and solving the complex challenges faced by organisations, both for profit and for non-profit. For Gupta (2018), strategic leaders do not only end with identifying and providing solutions to the identified problems and/or risks, but their strategic leadership role is also significant in influencing others to think alike and this helps in ensuring that the organisation becomes competent.

2.2.5 Strategic leadership capabilities

Kabetu and Iravo (2018) state that many organisations are going to struggle to survive and grow in this ever-changing world without effective strategic leadership capabilities. Atthirawong et al. (2021) concur, stating that for organisations to be successful in these challenging and demanding times, they need to develop the capacities that would help to achieve their goals and objective optimally. This supports the views of Ireland and Hitt (2005), who suggest that the literature on strategic leadership emphasises that strategic leaders who show their capacity for

effective leadership have great value during these ever-changing, testing and challenging times. For Mahdi et al. (2021), social capital and human capital are key to strategic leadership; therefore, the capabilities of strategic leadership should focus on developing these two key areas. Hitt et al. (2010) regard the following as capabilities of strategic leadership: (i) develop and communicate a vision; (ii) build dynamic core competencies; (iii) emphasise and effectively use human capital; (iv) invest in the development of new technologies; (v) engage in valuable strategies; (vi) build and maintain an effective organisational culture; (vii) develop and implement balanced controls, and (viii) engage in ethical practices. These capabilities are a prerequisite for the leaders not only to set organisational direction to engender commitment but also to make them resilient to attain sustainability (Nwachukwu & Vu, 2020; Ojogiwa, 2021).

Hitt et al. (2010) argue that the development of a compelling vision needs the expertise of a strategic leader who is responsible for the ultimate functioning of the organisation. Khera (2018) asserts that strategic leadership should not be about top leaders since there are leaders at every level of the organisation and these leaders are also vital for strategic leadership. Thus, all leaders at every level of hierarchy in an organisation should play a crucial strategic leadership role to ensure that the organisation becomes competitive. Leaders at their respective levels should inspire their subordinates because strong and inspiring visions are associated with higher organisational performance and encourage employees to perform their tasks conscientiously (Daft, 2018; Munga & Gakenia, 2022).

2.2.6 Characteristics of strategic leaders

For strategic leaders to be effective and successful, they need to possess certain characteristics, qualities and attributes (Mistarihi, 2021; Munga & Gakenia, 2022). Amanchukwu et al. (2015) assert that certain characteristics distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Hidayah et al. (2015) regard strategic leaders as people who are supposed to be occupying the top level in an organisation should be long-term and critical thinkers, information seekers and have strong interpersonal relationships. As good strategists, these individuals should inspire and influence the subordinates at all times and should also understand the environments (both an internal & external milieu) in which they operate clearly. According to Jonyo, Ouma and Mosoti (2018), a major characteristic of strategic leadership is being able to express the vision and mission of the organisation to the colleagues properly and effectively. Kowo and Akinbola (2019) concur,

adding that the characteristics of strategic leadership influence the performance of the organisation.

Lazenby (2014) regards the following as characteristics of strategic leaders: (i) the ability to create and communicate a vision is one of the key attributes of a good strategic leader. Strong leaders must have a clear and compelling vision of where the organisation should go in the future; (ii) the ability to instill commitment. Strategic leaders must demonstrate commitment to the vision of the organisation through their actions and words; (iii) the willingness to delegate and empower. High-performance strategic leaders are skilled to empower others; (iv) the ability to make tough decisions. Sometimes these decisions may be risky so they must be resolute in their belief in what is in the best interests of the organisation, and (v) the crucial characteristic that strategic leaders should have is emotional intelligence, which is regarded as the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate one's own and others' feelings and emotions (Lazenby, 2014; Giulia, Giulia & Paola, 2019; Sfetcu, 2020).

Studies suggest that characteristics of strategic leadership are revealed by the traits, abilities and behaviours of strategic leaders. Davies (2003) regards the ability to be intuitive and sharp in judgement, as the main characteristic of strategic leaders because this enables strategic leaders to choose the optimum time to make changes. Davies and Davies (2004) identify the following characteristics of individuals who fulfil a strategic leadership role: (i) strategic leaders have a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present; (ii) strategic leaders prioritise their strategic thinking and learning; (iii) strategic leaders create mental models to frame their understanding and practice, and (iv) strategic leaders have robust personal and professional networks. A person with these characteristics can fulfil a strategic leadership role successfully (Davies & Davies, 2004; Mjaku, 2020).

Davies and Davies (2004), pinpointing factors associated with strategic leadership, both at organisational and individual levels, maintain that strategic leaders should have the organisational ability to be strategically oriented. According to Davies and Davies (2004), strategic leaders involve themselves in the following five key activities: (i) direction setting; (ii) translating strategy into action; (iii) aligning the people and the organisation to the strategy; (iv) determining effective intervention, and (v) developing strategic capabilities. Schoemaker et al. (2018) identify the following abilities of strategic leaders: (i) anticipating ability – this ability refers to evaluating and responding to signals from the organisation's business environment for

the struggle against rivals; (ii) challenging ability – this ability relates to thinking creatively and finding creative solutions for problem solving; (iii) interpreting ability – this ability refers to developing hypotheses about dynamic environmental conditions; (iv) deciding ability – this ability refers to generating and evaluating excess options for forming an organisation's strategies and designing its future; (v) aligning ability – this ability refers to motivating employees around the strategic vision and values, and (vi) learning ability – this ability refers to knowledge acquisition from the external instead of the internal environment.

Effective strategic leadership actions enable organisations to use strategic management processes successfully, which culminate in positive and good outcomes (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2007; Mjaku, 2020). Mubarak and Yusoff (2019) argue that, without effective leadership, organisations can struggle to move towards the intended direction and achieve their objectives and goals because employees would see things in different ways and team effort would not be possible. Thompson and Martin (2010) summarise the qualities and skills of strategic leaders shown in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Qualities and skills of strategic leaders

Effective strategic leaders	Ineffective strategic leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have few initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and control an effective team of managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surround themselves with loyal supporters and not competent ones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe in success and in corporate strengths that can be exploited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not in touch with the customers' views and competitors' activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and synthesise essential developments, both inside and outside the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good new products and services are not developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively delegate, organisation and motivate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend too much time on external activities and not on organisational issues

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have credibility and competence in exercising power and creating change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy his or her power and status but do not add real value to the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have implementation skills; getting things done which requires drive, decisiveness and dynamism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore or not tolerate discordant views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persevere and persist in pursuing the vision and mission 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the flexibility to change strategies, structure and style 	

Adapted from Thompson and Martin (2010:407)

Ireland, Hoskisson and Hitt (2009) believe that individuals should enhance their abilities so that they can function as effective strategic leaders in the 2^{1st} century. Ireland et al. (2009) advise that it is very important that strategic leaders are curious and willing to learn continuously, so that they can pick up challenges and address them even before others in an organisation become aware of them. Ireland et al. (2009) list the following as rules of effective strategic leadership that tomorrow's strategic leaders should not only emphasise but should also familiarise themselves with the following: (i) leaders place attention on others, not on themselves. A strategic leader orients to 'them' (the stakeholders but especially employees) not 'self'; (ii) leaders learn everything possible about their organisations to gain tactical views, and (iii) leaders allow individuals to explain the outcomes of their performance. However, leaders always bear the brunt for the overall performance of the organisation.

Onchiekua and Ragui (2019) argue that because leadership is the pinnacle of any organisation that needs to succeed, leaders should identify the best principles to adopt for the organisation to achieve its goals. Kowo and Akinbola (2019) posit that organisations can succeed and survive these turbulent and uncertain environments through effective strategic leadership. Maina (2021) concurs, adding that effective strategic leadership is the backbone of all organisations and successful organisations are led by effective strategic leadership. Maina (2021) further states that in organisations where effective strategic leadership is lacking or does not exist, such organisations struggle to perform outstandingly.

2.2.7 The role of a strategic leader in an organisation

Since strategic leadership is the cornerstone for the success of any organisation, it is critical that criteria required by the strategic leaders to have their organisations accomplish their goals should be identified and well understood (Lear, n.d.; Kahwaji, Eddin & Palalic, 2020). Lazenby (2014) states that the strategic leader should have the ability not only to make things happen but more importantly to ensure that his/her actions always bring about positive results in the organisation. Literature regards strategic leaders as those who perform many activities wearing as many hats as the variety of roles they take on, such as strategic decision making, creation, and communication of a view of the future; development of critical competencies and capabilities; development of structures, processes, and controls in the organisation; management of many constituencies; selection and development of future generations of leaders; sustaining an effective organisational culture and infusing ethical value systems into the organisation's culture (cf. 2.2.3).

Effective strategic leadership is a determining factor in the creation of high-performance organisations. This occurs when strategic leaders perform charismatic and architectural (instrumental) roles effectively and both roles are significant (De Vries, 1996; Kvedaravičius, Skaržauskienė & Palaima, 2009). While the focus of a charismatic role is mainly on establishing and gaining support for a winning vision and direction, empowering and encouraging employees to work enthusiastically (Adiguzel & Cakir, 2020; Jamal & Bakar, 2021), the architectural role focuses on building an appropriate organisational structure with systems for controlling and rewarding people (De Vries, 1996; Thompson & Martin, 2010; Kollenscher, Popper & Ronen, 2018). For any strategy to be accepted and implemented effectively, there should be a buy-in by the implementers (Thompson & Martin, 2010; Jamal & Bakar, 2021). Therefore, people should not only see the need of implementing such a strategy but should also own the strategy. Likewise, De Vries (1996) maintains that the leader's role is questioned in some quarters and those who question the significance of this leadership role are of the view that the importance of this role is extremely overrated. According to De Vries (1996), the proponents of this view assert that organisations are influenced by an environment where these organisations function more than being influenced by leadership, since leadership is only static in the system. Supporters of this view purport that a leader is subjected to both internal organisational and external constraints (De Vries, 1996; Alkaf et al., 2021) because the performance of any organisation is influenced by both internal and external factors of the organisation. According to

Conțu (2020), the performance of an organisation does not only depend on the leader’s capability to create an effective working climate but also on the ability to lead a team that would work conscientiously for the success of the organisation.

This view is in accordance with Boal and Hooijberg’s (2001) postulations that the teamwork between an effective strategic leader and other senior management team members could enhance strategic leadership effectiveness, and this subsequently leads to higher organisational performance. Figure 2.2 shows the roles played by the strategic leader.

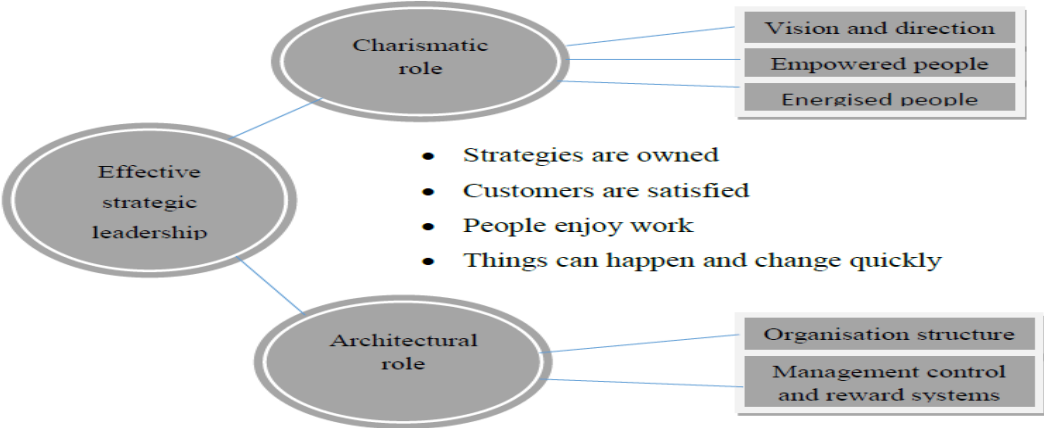


Figure 2.2: Strategic leadership roles, adapted from Thompson and Martin (2010:400).

Aboudahr (2021) states that a quality education system is dependent on the role that leaders of that particular education system play. Therefore, leaders of institutions of higher education need not only to review how they lead or should lead their institutions, they should also develop new strategies that can be used so that their institutions can be competitive during these uncertain times. According to Durie and Beshir (2016), several studies have given details of the necessary abilities that those tasked to lead higher education institutions should have. Durie and Beshir (2016) regard the following as essential elements for identifying effective leadership in higher education institutions: teaching leadership; leadership in the field of research; a leaning towards strategic networking and vision; transformational and collaborative leadership; fair and efficient management, development and recognition of performance, and interpersonal skills.

Sathye (2004) elaborates that teaching leadership refers, for example, to bring new ideas about teaching to the department or create excitement about teaching. Research leadership can be evidenced, for example, by inspiring respect as a researcher or leading by example. Strategic

vision and networking are demonstrated by furthering the interests of the department across the university. Collaborative and motivational leadership is demonstrated, among others, by honesty, integrity and openness. Fair and efficient management is evidenced by delegation, highly organised working of the department, and getting things done with little resistance. Developing and recognition of performance includes aspects such as praising and sustaining the success of the staff of the department and giving good feedback for improvement. Interpersonal skills refer to communicating well and having concern for others.

Amanchukwu et al. (2015) state that effective strategic leaders inspire, motivate and direct activities of others, so that the group or organisational goals can be attained. Meanwhile ineffective leaders are unable to make any positive contribution to the growth of the organisation. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) assert that leaders should be visionary and should show creativity, flexibility, inspiration and innovation. Furthermore, an effective leader should be courageous and should not only be able to initiate changes but also to ensure that people support and implement such changes in the organisation. Amos (2006) maintains that for any strategic leader to be successful in performing strategic leadership roles, a strategic leader must be a strategic thinker and be emotionally intelligent. Cavaness, Picchioni and Fleshman (2020) assert that during these changing and challenging times, emotional intelligence has become an integral part of leadership. According to Cavaness et al. (2020), effective leaders are those who have a considerable degree of emotional intelligence, who are able to understand and manage emotions. Therefore, a good leader should not only have a greater understanding of his/her own emotions and the emotions of others but should also possess the necessary skills to control his/her emotions. Leaders are able to achieve desired results because emotional intelligence allows them to use the type of leadership that is suitable for any particular situation (Amos, 2006; Issah, 2018).

Doğru (2019) regards the following as some of the functions or roles of strategic leadership: (i) the integration of societal ethics with organisational ethics; (ii) the alignment of philosophies regarding the roles of leader, society and organisational constituents and the enactment of those philosophies, and (iii) the alignment of the organisation with respect to influence and power in society. Thompson and Martin (2010) summarise the responsibilities of the strategic leader as follows: (i) leading the organisation on behalf of all relevant stakeholders; (ii) giving guidance and direction, so that all stakeholders can understand the mission and the purpose of the organisation; (iii) developing and ensuring that all changes introduced are effectively

implemented; (iv) supervising, monitoring and controlling all activities for the betterment of the institution, and (v) providing policies and guidelines and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders comply.

Rahman et al. (2019) ascribe the success of any organisation to how organisational strategy and leadership are implemented. However, Rahman et al. (2019) argue that most organisations struggle to match leadership with their organisational strategies. As a result, these organisations struggle to achieve their goals. Ragul (2021) states that strategic leaders should not only be certain of what they want their organisations to achieve but they should also be able to communicate their intentions to employees or their subordinates unequivocally so that the people under their leadership understand what is required of them. Otherwise, if the vision, mission and goals of the organisation are not properly communicated, employees perform their tasks in a hit-and-miss fashion.

The King III Report (2009) includes the following five moral duties for strategic leaders and company directors: (i) conscience – intellectual honesty is vital for strategic leaders and directors who should always work with a conscience and do everything in the best interests of the organisation and all its stakeholders; (ii) care – strategic leaders and directors must be caring and they must devote serious attention to the affairs of the organisation; (iii) competence – strategic leaders and directors should have the knowledge, competence, and skills required for governing the organisation effectively; (iv) commitment – strategic leaders and directors should be committed to performing their duties and responsibilities, and (v) courage – strategic leaders and directors should have the courage to act with integrity in all strategic decisions and activities. Castellanos and George (2020) concur but argue that most top leaders, like Chief Executive Officers/Directors do strategic management, instead of doing strategic leadership. According to Castellanos and George (2020), their duties involve internal and external functions, since they have to monitor the activities of the management and also have to be involved in the strategic direction of the organisation.

2.2.8 Strategic leader as a change agent

According to Wulandari, Supriyanto, Qomaruddin, Damayanti and Laksono (2020), strategic leaders provide a strategic role in the process of organisational change and this role of leading change is not always easy. Zainol, Kowang, Hee, Fei and Kadir (2021) concur, asserting that

effective strategic leaders must take a lead in formulating and ensuring that the change introduced is not only implemented but is also sustained. Although school leaders must be responsible for leading change in their respective institutions as strategic leaders, the study conducted by Acton reveals that these leaders had not received much training on how to effectively influence change (Acton, 2021). “The role of leading changes is on a leader’s hands” (Zainol et al., 2021:4). The role of strategic leadership is crucial throughout the process of change to support the success of the organisational change (Wulandari et al., 2020; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Zainol et al. (2021) maintain that leaders need to acquire strong skills in change management in order to be able to become successful change agents. Hamlin and Russ-Eft (2019) find that the role of the change agent includes the following: to understand the organisation and make sense of the organisational dynamics taking place; to develop appropriate organisational change and development strategies; to implement them effectively, and to assess how effective the strategies have been in execution. Leaders of change must ensure that people who are led, including organisations themselves, adapt to the changing and complex environments in order to survive, especially during uncertain times. However, this can only be possible if the change agent understands the organisational structure, functions, culture and the dynamics of that particular organisation extensively (Mwaura, Chepkilot & Tanui, 2018; Hamlet & Russ-Eft, 2019).

Although the organisational change is predominantly initiated from above, organisational change can also be initiated from below. In cases where employees initiate an organisational change, they become change agents and leaders or managers become change recipients (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Rousseau & Ten Have, 2022). Likewise, Wulandari et al. (2020) concur, arguing that anyone can act as a change agent depending on the circumstances, conditions and/or situation but the success of an organisational change is mostly influenced by the support of the leaders in the organisation. Thus, well-developed leadership skills and capabilities are required for anyone to deal with challenging and complex changes experienced by most organisations globally. Institutions of higher learning should have leaders who are capable of facilitating complex transformation process successfully (Hidayah et al., 2015; Msila, 2022).

Hidayah et al. (2015) note that transformational leadership or strategic leadership is one where the leader can make changes, which can help in creating a better future for the organisation. As change agents, strategic leaders should be able to envision and influence all stakeholders in their organisation to make strategic changes as required (Mwaura, 2018; Belias & Trihas, 2022). For

any organisation to succeed under the current challenges that place heavy demands on the leadership of organisations in different spheres, leaders of these organisations should perform a strategic leadership role (Hidayah et al., 2015; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). In addition, for any organisation to survive and succeed under difficult conditions, that organisation should respond positively to the internal and external conditions of the environment within which the organisation operates. Hence, Amos (2006) recommends that strategic leaders need to review and change their strategies periodically in responding to the environment. Strategic leaders should be mindful of effects that changes might have on socio-economic, political and technological factors at local and global levels (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001) in order to develop strategies to deal with challenges and opportunities brought by these changes meticulously (Gupta, 2018; Mac Giolla Phádraig, 2022).

Davies (2003) maintains that strategic leaders have a coherent and perceptive map of the existing state or position of the organisation and can envisage how that map needs to change and develop into the future. They use this knowledge to build a vision of where the organisation needs to be. Davies (2003) argues that to turn that vision into reality, strategic leaders need to be able to communicate the map and vision to others to engage them in the process of designing the future direction of the organisation. Thompson and Martin (2010) concur, stating that vision or idea alone is inadequate. The leader must persuade others – customers, partners, employees, and suppliers – to see the vision, share it, and above all, support it. Literature on strategic leadership suggests that strategic leaders who have various areas of knowledge and expertise can identify changes needed before everyone else has noticed and provide strategies needed to implement such changes successfully (Aliabadi & Salimzadeh, 2016). Boal and Schultz (2007) assert that strategic leadership pushes organisations out of stasis and to the edge of chaos; without it, no significant change can emerge. As guides for interactions with other agents, strategic leaders use many different ways to achieve balance, as they form part of complex systems and adaptation (Boal & Schultz, 2007; Hallo, Nguyen, Gorod & Tran, 2020).

Hidayah et al. (2015) moot that strategic leadership as an agent of change should do as follows: (i) motivate for punctual completion of work; (ii) evaluate the work of subordinates and provide immediate feedback; (iii) ensure that every employee performs the work in accordance with the targets set; (iv) give all employees adequate facilities to be able to complete the task well; (v) allow employees to make significant contributions to the achievement of institutional goals, and (vi) have confidence in each employee to make decisions related to their work.

Ross, Leonard and Inayatullah (2022) note that the pace of modern technology is too fast such that leaders around the globe struggle to keep pace with this change within their organisations. Compounding the problem is that leaders have also to deal with the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), which force organisations to make unprecedented decisions (Ramakrishnan, 2021; Ross et al., 2022). Added to the changes that organisations, together with their leaders struggle to handle is the organisation on, which plays a pivotal role in the work environment and most occupations (Cortellazzo, Bruni & Zampieri, 2019; Hai, Van & Thi Tuyet, 2021; Klus & Müller, 2021). Strategic leaders identify obstacles that may confront their organisations in the future and prepare for those eventualities (Serfontein, 2010; Hendriks & Reddy, 2020; Tipurić, 2022).

2.2.9 Strategic leaders managing contextual challenges

Changes and the ever-increasing challenges taking place globally necessitate the need for better leadership at all levels (Souba, 2014; Junnaid, Miralam & Jeet, 2020; Fry & Egel, 2021). Organisations cannot be effective unless leaders, especially strategic leaders are aware of the contextual factors and the challenges they present that might have an impact on their professional activities (Wolhuter, Van der Walt & Steyn, 2016; Neyişci & Erdoğan, 2022). However, being aware is not enough; leaders should be able to take instantaneous actions to address or deal with whatever challenges they face. Souba (2014) moots that leadership can only happen when the person in a leadership position is taking actions, allocating resources, taking a stand on various issues and making his/her stand known to those who are being led.

Changes being witnessed in all spheres worldwide because of organisations' call for strategic leaders with the potential to lead organisations to success (Onkoba, Omari & Ngacho, 2017; Sobratee & Bodhanya, 2018; Willis et al., 2022). Onkoba et al. (2017) maintain that these leaders should be able to expand their horizons, see the bigger picture and focus more on intended outcomes. Effective strategic leaders determine the performance of their organisations because they forge the internal and external relationship among different stakeholders (Asif & Basit, 2020; Belias & Trihas, 2022). Jaleha and Machuki (2018) claim that it has become apparent that strategic leadership plays a critical part in organisational change and this influences the performance of the organisation. However, Jaleha and Machuki (2018) caution that change should not be hastily implemented because hasty implementation may have a negative impact on the performance of the organisation.

Hidayah et al. (2015) argue that strategic leaders understand their organisations and their surroundings, including technological advancements and the effects that technological changes have on the performance of their respective organisations. Amos (2007a), however, argues that there is a need for strategic leaders to surround themselves with leaders who have unique quality of leadership throughout the organisation that can assist in providing quality leadership at various levels. Certainly, strategic leadership is more than sitting around and visioning the future and being able to involve others or a team of leaders for the benefit of the organisation. The best leaders get the organisation to focus and to become involved primarily in what matters the most to the employees and stakeholders that the organisation serves.

Daft (2018) maintains that effective strategic leadership does not come naturally, but leaders can develop the necessary skills for thinking strategically and navigating uncertainty. Ramakrishnan (2021) opines that strategic leaders need to: (i) Set up incremental milestones, particularly when goals and priorities keep shifting. They need to develop consistent messaging and give clear direction; (ii) They must always have the big picture while trying to solve all challenges at hand; (iii) They must retain a clear vision over which judgments should be made while responding to rapidly unfolding scenarios; (iv) They must develop processes and concepts to test new ideas and existing challenges; (v) They must always be open to new opportunities without losing sight of the longer-term goals, and (vi) They should be open to communication among employees, encourage networks and develop interdisciplinary and collaborative teams.

Daft (2018) thinks that the only way of improving strategic leadership is that strategic leaders should identify their weak points in these skills and find a way to correct those weaknesses. Daft (2018) is of the view that organisations cannot perform effectively, if they are not led by firm strategic leaders.

2.3 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND THE TVET SECTOR

According to Majumdar (2018), various reforms in institutions of higher learning, particularly the TVET sector have created a multitude of challenges and opportunities for the system of higher education globally. Therefore, for TVET to cope with these changes and to remain relevant, TVET must adapt to meet the changing requirements. Majumdar (2018) regards this as an adaptation process that entails changing existing structures and practices. This process can be

driven effectively through strong leadership in all kinds of institutions concerned with TVET (Joo, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2021). Hidayah et al. (2015) are of the view that colleges must transform themselves if they want to help the societies in which they operate to transform. They argue that proper change can only happen if it is led by people who are deft, but it cannot happen on its own. Majumdar (2018), however, argues that many TVET institutions worldwide are struggling to make the necessary changes that the industry requires, as well as to stay connected to global developments. This challenge can be met by adopting strong strategic leadership. Many leaders who lead their organisations successfully use strategic leadership (cf. 1.1).

Sound strategic leadership will ensure that the bottleneck in effecting changes is adequately addressed. According to Majumdar (2018), effective leadership is perceived as a bottleneck in advancing the TVET agenda. For Majumdar (2018), effective TVET principals should have a very clear vision and understanding of the significant international developments in their field of work. Against this backdrop, Bogonko (2018) recommends that the right people with sound leadership skills should be placed in leadership positions to provide strategic leadership. The proponents of TVET colleges think that these colleges can address the social ills and economic challenges in their respective countries (Chinakwe & Njoku, 2019; Ike et al., 2020). Importantly, proper leadership programmes should be developed to ensure that people are well-prepared before taking leadership positions or those who are already in leadership positions are able to perform their tasks confidently and effectively. As Jabor et al. (2012) state, the TVET sector can only develop and improve its performance if it has good and perfect leadership at all levels.

According to Jabor et al. (2012), programmes for leadership in the TVET sector and other related activities need to be judged against the following criteria: (i) they produce beneficial effects on student' learning, as measured by test scores; (ii) they produce beneficial effects on student' attitudes and engagement; (iii) they produce improvement in employees, particularly teachers, motivation, capacity and performance; (iv) they promote equity and diversity; and (v) they encourage democracy and participation. Gyimah (2020) maintains that one of the unique features for the TVET sector is development in the economy of the world. This is supported by Rahardjo (2020), who maintains that some features of the TVET sector include (i) oriented towards individual performance in the workplace, and (ii) sensitivity to the development of the workplace.

2.3.1 Qualities of effective leadership in a TVET sector

Higher education institutions are confronted with unprecedented challenges, which compel leadership in these institutions to change their ways of doing things, so that they can accomplish goals set by these institutions. Compounding the problem more recently was the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (Nyame & Abedi-Boafo, 2020; Karakose, 2021; Du Plessis, Jansen van Vuuren, Simons, Frantz, Roman & Andipatin, 2022; Wang & Sun, 2022). Roache, Rowe-Holder and Muschette (2020) assert that global challenges require skilled and effective leadership in order to ensure that higher education plays their rightful role in their respective communities. Sathye (2004) regards leadership in tertiary institutions as being more diversified and complicated when compared to leadership in the other public and/or private entities. Sathye (2004) denotes that the difference between leadership in higher education institutions and leadership in other public and private institutions emanates from the fact that leadership in institutions of higher learning concentrate on maximising the values of stakeholders, like students, staff, government and the public at large. Leaders in institutions of higher learning must have greater competence to satisfy all of these diverse stakeholders at the same time (Durie & Beshir, 2016; Kurniady, Nurlatifah, Komariah & Sunaengsih, 2020; Mohamed Jais, Yahaya & Ghani, 2021).

Although the survival of the organisation is ultimately the responsibility of the top management or leaders at the top, good organisations are expected to have effective leaders at all levels within these organisations (Amos, 2007b; Nicolaidis & Duho, 2019). Ireland and Hitt (2005) list the following as the six components of effective strategic leadership: (i) setting goals or vision of the company; (ii) exploiting and maintaining core competencies; (iii) developing human assets; (iv) maintaining an effective organisational culture; (v) use of ethical practices, and (vi) establishing a balanced organisational control. These strategic leadership elements are the mainstay for the success of any organisation (Ireland & Hitt, 2005). Meanwhile, Dimitrios, Sakasa and Vlachosa (2013) regard the following as the most important elements of a strategic leader: (i) think strategically – strategic leadership is about leading, guiding, and influencing the group members to think strategically about their own competencies; (ii) ability to look at the big vision – strategic leadership requires the ability to predict and understand the work environment. It requires detachment and the ability to look at the broader vision. They have a generic point of view and a good working knowledge of many issues that are of organisational importance; (iii) change adaptability – adapting strategy to changing business requirements is the aim if a leader

wants to remain essential to business. The procedure of estimating the available leadership knowledge and gauging the team to lead the change to enable business to meet its objectives is change adaptability; (iv) dedication – powerful and effective leaders exhibit their dedication to the overall vision of the company and align their departmental vision to overall vision, and (v) motivation – strategic leaders must have a desire for work that goes beyond power and money, and they motivate their members to achieve objectives with authority and decisiveness.

Effective strategic leaders help organisations to analyse their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats efficiently for their own effectiveness. Through effective leadership, the organisation is able to bring new changes, new technology, reform the organisational structure and organisational risks and maximise the performance of the organisation, so that the organisation can gain competitive advantage (Hidayah et al., 2015; Hunitie, 2018). Kose and Kose (2019) posit that effective strategic leaders can adapt easily to the changing environmental conditions and direct the employees to new goals; this requires the leaders to have special strategic leadership competencies (Mistarihi, 2021).

2.3.2 The quality of teaching and learning at the TVET sector

Nadaf and Siddiqui (2019) assert that the importance of quality teaching in institutions of higher learning cannot be over-emphasised. Jeyaraj (2019) concurs, adding that quality teaching leads to effective learning. Jeyaraj further states that quality teaching should be responsive and reflective. Quality teaching should be responsive to student learning processes and learning styles. Those who teach should reflect as they think over what and how they teach and learn (Chang, 2019; Jeyraj, 2019; Abidin, Budayasa & Khabibah, 2021). Quality should not be viewed to as referring only to teaching and learning but also to the suitability of the curriculum to the societal and global needs, including the commitment of the lecturers and the students (George, Victoria & Monica, 2018; Brainard, 2021).

The quality and effectiveness of all education systems largely depend on the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms, workshops, laboratories, and other spaces in which education takes place. Good teaching and learning, active engagement of students, well-designed courses, and resources are necessary for the excellent provision of education (Makgato, n.d.a; Shukla, Dosaya, Nirban & Vavilala, 2020; Munna & Kalam, 2021). Makgato (n.d.a) further states that the provision of quality TVET is generally viewed as playing a vital role in promoting both

economic and socio-economic growth, increasing productivity, empowering citizens and alleviating poverty. The success of teaching and learning, however, is dependent on the competency of the head of the institution. Therefore, college principals or educational leaders should have a clear understanding of what lecturers and students do when they are interacting inside and/or outside the classroom.

Makgato (n.d.a) states that vocational education requires two types of expertise: teachers with work experience and workers with pedagogic knowledge and expertise. Makgato (n.d.a) maintains that there is limited research on acceptable and agreed vocational pedagogy in TVET. Scholars argue that most of the research studies on TVETs have focused on the systems level, such as skills needed and qualification/curriculum development (Lucas, 2014; Schulte, Moonpa, Sern & Phalason, 2020; Rosly, Hussin, Sidek & Jiea, 2020). It becomes necessary, therefore, to develop a well-grounded and useful theoretical underpinning for vocational pedagogy that will provide a structure in which vocational teachers can build quality, effective teaching and learning programmes (Makgato, n.d.a; Haßler & Haseloff, 2022). Realistically, TVET lecturers are expected to have expertise in the following foundational dimensions: formal subject or technical knowledge; pedagogic expertise, and practical workplace experience. However, Van der Bijl and Oosthuizen (2019) argue that very few TVET college lecturers have expertise in all these three dimensions.

TVET lecturers have a vital role in providing a competent workforce because this can assist in developing the socio-economic of the country. However, Van der Bijl and Oosthuizen (2019) believe that for these lecturers to perform their duties well, they need a good combination of experience and qualifications that can provide them with workforce-related competency, on the one hand and pedagogic competency, on the other. For Van der Bijl and Oosthuizen (2019), such qualifications can enable these lecturers to prepare their students adequately. However, Badenhorst and Radile (2018) maintain that most lecturers at TVET colleges fail to cope with numerous challenges faced by the sector because they are inadequately trained. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) regard lecturers' lack of subject expertise and their inability to meet administrative requirements to undertake practical work as the main reasons why the TVET sector in South Africa performs poorly. Van der Bijl and Oosthuizen (2019) regard this state of affairs as a dearth in the qualifications of TVET lecturers that college principals should address immediately, so that TVET colleges can achieve their mandate. Therefore, lecturers who have

poor qualifications need to be supported to improve these qualifications so that they can assist their students adequately.

As teaching and learning are regarded as the main function of the TVET sector, teaching and learning should be the main focus of these institutions. Yusop, Rasul, Mohamad Yasin, Hashim and Jalaludin (2022) assert that lecturers need to prioritise their teaching approaches as well as their assessment practices, in order to achieve students' learning outcomes. Therefore, TVET lecturers must have a clear grasp of the suitable assessment techniques and should also acquire the necessary skills to be able to assess the students properly (Chan, 2021; Yusop et al., 2022). This requires competent leaders with the necessary skills not only to provide support but also to provide proper guidance, so that effective teaching and learning can take place uninterrupted in the TVET sector. Terblanche (2017) argues that quality teaching and learning can only be realised if public colleges have strong leadership to support it. College leaders should acquire skills so that quality teaching and learning can take place at TVET colleges. However, Robertson and Frick (2018) argue that quite often TVET leaders are confronted with many challenges, including policy changes and get frustrated. Consequently, they become distracted and fail to ensure that proper teaching and learning take place in the classroom.

2.4 ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

“Organisations, especially large organisations, are very complex and need a range and depth of knowledge and experience to be effectively managed: this is provided by the senior management team. The analysis, insight, and decisions made by this group of managers are key to the success of an organisation” (Redmond, 2015:3). Redmond (2015) posits that the effectiveness of these decisions and strategies rest on the effectiveness and efficiency of those who are tasked to lead these institutions. New demands have been placed on organisations, which literally means that effective strategic leaders are required to ensure the organisational effectiveness in dealing and handling these new demands. This is in accordance with what Coban, Ozdemir and Pisapia (2019) that strategic leadership is very important not only ensuring that organisational changes are implemented and dealing with the organisational challenges but also for ensuring that the organisation is effectively transformed.

Organisations operate in a very competitive environment with a variety of challenges and if they want to survive and continue being relevant, they need to develop effective strategies to deal

with challenges that affect their performance (Rehman et al., 2019; Walumweya & Phiri, 2021). Rehman et al. (2019) regard organisational performance as a crucial factor that determines the success or failure of any organisation, irrespective whether the organisation is a private or public one (profit-making organisation or non-profit making). Al Khajeh (2018) asserts that the performance of an organisation is measured through the outcomes, outputs or results of the organisation against the set and agreed upon aims and purposes of the organisation. Scholars state that the choices and decisions that leaders make mainly determine the extent of performance of the organisation. As Arif and Akram (2018) denote, it is responsibility of any manager and/or leader to promote and improve the performance of the organisation by encouraging, motivating, supporting the employees to work conscientiously for the improvement, growth and development of the organisation. Al Khajeh (2018) concurs, adding that the style of leadership adopted by the leader influences the culture and behaviour of the employees, which consequently influences the organisational performance. Further, effective leaders can encourage the employees to be committed to their tasks, as positive organisational commitment has a significant impact on the organisational performance (Berberoglu, 2019; Cilek, 2019).

"In general, organisational performance is total performance results achieved by an organisation, in accordance with the organisation's mission" (Gusmão, Christiananta & Ellitan, 2018:125). Akpa, Asikhia and Nneji (2021) agree, adding that the organisation may achieve its goals if employees understand their role and responsibilities and are committed to the same values and norms as the organisation. However, this would require continuous communication between management, leader and employees to ascertain that everyone is working towards the set outcomes. Cera and Kusaku (2020) maintain that organisational performance can be influenced by the following factors: the culture or climate of the organisation, working conditions in the workplace, practices, training and developmental activities implemented or adopted by the leaders or managers in the organisation. Therefore, the strategic leader must ensure that he/she creates an enabling environment by being visible, approachable and willing to interact with the employees at every level.

2.4.1 Strategic leadership and organisational performance

According to several empirical studies, strategic leadership focuses mainly on how leaders who occupy top positions influence the performance of organisations (Aliabadi & Salimzadeh, 2016;

Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Onu, Akinlabi & Egbuta, 2018; Simsek et al., 2018; Asif & Basit, 2020; Kim, 2020a). Aliabadi and Salimzadeh (2016) further maintain that organisations are often the reflections of their top leaders. According to Serfontein and Hough (2011b), those organisations that perform exceptionally well and compete successfully in changing and challenging environments are led by effective strategic leaders who help these organisations to enhance their performance. Serfontein and Hough (2011b) further maintain strategic leadership and organisational performance have an intertwined relationship.

Jabbar and Hussein (2017) maintain that strategic leadership is crucial for transforming any organisation through proper plans and strategies into a thriving organisation. Likewise, Jaleha and Machuki (2018) posit that for any organisation to be successful, especially during these times of uncertainties, challenges and ever-changing dynamics and complexities require effective strategic leadership. They further argue that to face the world of uncertainty and scarce resources, there is a strong need for strategic leadership, which will ensure that reality is confronted for organisations to improve their performance and compete globally. Thompson and Martin (2010) regard the strategic leader as a key not only in directing the organisation but also in determining the strategies for accomplishing the set goals of the organisation, including ensuring that those who will implement these strategies understand and support such strategies. Hence, Jabbar and Hussein (2017) regard strategic leaders as crucial individuals for the overall success of any organisation because they do not only make strategies and strategic plans, but they also ensure that these strategies and plans are executed so that the organisation can obtain positive outcomes. Thus, it can be deduced that positive and effective strategic leadership actions have a strong positive bearing on the organisational performance (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Butama, Mathenge & Mungai, 2019).

Singh et al. (2016) maintain that strategic leadership theory and research inquire into the extent in which top leaders influence the performance of an organisation. However, Jaleha and Machuki (2018) allude that situational constraints have a decisive role on how the role of strategic leadership influences the performance of an organisation. Strategic leadership role is significant in determining the degree to which organisations make connections between people, technology and work processes. Sosik et al. (2005) maintain that strategic leaders who should be acknowledged and embraced are those who ensure that their organisations execute their strategies outstandingly. There has been general acknowledgment amongst scholars and practitioners that effective strategic leaders, using a bird's eye view of both internal and external

environments, are able to identify opportunities for their organisations, as well as risks that can hinder their progress (Norzailan, Yusof & Othman, 2016; Akem-Vingir, 2020; Asif & Basit, 2020; Mistarihi, 2021).

According to Akem-Vingir (2020), strategic leaders are not only able to solve very challenging and difficult problems but also to venture where one-dimensional leaders fail. Akem-Vingir (2020) further states that because the strategic leader is versatile, he/she must be capable of anticipating and preventing things, which may distract him/her from executing his/her duties effectively and consequently resulting in the poor performance of the organisation. Additionally, it is incumbent upon an effective strategic leader to identify, develop and mentor a team of talented leaders for maintaining continuity in their organisations. Ireland and Hitt (1999) list the following as the components of strategic leadership that can enhance the performance of an organisation, even in the turbulent and unpredictable global environment (cf. 2.3.1):

Determining strategic direction: Determining the vision and mission of the organisation is one of the components of strategic leadership. Strategic leaders do this by articulating an explicit statement explaining not only the reasons for the existence of the organisation but also the uniqueness of the organisation (Slawinski, 2007; Jabbar & Hussein, 2017). The purpose of this statement is to motivate and empower individuals in an organisation to develop and execute strategies that would assist the organisation to grow (Slawinski, 2007; Redmond, 2015). The vision statement is a guide for developing and executing the strategy and the envisaged destination of the organisation; the vision must be clearly communicated to the stakeholders, especially those who are to implement it (Redmond, 2015; Bore & Macharia, 2022). Redmond (2015) maintains that a vision can only have an impact on an organisation if it is properly communicated to the organisation and reinforced by those who are leading the organisation regularly. Thus, everything needs to be done to ensure that people as the only active resource and valuable assets in an organisation commit themselves and support the strategy (Amos, 2006; Al-Kassem, 2021; Alwi & Shaiq, 2021; Nkemjika, Kingsley & Osita, 2021).

Exploiting and maintaining core competencies: Strategic leaders need to exploit and maintain core competencies, as they are resources and capabilities that give organisations an edge over the competition. Strategic leaders must understand which combinations of resources and skills are valuable, rare, costly to imitate, and difficult to substitute, as these will allow the firm to gain a competitive advantage (Slawinski, 2007; Hunitie, 2018). According to Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2005), core competencies refer to activities the organisation performs really well and

may result in a basis of competitive advantage. Redmond (2015) asserts that senior management must be sure to maintain the organisation's core competences. These must be invested in and developed over time to ensure they remain relevant. Furthermore, senior management must ensure that the competencies form part of the competitive strategy of the organisation and that they are leveraged effectively in implementing that strategy (Redmond, 2015; Hendriks & Reddy, 2020). Amos (2006) suggests that organisations need to know their niche areas and utilise this as an edge against their competitors.

Developing human capital: Strategic leaders effectively develop human capital because organisations in many countries have realised the importance of investing in human capital. Matei and Ceche (2018) regard human capital as skills, knowledge, experiences and abilities that an individual can acquire through schooling or outside the school. Nezhnikova (2020) states that investing in human capital can create conducive conditions for sustainable economic growth because employees would have skills, knowledge, expertise and abilities to work in good faith. Philip and Ikechukwu (2018) are of the opinion that no organisation or company can develop and/or survive, especially under these dynamic and complex challenges. Because human capital is an asset for the survival of the organisation, strategic leaders should ensure that they invest in the human resources through continuous developmental programmes.

For organisations to succeed, they need people with the necessary skills to execute strategies at the right time (Amos, 2006; Al-Kassem, 2021; Nkemjika et al., 2021). Muzee, Bagire and Ngoma (2016) concur, asserting that involving employees helps in ensuring that the organisation is able to recognise and utilise its resources and capabilities effectively. Ireland and Hitt (2005) agree that the manner in which leaders make decisions and interact with people to encourage knowledge sharing, learning and fostering relationships determines the success or failure of the organisation. Against this backdrop, many organisations support the idea that human capital development has potential to improve the performance of any organisation (Philip & Ikechukwu, 2018; Ameyaw, Peprah & Anowuo, 2019; Nkemjika et al., 2021).

Sustaining an effective organisational culture: According to Lunenburg (2011), organisational culture is the combination of ideologies, shared values, norms and beliefs that influence the manner in which employees in an organisation do things, think feel and behave. Because the organisational culture affects employees in an organisation strongly, as well as the manner in which they do things, the leadership of the organisation should understand these values, beliefs and their effect on the performance of the organisation (Butama et al., 2019;

Reddy & Scheepers, 2019; Nzuva & Kimanzi, 2022). Redmond (2015) maintains that strategic leadership influences the nature of the culture with an organisation. Priya and Sudhamathi (2019) emphasise the important role that strategic leaders play not only in creating and managing the culture of an organisation but also in ensuring that the organisational culture is sustained. Streimikiene, Mikalauskiene, Digriene and Kyriakopoulos (2021) state that leaders have a crucial role in influencing and shaping the culture of an organisation to become more competitive. Streimikiene et al. (2021) assert that those leaders who are able to use organisational culture effectively to influence and inspire employees to work conscientiously manage to accomplish the goals of their organisations.

According to Redmond (2015), strategic leaders define their institutions by their behaviour, as they lead their organisations and above all, they lead by example. Priya and Sudhamathi (2019) regard selecting employees when recruiting, socialising employees and the actions of leaders as some of the strategies that the strategic leader can use to sustain an effective organisational culture. Halim, Ahmad and Ramayah (2019) concur that strategic leaders need to develop proper structures and processes that will enable the organisation to compete locally and globally and effectively sustain the culture of an organisation.

Emphasising ethical practices: According to Rao (2018:2), “ethics means doing the right things without necessarily being publicly monitored”. Rao (2018), however, warns because ethics differ from culture to culture: what may be considered ethical in a certain culture may not be necessarily considered as ethical in another because ethics are environment specific. Strategic leaders can influence employees in the workplace to behave ethically and avoid unethical behaviours (Hitt et al., 2010; Rabie & Malek, 2020; Okanda, Mwinzi & Gunga, 2021). Therefore, strategic leaders should not only establish ethical practices in the organisation, but strategic leaders, as senior leaders, should also subscribe to those ethical practices. Leaders should lead by example and should show ethical behaviour, such as honesty, integrity, morality, reliability, justice, gratitude, humility and consideration (Hegarty & Moccia, 2018; Edward Godbless, 2021; Ancho & Villadiego, 2022).

When honesty, integrity, and trust are demonstrated by top management, employees are more likely to be inspired and start emulating the behaviour and practices observed from the leaders and deal with ethical dilemmas in the organisation (Nandasinghe, 2020; Rabie & Malek, 2020; Wiatr, 2022). Rabie and Malek (2020) posit that more often than not, the normative behaviour of leaders stimulate employees to emulate normative behaviour. As Rao (2018:5) puts it,

“Nothing is more powerful than setting example while leading others”. Redmond (2015) is of the view that strategic leaders when emphasising ethical practices must do the following: develop and communicate a code of ethics, provide ethics training to employees, form an ethics committee to give guidance on ethics matters and openly encourage employees to report possible infractions. Rabie and Malek (2018) concur that leaders must not only talk to the employees about their moral dilemmas, but leaders must also uphold moral standards and provide employees with feedback about ethical decisions. As Muzee et al. (2016) point out, once ethical values of honesty and integrity govern processes in an organisation, a favourable impression is mirrored by its leaders.

Establishing balanced organisational controls: Dědečková (2020) refers to organisational controls as any formal processes or procedures that are used in an organisation to direct, guide and influence activities of employees towards organisational goals. Verburg, Nienaber, Searle, Weibel, Den Hartog and Rupp (2018) regard organisational controls as the specification of organisational standards that are used to ensure that actions of employees and goals of the organisation are aligned. Slawinski (2007) lists two types of internal controls: strategic and financial controls. According to Slawinski (2007), strategic controls are accomplished through information exchanges that help to develop strategies, whereas financial controls are accomplished through setting objective criteria such as performance targets.

Redmond (2015) maintains that through organisational controls strategic leaders can establish when adjustments are needed and what adjustments should be made. Meanwhile, adopting a balanced scoreboard approach helps to have effective strategic organisational controls (Habidin, Yusof, Omar, Mohamad & Janudin, 2012; Khatoon & Farooq, 2015; Batasi & Okello, 2018; Quesado, Aibar Guzmán & Lima Rodrigues, 2018). However, Oluoch, K’Aol and Koshal (2021) argue that most organisations struggle to establish balanced organisational controls and suggest that it is incumbent upon strategic leaders to establish appropriate and adequate controls. Oluoch et al. (2021) further state that these two organisational controls are important for providing the direction of the progress, as well as for providing signals on corrective measures to be put in place. Balanced organisational controls include strategic, financial and feedback controls. Therefore, strategic leaders should establish balanced organisational controls because these controls are vital for the survival of any organisation (Sargeant & Day, 2018; Sihag & Rijdsdijk, 2019). As Oluoch et al. (2021) point out, balanced organisational controls are significant in setting targets, sustainability, managing resource organisation and incorporating feedback for enhanced performance.

The above-mentioned elements enable the strategic leadership team in an organisation to be a force to be reckoned with.

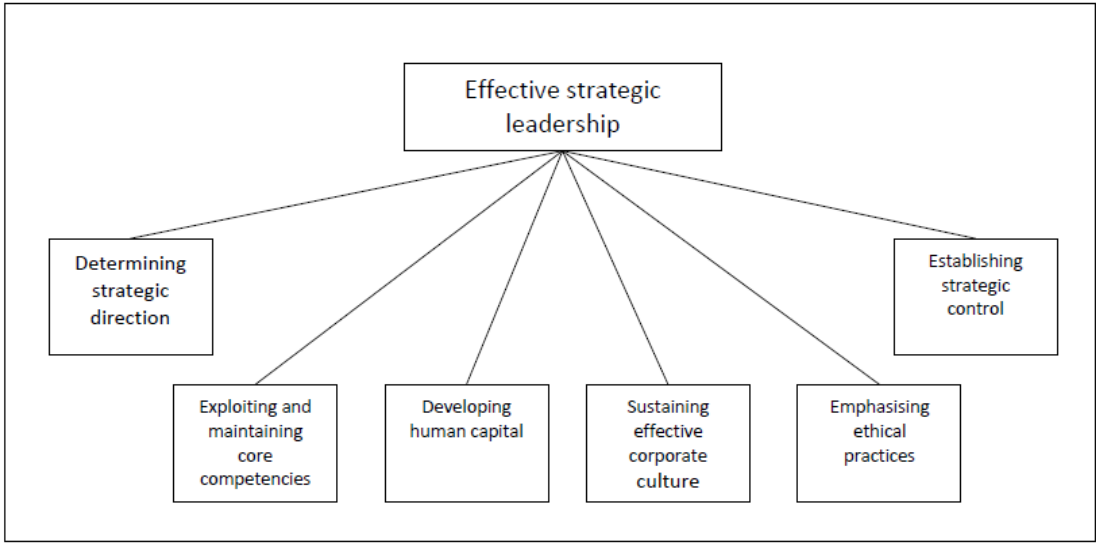


Figure 2.3: Key strategic leadership actions, adapted from Hitt et al. (2007).

Sosik et al. (2005) posit that these components of strategic leadership focus mainly on strategy formulation, which is the responsibility of the top strategic leaders. Hitt et al. (2007) assert that individual action makes a positive contribution to effective strategy implementation. Hitt and Ireland (1999) maintain that great organisations are determined by how executives perform their strategic leadership roles. According to Hitt and Ireland (1999), interactions between leaders and employees should happen when the organisation fulfils the requirements associated with six key strategic leadership practices. It is through the configuration of all six of these practices or critical criteria that strategic leadership can succeed in the 21st century organisations.

Most organisations that have high performance are led by highly committed leaders at the top (Lear, n.d.; Bibi & Akhtar, 2020a; Bibi & Akhtar, 2020b). Jabbar and Hussein (2017) assert that good leaders are able to forge strong relationships among the employees in all spheres. In this way, all employees work positively towards overall performance, although the leader’s commitment still directs them towards the accomplishment of the strategic vision of the organisation.

2.4.2 Strategic decisions taken by the leadership to achieve the set organisational goals

Linder and Sundberg (2018) regard strategic actions as practical actions that are taken by the leadership of an organisation for accomplishing the objectives and long-term goals of the organisation. The strategic leader makes strategic decisions after careful observation of the environment and an interpretation of the future. On this basis of strategic vision, conviction and motivation are created in the followers to embrace the organisational strategies (Doğru, 2019; Kılıç, 2022). Doğru (2019) regards strategic decisions as key factors for the success of an organisation. These strategic decisions help to generate the basis for strategic leadership. Strategic leaders should make strategic decisions that the whole organisation is devoted to as determined targets within a plan of action (Doğru, 2019; Bayo & Akintokunbo, 2022). As a result, strategic leaders must ensure that employees in an organisation are clear about the strategy of an organisation before actions are taken to implement it (Doğru, 2019; Kabeyi, 2019; Rani, 2019).

Doğru (2019) regards strategic leaders as critical in the development and execution of the organisational strategies based on the vision that has been set for the organisation. Various scholars maintain that strategic leaders are more important during the times of uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities because they are needed to provide strong leadership, to lead organisational changes and ensure that that the organisation remains resilient to such challenges (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Butama et al., 2019; Doğru, 2019; Adobor, Darbi & Damoah, 2021; Mistarihi, 2021). According to Doğru (2019), strategic leaders, through their leadership skills should keep the organisation strong and resilient during the times of difficulties, ensure that the organisation remains competitive and that it improves its performance to gain competitive advantage.

Propositions

Since no one has yet extended the application of strategic leadership to the non-profit sector, the following propositions are offered in this study to explain how strategic leadership contributes to the performance of non-profit organisations (Phipps & Burbach, 2010; Palladan, 2020). Propositions developed concerning the performance of the public TVET sector and the effectiveness of leadership are elaborated below:

Proposition 1. Poor performance of public TVET colleges is attributed to lack of strategic leadership.

2.4.3 Strategic leadership and the performance of public TVET sector

Ndebele (2019) regards strategic leadership as fundamental to organisational development because through strategic leadership organisations are able to enhance their abilities and contextual intelligence, which ensures the effective use of their resources. Boal (2004) denotes that strategic leadership cannot be divorced from the organisations' past, present and future. Hence strategic leadership can be viewed as a proactive way to contextual changes taking place in an organisation because it deals with the entirety of the organisation (Carvalho, Cabral, Verdasca & Alves, 2021; Abrudan, Daianu, Maticiu, Rafi & Kalyar, 2022). Carvalho et al. (2021) argue that, although over the past decades strategic leadership has been viewed as very important in the educational setting, strategic leadership and its influence on organisational performance has not been widely extended to educational settings and/or to the non-profit sector. Phipps and Burbach (2010) argue that very little has been done to link strategic leadership theory with non-profit sector, in terms of linking the actions of the strategic leader and the performance of the organisation.

Findings of the study conducted by Serfontein (2010) on organisational performance in South Africa positively linked effective strategic leadership practices to organisational performance. Although Serfontein's study focused on the private sector, it can be deduced that the findings could have been more or less similar, should the study have been focused on the public sector. While Serfontein's study focused on the strategic leadership in the private sector, this present study focused on the role of strategic leadership in the public sector in South Africa. However, the difference between the two studies is the context in which the organisations being studied operate. Likewise, Gachunga et al. (2020), in their study of leadership in TVET in Kenya, found that leadership commitment enhanced the performance of the TVET institutions.

However, low throughput and certification rates are still a major challenge to the successful impact of TVET colleges (Stander, Du Plooy & Scheckle, 2022). Performance is judged on relevance of programmes to industry demands, target students, intended outcomes and student performance (DHET, 2018b). The performance of public TVET colleges is measured on the achievement of the activities articulated on the annual strategic plans of these colleges. Public

colleges submit the five-year strategic plan together with the annual performance plan with a number of operational plans, such as budget, programmes or courses offered, human resource development, teaching and learning and student support services planning (Thekwini TVET college, 2019). The performance of these colleges is measured through monitoring and evaluation tools, which assist in determining if the colleges have managed to achieve the strategic goals and objectives (Sithole et al., 2022). Additionally, and more importantly, the performance of the TVET sector should be judged by the number of graduates that manage to enter the job market immediately after graduating.

However, in most countries, especially developing countries, the level of skills and capabilities of the students that graduate from the TVET colleges are not in tandem with job market requirements (Yiga, 2022). Schweri, Eymann and Aepli (2020) attribute the mismatch between the training and labour market's expectations to the failure of TVET institutions to meet the pace of changes in the economic environment and the demands that these changes bring. Husain, Che-Ani, Affandi, Nasri and Musid (2019) are of the view that enabling industries to take a lead in curriculum development could assist in addressing the issue of the mismatch between what the TVET sector produces and what the industry or labour market requires. Ibrahim and Nashir (2022) argue that TVET colleges focus on producing many graduates without a strategy and/or involving the labour market and this result in the supply mismatch. Accordingly, the principals of TVET colleges should ensure that TVET colleges provide appropriate and relevant skills to their students, so that when these students graduate they meet the demand and expectations of the employers.

2.4.3.1 Performance of public TVET colleges in South African context

Badenhorst and Radile (2018) maintain that there is poor performance at many South African public TVET colleges. The reason can be ascribed to lack of leadership and poor managerial skills as well as the numerous challenges that lecturers face during teaching and learning sessions (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Robertson & Frick, 2018; Worku, 2019). Literature suggests that most TVET colleges have challenges and are failing to perform according to the guidelines/policies of DHET because of a lack of strategic leadership. Colleges are expected to comply and perform according to predetermined outcomes. These are outcomes that have been set out in the guidelines and policies of the department. For example, there are guidelines and policies for Finance, Human Resource Management, Supply Chain Management, and above all,

for teaching and learning as the core business. Therefore, the role of strategic leadership is to guide colleges to ensure that they comply and perform according to these guidelines and policies. The critical problem, however, is that several colleges are unable not only to meet the outcomes set by the department but also the expectations of many stakeholders because of a lack of strategic leadership. The following proposition was developed from the above analysis:

Proposition 2. Effective leadership improves the performance of public TVET colleges

2.4.4 Effectiveness of leadership in the TVET sector

The European Union (2011) states that the importance of the TVET sector and the demands placed by the labour market on this sector has placed more pressure on the role of TVET leaders. This sector needs effective strategic leaders to influence the activities of all stakeholders associated with this sector in order to meet the challenges and demands exerted from different fronts. Boateng (2012a) maintains that there is consensus among many leadership theorists that the primary cause of diminishing productivity in any company or institution can be attributed to ineffective leadership in that institution. Effective leadership becomes an asset if any organisation wants to achieve productivity (Boateng, 2012a; Nandasinghe, 2020).

European Union (2011) states that leaders have the following attributes. They: (i) do the right things; (ii) see people as significant assets; (iii) seek commitment; (iv) focus on outcomes; (v) see what could be done and why; (vi) share information and promote networks. The European Union (2011), however, states that literature contains little research on leadership on TVET (cf. 1.3). As a result, finding a suitable definition of TVET leaders is difficult. The European Union (2011) regards TVET leaders as those individuals who are in charge of TVET institutions that provide job-related education and emphasise practical skills rather than theoretical learning. They are accountable for everything that happens at these institutions. Jannah, Latip, Tarmizi, Afrizal, Saputra and Bon (2021) believe that these people should be able to create situations that inspire the morale of the employees so that they achieve the goals of the organisation optimally. As effective leaders, they can read the situation and address the problems faced by the organisation for the betterment of that particular organisation (Ofodeme, 2020; Jannah et al., 2021).

Boateng (2012a) thinks that leadership and leadership development are getting more attention because of numerous rapid and significant changes directed towards TVET. Boateng (2012a) maintains that the changing nature of work and also rapid changes in technology put pressure on the TVET system. Clearly, there is a need to produce individuals with multi-skills that can increase their employment opportunities, ensure their personal development and assist coping with societal changes. Boateng (2012a) is of the view that the TVET sector requires strategic leaders who can follow new paths as times change while encouraging others to believe and follow. Scholars (in Boateng, 2012a) argue that the TVET sector cannot succeed without effective strategic leaders. Boateng (2012a) regards the following as the three major criteria of leadership effectiveness: (i) is the leader's behaviour perceived to improve the quality of the group process? (ii) is the leader's behaviour seen to have had a personal impact on followers/employees)? and (iii) is the leader's behaviour perceived to have helped the group or institution perform its tasks successfully to attain its goals?

The National Centre for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) in America (in Boateng, 2012a) lists the six leadership tasks that describe the envisioned role of leaders in vocational technical education. The six tasks are: (i) inspiring a vision and establishing standards that help the organisation achieve its next stage of development; (ii) fostering unity, collaboration, and ownership, and recognising individual and team contributions; (iii) exercising power effectively and empowering others to act; (iv) exerting influence outside the organisation to set the right context for the organisation; (v) establishing an environment conducive to learning, and (vi) satisfying the job-related needs of members of the organisation as individuals. For leaders to accomplish these tasks effectively, leaders should empower themselves and their employees with adequate and appropriate knowledge and skills (Muriithi, Louw & Radloff, 2018; Mutonyi, Slåtten & Lien, 2020; Vu, 2020; Ye, Liu & Tan, 2022). Boateng (2012b) believes that through the effectiveness of leadership, vocational technical education adapts constructively to the changing and demanding environment. Boateng (2012b) further states that pressure exerted by the changes and numerous demands placed on the TVET sector has shown that the sector can only survive through astute and creative leaders at all levels.

2.4.5 The critical role of TVET colleges

According to Kanwar, Balasubramanian and Carr (2019), the TVET sector is an essential part of lifelong learning because TVET learners require continual upskilling and reskilling in order for

them to keep pace with the ever-changing industrial and technological demands. Kanwar et al. (2019) argue that initial training is no longer enough during these uncertain times and individuals should keep themselves abreast with the continual global demands. Park and Kim (2020) concur, arguing that what compounds the problem is that skills become obsolete quicker than in the past because of rapid technological development. As a result, the ever-changing global challenges and new technology necessitate lifelong learning for people to keep themselves abreast with what is happening worldwide (Bayo, 2019; Kanwar et al, 2019; Oriji & Uzoagu, 2019).

Lewin (1993) lists the following as reasons why countries worldwide justify their investment in the TVET sector: increased relevance of schooling to likely occupational futures, reductions in youth unemployment as a result of the acquisition of employable skills, increased economic development arising from improvements in the quality and skill levels of the working population, poverty reduction through giving access to higher income occupations to those who do not succeed academically and transformation of attitudes amongst youth to favour occupations where there are some employment prospects. Adebile and Ojo (n.d.) argue that although, the TVET sector has been propagated globally as the panacea for most, if not all the social ills of countries, the biggest impact that has been exerted by this sector in addressing the challenges facing countries globally has yet to be witnessed. For example, Adebile and Ojo (n.d.) argue that the TVET sector has been unable to address the issue of shortage of skills across the world.

2.4.6 The value of partnership between the TVET sector and industry

According to Raihan (2014), proper collaboration between TVET institutions and industries or labour market, where parties see themselves as equal partners, would assist in addressing the gap of shortage of skills. However, Manevska, Danquah, Afful, Smerdova and Manev (2018) assert that the distance or gap between the institutions of higher education and industry has not been closed and, in some instances, the gap is growing. Manevska et al. (2018) further state that this gap is caused by the difference in what the industry expects and what the higher education institutions, particularly the TVET sector are offering to the students. The result of this gap is the unpreparedness of the graduates for the industry and these graduates struggle to find employment. There is an urgent need for both parties (the TVET sector & the labour market) to bridge this gap for economic development in different countries, especially developing

countries. Raihan (2014) states that without both parties showing the willingness to work together as equal partners there will be no proper collaboration and the issue of mismatch between what the TVET sector produces and what the labour market requires will remain a challenge. Compounding the problem is that the curricula used by TVET colleges in some countries, including South Africa are not developed by experts with knowledge and understanding of industry requirements (Raihan, 2014; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018; Sibiyi, Nyembezi & Bogopa, 2021).

Raihan (2014) is of the view that some of the major challenges faced by the TVET sector can be addressed by forging a strong linkage between the TVET sector and labour market. For example, the private sector can adopt TVET colleges and provide these colleges with equipment and tools to be used at the workshops, exchanging staff at certain intervals and placing students and staff on work experience, so that the students and lecturers can be acquainted with what is happening in the labour market. Undoubtedly, such joint efforts can help not only in bridging the gap between TVET colleges and industries, but also in addressing the challenge of skills shortages through the TVET sector (Alhasan & Tasmin, 2013; Batholmeus & Pop, 2019; Mesuwini, Thaba-Nkadimene & Kgomotlokoa, 2021; Sibiyi et al., 2021; Oosthuizen, Spencer & Chigano, 2022). In addition, strong partnerships can help in ensuring that there is a smooth transition from college-to-workplace.

Likewise, Manyonge and Kyalo (2020) denote that TVET colleges should forge a close working relationship, so that the TVET sector can be positively and significantly revamped. For example, private sector or industries should assist in training and/or retraining both lecturers and students on new machines and technological innovations, so that these individuals can keep pace with the new global developments, provide TVET colleges with financial support and tools to be used in the workshop and assist in curriculum development (Oviawe, 2018; Manyonge & Kyalo, 2020; Widiastuti, Noviansyah & Trianingsih, 2021). Badenhorst and Radile (2018) claim that vocational training institutions are failing to address the issue of skills shortage because of lack of strong partnerships. Mustafa, Hussain and Zulkifli (2022) concur, adding that the issue of partnership can be addressed if the governments can have clear policies, which can enhance a common understanding between industries and TVET colleges. This can enable TVET colleges to supply the labour market with what the market requires, and this can contribute to the socio-economic development in different nations (Bhattarai, 2020; Siddiky & Uh, 2020; Wibowo, Nyan & Christy, 2022).

2.5 THE SECTORAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITIES (SETAS)

The Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are an important component of South Africa's education institutional landscape. SETAs were set up to address the demand for various skills and to encourage and support training. RSA (2013) regards the SETAs as key institutions for narrowing the existing gap between education institutions and workplace. These stakeholder bodies were formed in 2000 in terms of the Skills Development Act (No. 97 of 1998) to cover discrete national economic sectors. Although TVET colleges should offer occupational programmes, funding these programmes still resides with the SETAs (DoE, 2006). Terblanche (2017) asserts that learnerships and skills qualifications called occupational qualifications are meant not only to assist young people who are unemployed but also to assist by improving the employability and self-employment opportunities of learners. Ideally, if colleges and SETAs were to address the issue of scarce skills in South Africa properly, these two parties should plan, design and decide on the funding model and see the occupational programmes delivered or starting off jointly (RSA, 2013; Du Plooy & Du Preez, 2022). SETAs promote and facilitate links between colleges and industries, so that colleges can provide the industry with the calibre of graduates that the industry requires, as well as to ensure that the industry provides students with experiential training before they join the industry as full-time employees (RSA, 2013; Mesuwini et al., 2021). Therefore, TVET colleges need to provide students high-quality technical education, so that these students can meet the needs of the industry.

As intermediaries that connect the tertiary institutions and the workplace, SETAs assist greatly in forging relationships between institutions of higher learning and employers (Kraak, 2019; Rosenberg & Ward, 2020). They persuade employers to accommodate students for workplace learning opportunities. To cement the relationship between colleges and SETAs, SETAs were expected to establish offices in each of the 50 public colleges (RSA, 2013). Public colleges may apply to SETAs for funding to deliver specific occupational qualifications, subject to approval from the SETAs (Field et al., 2014; Terblanche, 2017).

2.6 TVET SECTOR AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING SOUTH AFRICA

Changes taking place globally requires strategic leaders who will not only lead but who will also make organisations succeed. Hitt et al. (2009) assert that only organisations that are led by

effective strategic leaders can survive in unpredictable and turbulent environments. Onkoba et al. (2017) agree, saying that it is important that during difficult times strategic leaders stand side-by-side with employees for the survival of the organisation. Thus, leaders should focus on strategic leadership practices for their organisations to succeed, especially during times of uncertainty.

2.6.1 The challenges facing TVET leaders

The pressure put on the TVET sector concerning the socio-economic development of countries, especially developing countries by producing graduates with the skills required by the labour market has put an enormous burden on the workload of TVET leaders (Robertson & Frick, 2018; Majumdar, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2021). The TVET sector in South Africa, as in other countries, especially developing countries, is regarded as dysfunctional and unable to meet the needs of the country (RSA, 2013; Gachunga et al., 2020). To overcome these challenges, public college leaders (principals) need relevant skills (Robertson & Frick, 2018; Yisihak & Cai, 2021). Undoubtedly, college leaders in possession of these leadership attributes, knowledge and skills can assist public colleges to move from strength to strength and obtain competitive advantage. According to Terblanche (2017), improving the quality of teaching and learning is one of the major challenges facing public TVET colleges in South Africa.

Scholars and theorists ascribe different definitions to the concept of leadership. As a result, people define the concept of leadership not only according to their perspective but also according to the context in which the concept is used (Rosari, 2019; Yisihak & Cai, 2021). Gandolfi and Stone (2018) concur that there are countless definitions of leadership. According to Gadirajurrett, Srinivasan, Stevens and Jeena (2018), leadership is the process of influencing individuals to achieve the set organisational goals. It is a process of facilitating the individual employee's and the group's efforts to work towards the common goals. Therefore, the leader, together with employees, should formulate proper strategies and plans that should be used to achieve the set goals and the leader should also guide, direct and motivate employees constantly to work conscientiously towards the intended goals (Gadirajurrett et al., 2018; Rono et al., 2019). Robertson and Frick (2018) have concluded that being a leader is, thus, no easy task, especially in the TVET sector because leadership requires commitment, integrity, perseverance and a capacity to inspire others. What compounds the problem is that most leaders at South African TVET colleges have no vocational education or context-specific leadership training.

Unfortunately, these leaders are expected to work under extreme pressure coming from different spheres. Robertson and Frick (2018) maintain that TVET college leaders have to deal with the ever-changing policies, political interferences, student unrest, staff demands, while they lack proper leadership development. Compounding the problem of college leadership capacity is the shortage of resources, both physical and human (Terblanche, 2017; Badenhorst and Radile, 2018; Scheepers & Gebhardt, 2021; Atukunda, J. & Maja, 2022).

Guthrie, Perkins and Nguyen (2006) assert that most TVET leaders struggle to design strategies, systems, structures and the underpinning mind-sets that would enable these leaders to deal successfully with new demands. Guthrie et al. (2006), looking at the challenges facing TVET colleges in Australia, list the following as some of the challenges: (i) developing a strategic approach to the TVET workforce, planning to tackle recruitment, retention of key staff, provide career paths, succession planning, mentoring, and new approaches to the training of casual staff; (ii) building better environments, with appropriate structures and systems to support practitioner innovation; (iii) designing supportive, streamlined administrative and resource allocation systems that enable practitioners to focus on core business; (iv) implementing human resource management systems that support the way practitioners now work; (v) establishing and maintaining partnerships with industry and community clients, and (vi) managing competing priorities and an expanding set of expectations associated with new roles and responsibilities.

These challenges are not unique to Australian TVET college leaders. TVET college leaders in most countries, especially developing countries, face more or less similar challenges. Terblanche (2017) asserts that TVET college leaders could be able to lead colleges effectively if they have acquired comprehensive leadership competencies. Terblanche looking specifically at South African public TVET colleges maintains that principals of public colleges should ensure that the sector achieves its vision of developing and delivering responsive to address what the industry requires. Caves and Renold (2018) posit that there is a need of a strong TVET sector with good multilevel governance to address the challenges facing TVET college leaders.

2.6.2 The role of the TVET college council

The college council is responsible for the governance of a public college, as stipulated in the FET Colleges Act of 2006 (RSA, 2006; Sithole, 2019). College council members need to understand their respective roles at the college as council members in order to be able to

perform these tasks successfully. Angelis, Lolwane, and Marock et al. (2001) regard the statutory responsibilities of the college council as to (i) develop a strategic plan to address past imbalances as well as gender and disability issues; (ii) determine the language policy; (iii) ensure that the TVET college is accredited; (iv) approve all the policies and consult with the academic board and the SRC concerning the implementation of the approved academic programmes. Apart from these tasks, the college council should also apply sound governance principles. These include overseeing, supporting, establishing, monitoring, and controlling the implementation of policies, as well as delegating responsibility and managing knowledge (Angelis et al., 2001; Sithole, 2019).

Mokoena (2020) states that the college council provides oversight and is not responsible for the management of the public college. This oversight role is to monitor, observe, watch and oversee the functioning of the college (Mokoena, 2020; Sithole et al., 2022). Angelis et al. (2001:293) maintain that the college Council should play a strategic role by determining the vision, mission, and strategic direction of the college. For college council members to perform their functions efficiently depends on whether or not they have the necessary expertise and knowledge. Without training and development, college council members may fail to perform their tasks effectively. Therefore, the college principal should ensure that college council members are not only given the necessary training but that they also understand their roles and function according to the relevant legislations. According to RSA (2006), college principals are expected to manage and administer the college, while also dealing with the demands exerted by the governance of the college.

Mothapo (2014) maintains that the majority of the college council members do not clearly understand what their roles and responsibilities actually entail, and this usually leads to them interfering with the managerial role of the college principal. Mothapo (2014) further argues that some college council members do not fulfil their statutory duties, as articulated in the FET Act of 2006. Although the development of a strategic plan and formulation of policies fall within the ambit of the college council, Mothapo (2014) asserts that, in most cases, council members are only involved in approving the strategic plans and policies developed by the college management. Usually, college councils just rubber-stamp the strategic plans and policies developed by the college management on the basis that they (council members), are of the view that these plans and policies are developed by specialists (Mothapo, 2014). The college council should also establish the following committees to assist in performing their functions: (i) executive council; (ii) finance; (iii) strategic audit; (iv) human resource; (v) student affairs; and

(vi) communications and marketing committees (RSA, 2006; Coetzer, 2008). These sub-committees are formed to ensure that the college council fulfils its mandate efficiently and effectively. However, effectiveness and efficiency can only be organised if these sub-committees are coordinated well, and the tasks of the committee members are well articulated (Mothapo, 2014).

The table adapted from Angelis et al. (2001) gives a summary of the roles of the college council (governance structure) and those of the college principal (college management).

Table 2.3: Summary of the roles of the college council and those of the college principal

The College council (Governance structure)	The Principal (Management)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines the vision, mission and strategic direction of the TVET college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalises the vision, mission, and strategy and provides strategic leadership of the TVET college.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that the transformation of the TVET college is a priority and monitors progress of transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads the transformation of the TVET college and reports on progress to the college council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates policy options and chooses policy directions for the institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs necessary research into policy options and resource implications and provides information to the college council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves the annual budget and monitors income and expenditure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops proposed budgets for approval by the college council. Spends and reports in an accountable manner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that the academic board and Students' Representative Council are established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages the process by which these structures are established and monitors their functioning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs and supports the principal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages and supports the staff of the institution.

Extracted from Angelis et al. (2001:293).

2.6.3 The role of TVET sector in addressing the triple socio-economic challenges

The majority of developing countries including South Africa are confronted by three major challenges, which are unemployment, inequality and poverty, and these usually lead to crime (Cheteni, Mah & Yohane, 2018; Noyoo, 2019; Armin, 2020; Haque & Muniruzzaman, 2020; De Villiers, 2021). Therefore, TVET colleges should be revitalised, so that they can increase their relevance and attractiveness for young and adults (Obidile & Uzoekwe, 2018; Azmi & Salleh, 2021; Bello & Muhammad, 2021). In spite of South Africa's attempt to alleviate poverty in the country since its democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa is still battling with the challenge of extensive poverty, increasing unemployment and inequality (World Bank, 2018; Francis & Webster, 2019; Folarin, 2021). Gumede (2021) concurs, arguing that the inability of South Africa to deal with the issue of poverty, unemployment and inequality decisively can be ascribed to the weak performance of the country's economy. Ateboh-Briggs and Sam Egbuson (2018) assert that the citizenry of a country can only fight unemployment and poverty if they have acquired apt and adequate skills, which the labour market requires. The TVET sector is a means towards addressing these challenges. As Gasmelseed (2021) puts it, the TVET sector is required to deal with the declining economy and the rising unemployment, especially in a developing country. In addition, social and economic development of any country is dependent on the effectiveness of the TVET sector in performing its significant role (Batholmeus & Pop, 2019; Gasmelseed, 2021; Makinde & Bamiro, 2022). In accordance with what Obidile et al. (2019) suggest, that through creating employment and poverty reduction, the TVET sector can address the issue of insecurity in a nation, which is normally the outcome of unemployment and poverty.

Youth unemployment, in most cases, caused by the skills gap between graduates from the TVET colleges and what the labour market requires is a major problem facing many countries, especially developing countries (Widiastuti et al., 2021; Habiyaemye et al., 2022; Ugwoegbulem, 2022). Afeti (2018) states that the threat posed by youth unemployment has made governments and decision-makers in many countries pay more attention on the TVET sector for ensuring that the youth acquire required skills that could prepare them for job opportunities. Zwane, Radebe and Mlambo (2021) think that entrepreneurship can also be an answer to unemployment, poverty and social inequality challenges, as it can help in the establishment of new businesses, reduce unemployment, reduce poverty and stimulate economic development in the country. For TVET colleges to achieve these, these colleges, especially

public colleges need to be well-managed and should have enough human resource capacity to deliver high-quality education, also organising the development of the nation as well. TVET colleges could take an outward-looking approach and form social partnerships with community organisations, business, and organised labour. This can be organised through quality and effective strategic leadership.

2.6.3.1 Youth unemployment

According to Sever and İğdeli (2018), the issue of youth unemployment is like a pandemic that faces both developed and developing countries alike globally and it needs to be resolved urgently. Sever and İğdeli (2018) argue that the problem of youth unemployment is not only for the developing countries, but the developed countries are grappling with the similar problem. However, Alfonsi, Bandiera, Bassi, Burgess, Rasul, Sulaiman and Vitali (2020) are of the view that the high levels of youth unemployment is more prevalent in the developing countries. Alawad, Kreishan and Selim (2020) agree, claiming that in most developing countries, youth unemployment has become a threat to society at different levels. South Africa is one of the developing countries with the worst youth unemployment rate (Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021; Habiyaemye et al., 2022).

Dadush (2018) is of the view that the high level of youth unemployment is a recipe for political instability in some countries, if it is not addressed sharply. Hailu Demeke (2022) concurs, saying that in most developing countries political instabilities and social conflicts are caused by, among the other things, youth unemployment. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2019) identifies the low growth rates of the economy and lack of the required employable skills as the two factors that contribute to youth unemployment. Maskaeva and Msafiri (2021) agree that lack of education contributes tremendously to youth unemployment because the unemployment rate is lower among those young people with skills and/or who have graduated compared to those with low education levels. Obidile and Uzoekwe (2018) are of the view that empowering and inculcating the culture and attitude of working with hands (imparting skills) that are learnt through TVET programmes, governments could minimise the high rate of unemployment among the youth. Obviously, the TVET sector can provide a solution to this challenge, if it can provide relevant skills to the young people for them to be employable. Alhasan and Tyabo (2013) assert that the TVET is for the following: (i) skill and knowledge required in the society; (ii) economic development; (iii) work and economic activity; (iv) job

creation, and (v) self-respect, social contact, and participation. Although unemployment affects almost all age categories, the youth is most affected.

Like most other developing countries, youth unemployment in South Africa is an acute problem requiring a multi-dimensional solution to increase employment and foster an inclusive and cohesive society. The high rate of unemployment amongst young people tells us that they have not acquired the skills or experience necessary to stimulate the economy. Geza, Ngidi, Slotow and Mabhaudhi (2022) feel that to assist the youth properly, the main drivers of poverty, inequality and unemployment should be identified and subsequently addressed adequately. Glatt and Wunnava (2018) state that there are various reasons causing youth unemployment, including the following: poor education and/or lack of work-relevant skills, information and connections for acquiring skills, experience and credentials and opportunities for entry-level work that is career oriented. Pastore (2018) adds that some young people fail to secure employment because they have dropped out of school before acquiring the required education level, which could enable them to be employable.

Likewise, De Jongh (2019) regards a lack of experience and skill mismatch between demand and available skills as key reasons for the high rate of unemployment worldwide. TVETs can address this challenge by providing the necessary skills, which can make youth employable. The literature reveals that the mismatch between the competencies of the youth graduating from tertiary institutions and what the labour market expects impacts negatively on their employability (Shefiu & Ayika, 2019; Ismail, Chik and Hemdi, 2021). This situation has increased the rate of unemployment in various countries, especially in developing countries. Ateboh-Briggs and Sam Egbuson (2018) believe that the TVET sector is in a better position to empower youth with saleable skills not only to be employable, but also to be self-reliant.

TVET institutions are considered instrumental in tackling the menace of youth unemployment (Anudo & Orwa, 2020; Manshor, Abdullah & Takiyudin, 2020). However, this dream of seeing the TVET sector effectively addressing youth unemployment will only be realised when the sector is regarded as a centre of choice by parents, students and the community at large not as a second-choice option.

2.6.3.2 Inequality

According to Hundenborn, Woolard and Jellema (2019), inequality is still a major challenge facing South Africa and because of its background, the country is still lagging behind when it comes to equality. Leibbrandt and Díaz Pabón (2021) concur, adding that attempts to decrease the level of inequality in South Africa has not yielded positive results because the level of inequality in the country has not been reduced substantially. Omotoso and Koch (2018), who attribute inequality in South Africa to the apartheid regime, assert that inequalities are still witnessed in poor living conditions, poor education and limited access to health facilities. As a result, the increasing inequality is a worrying factor for policymakers and social scientists. South Africa faces severe challenges in tackling inequalities in society, as the rich grow ever richer while poverty increases amongst those who are already poor.

2.6.3.3 Poverty

Alhasan and Tasmin (2013) maintain that most developing countries are struggling to tackle the issue of poverty. Mubanga, Hock, Karim, Senteri, Mulenga and Preckler (2019) are of the view that the issue of poverty can be addressed by reducing or addressing the issue of unemployment. Mesuwini and Bomani (2021) assert that TVET colleges can address the issue of poverty by providing relevant skills to the youth, so that the youth can find employment, as well as by providing them competencies to be employable and create wealth and emerge out of poverty. Various scholars have identified the TVET sector as an important solution to poverty eradication, job creation, and economic expansion (Islam, n.d.; Bello & Muhammad, 2021; Onigbara & Evavoawe, 2022; Ugwoegbulem, 2022). As a result, the sector is being promoted worldwide because it is considered as a tool to alleviate poverty in those countries.

Mubanga et al. (2019) believe that the TVET sector should also put more emphasis on entrepreneurship education, as this part of education can have a significant role in addressing the problem of unemployment faced by a number of countries, especially developing countries. Nwokike, Nwokike and Alio (2019) allude that the TVET sector is struggling to achieve its potential in alleviating poverty because of a number of challenges, including social ills that hinder the sector to achieve one of its important mandates. Although TVET institutions are considered as a panacea for addressing employment problems and other social ills in most countries, various challenges have hindered the ability of these institutions to live up to their

expectations (Nwokike et al., 2019; Mohammed, 2020). The majority of these institutions struggle to contribute significantly to achieve their core mandate because numerous challenges handicap them.

2.7 EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Generally, organisational performance is a benchmark of the level of success and development of an organisation, and the performance is judged through financial and non-financial performances (Christian et al., 2018; Kim, 2020b). Scholars (in Christian et al. 2018) suggest that performance evaluation is very important for effective organisational management because the improvement of the organisation's progress is impossible without evaluating the results of achievements in a certain period. Strategic leadership is fundamental in the performance and success of any organisation and visionary, motivator, enabler, facilitator, mentor and coach are all regarded as aspects of leadership (Serfontein & Hough, 2011b; Munga & Gakenia, 2022). Ojokuku, Odetayo and Sajuyigbe (2012) concur, stating that the style of leadership adopted by the leader determines the success or failure of any organisation. According to Akparep et al. (2019), the leadership role is crucial for an organisation to achieve its set goals. Likewise, Owusu-Boadi (2019) regards the primary role of leadership as to set a clear vision, motivate and inspire the people led to achieving the organisational goals. Ojokuku et al. (2012) regard a leader as an influencer, director, and motivator of the employees to perform different tasks diligently, so that an organisation is able to accomplish its goals successfully. According to Akparep et al. (2019), literature states that a style of leadership adopted by the leader has a great influence in ensuring that people change their attitude and commit themselves to the betterment of the organisation. Leaders always set the tone for the organisation and gather the support of their subordinates, so that goals of the organisations are achieved.

Naja and Ungku Ahmad (2021) opine that since strategic leaders make important decisions to achieve success of the organisation, strategic leadership role can help organisations to compete successfully in these turbulent and unpredictable environments. Likewise, Jannah et al. (2021) believe that the effectiveness of the leader can help the organisation to enhance performance because his/her influence plays a crucial role in determining how employees fulfil their roles particularly when facing challenges. Amos (2007b) asserts that organisations exist because there are people in those organisations and without the people organisations cannot exist. Therefore, the existence of the people in an organisation should be acknowledged as important assets that

can help the organisation accomplish its goals. Gupta (2018) argues that strategic leaders are able to encourage employees to have a shared vision and working together towards organising the common goals and objectives of the institutions. Thus, the strategic leader has the crucial role of organising the activities of the organisation with the desired goals for the organisation to be successful (Gupta, 2018; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). Bose and Ndegwa (2019) concur that leadership, especially strategic leadership, ensures that that all employees are committed to what the organisation intends achieving, so that the organisation can maximise its performance. Therefore, every employee's work and effort should be aligned to ensure high performance in the organisation. Ireland and Hitt (2005) assert that strategic leaders can play a number of important strategic leadership roles for an organisation to achieve its superior performance. Serfontein (2010) concurs, adding that organisations can perform superbly if they execute effective strategic leadership practices.

The effect of the role of strategic leadership on organisational performance should be viewed from both the internal and external points of view because what happens externally may adversely influence the strategic leader role, especially during environmental uncertainties (Shatilo, 2019; Alayoubi et al., 2020). Jaleha and Machuki (2018) define the external environment as any external forces that influence the performance of the organisation. Although these forces may influence the performance of the organisation, the organisation has little or no control over these forces because they come from outside. Therefore, organisational leaders should have strategies and plans in place to deal with these external factors because if they are not properly managed they can impede the performance of the organisation. Jaleha and Machuki (2018) opine that external factors can create distinct opportunities and/or threats for an organisation and, therefore, they should be managed properly.

Ali and Anwar (2021) agree that because the performance of any organisation is also influenced by external factors, strategic leaders should understand these factors clearly and should have a proper way of handling such factors because they are outside their control. Kusnadi (2021) states that any organisational performance is also influenced by the environmental uncertainty and turbulence, competitors, employees and relevant stakeholders. Jaleha and Machuki (2018) assert that the effectiveness of strategic leadership on performance will vary, given the level of environmental turbulence. As a result, Jaleha and Machuki (2018) indicate that external environment is critical in forging a harmony between strategic leadership and performance.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, strategic leadership, TVET, as well as organisational performance, received attention. The researcher reviewed literature written by various scholars to find out how strategic leadership and its role in guiding organisational performance are viewed. In addition, the researcher conducted a literature review to determine the critical role of the TVET sector, both locally and internationally. The literature reveals that, although the role of strategic leadership is fundamental in the performance of organisations, emphasis has been placed on profit (private) organisations and less on non-profit (public) organisations. The study on the TVET sector reveals that this sector has enormous challenges that make it difficult for this sector to achieve its objectives.

Since strong leadership, particularly strategic leadership influences the performance of any organisation, it means that without effective strategic leadership organisations struggle to survive during these turbulent times (Alhyasat & Sharif, 2018; Schoemaker et al., 2018). Furthermore, Alhyasat and Sharif (2018) denote that the impact of strategic leaders on the performance of the organisation can be easily noticed through the way in which strategic leaders not only understand and perform tasks allocated to them, but also through how they interact with employees. Deduced from the above, it is apparent that that the role of strategic leadership is fundamental not only in addressing the challenges faced by the TVET sector, but also in guiding and improving the manner in which TVET colleges perform. Boateng (2012) is of the view that the goals of the TVET sector can be accomplished if people do the right things. For example, right policies should be formulated, appropriate goals set, and more importantly appropriate programmes should be implemented and effective measures put in place to evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes.

The next chapter (chapter three) deals with higher education, especially transformation in the higher education institutional landscape globally. This chapter also looks at the TVET sector as the catalyst for economic development through the perspective of South Africa, as well as the challenges facing this sector.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSFORMATION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Challenges facing higher education systems worldwide force these higher education institutions to make radical reforms in order to adapt to these new challenges (Aslan, Ghobashy, Mete, Price, Roth & Farraj, 2019; Kuleto, Ilić, Dumangiu, Ranković, Martins, Păun, & Mihoreanu, 2021). Likewise, South Africa's higher education institutions are faced with challenges, which push these institutions to make reforms in order to keep pace with these challenges or changes (Mazibuko, 2007; Baijnath, 2018). Petrus (2019) argues that the South African government after 1994 targeted for transformation in order to reverse the effects of the segregation regulations imposed on tertiary education institutions. Additionally, the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) considered the South African tertiary institutions as the catalyst of the reconstruction and development of South African society after a democratic form of government was established in South Africa in 1994 (Petrus, 2019; Badat, 2020). Calderon (2018) argues that it is an undeniable fact that the landscape of institutions of higher learning is changing at an alarming rate in most parts of the world. Hazelkorn (2017) states that recent world developments in many countries seem to be pitting higher education against emerging dynamics, including environmental and technological demands. In South Africa, policy changes are exacerbated by the fact that the country has been transformed from an apartheid regime to a democratically governed country. The need, therefore, for addressing the ills of the apartheid era, exists.

For higher education institutions to develop and grow, they need to understand the environment in which they function and need to adapt and adjust to the socio-economic changes taking place globally. Barbosa and Neves (2020) posit that it is very important that institutions of higher learning support economic, social and cultural growth globally. In South Africa, all higher education institutions are under the auspices of DHET. Therefore, these entities, namely, TVET colleges and universities, should form part of the discussion when one looks at transformation in the higher education landscape. Thus, the first part of this chapter focuses on higher education in general and in South African higher education in particular, looking at it from local and

international literature. The second part of chapter three looks at TVET colleges in general, but in South Africa particularly, from both the national and international points of view.

3.2 HIGHER EDUCATION IN A BROADER CONTEXT

Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) regard vigorous reforms witnessed in higher education systems globally as an academic revolution, which has shaken institutions of higher learning worldwide. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) concur, adding that these reforms exerted by internal and external pressures affect the functioning of higher education institutions. Nadeem, Batool and Asif (2018) asserts that higher education institutions should ensure that students acquire relevant skills and advanced knowledge to be able to deal with challenges taking place in their respective countries successfully. Alexander, Ashford-Rowe, Barajas-Murph, Dobbin, Knott, McCormack, Pomerantz, Seilhamer and Weber (2019) argue that institutions of higher education are finding themselves at the middle of the road, as they should not only confront the challenges that they are faced with, but should also ensure that they provide relevant skills and capabilities that would enable their students to deal with the present challenges, as well as with the future workplace challenges. These institutions should always keep pace with what is happening in the higher education sector globally for these institutions to deal with changes successfully in this competitive world.

Although in South Africa, transformation of institutions of higher learning has been on the policy agenda since the late 1990s, these institutions are still struggling to contend with the tremendous pressure exerted by different sectors (Moosa, 2018; Mzangwa, 2019). Gore and Walker (2020) concur, arguing that it might not be easy for South African institutions of higher learning to address all challenges because some of these challenges, especially students' challenges, are rooted in the structural factors. Gore (2021) states that tertiary institutions in South Africa are still grappling with the social ills of the past; as a result, providing education in inclusive environments is still a major challenge. Alhalwaki and Hamdan (2019) opine that higher education institutions globally are subjected to many demands from different forces, including societies, economies and global labour markets.

Hazelkorn (2017) is of the view that transformation taking place in higher education should be regarded as a geopolitical transformation because the new reforms are opening opportunities for

the graduates to work in any part of the world. Thus, the scope of work has been increased globally, as academics and researchers across the globe can work collaboratively (Dusdal & Powell, 2021; Fu, Marques, Tseng, Powell, & Baker, 2022; Okamura, 2022). Hazelkorn (2017) further states that institutions of higher learning are now able to form partnerships and recruit students across the globe without any boundaries. However, changes taking place globally have placed new demands on the role and functioning of most higher education institutions. Thus, these institutions have to adapt to the new ways of doing things (Abbas, 2021; Alenezi, 2021; Varma, Umesh, Nagesh & Kumara Swamy, 2021). Vladeva (2022) argues that this has influenced institutions of higher learning in different forms. To respond to the challenges imposed by globalisation, various institutions of higher learning across the globe are implementing various policies and programmes with the intention of competing and collaborating among themselves (Muriisa & Rwabyoma, 2019; Sułkowski, Fijałkowska & Dzimińska, 2019; Stavre & Ilie-Prica, 2020).

Guri-Rosenblit (2015) notes that, while the sector of higher education and higher education systems need to balance national priorities and local needs, they also need to adapt to the international demands. However, Guri-Rosenblit (2015) is of the opinion that it would be difficult for some of these institutions in any country to be at the same level as required by international standards. Some institutions of higher learning have strong financial muscle and cannot only address the societal and environmental needs but can also compete internationally. According to Rusman and Endratno (2019), many institutions of higher learning globally have developed organisational strategies in order to respond to needs and increase their competitiveness as world-class institutions of higher learning. Undoubtedly, institutions develop organisational strategies so that they can pursue a variety of goals, which may differ from institution to institution. Therefore, these institutions should clearly state why they undertake a particular initiative. Rusman and Endratno (2019) assert that institutions of higher learning have developed organisational strategies to ensure that their programmes are at the international standards, so that their students could compete in the international arena. As a result, most higher education institutions have increased the recruitment of international students.

3.2.1 The role of higher education

Globally, higher education institutions are supposed to advance and support lifelong learning through providing quality teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2020; Sung, Giannini, 2021; Sheng,

Liau, Xinhui, Liu & Coates, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). These institutions are also responsible for the advancement of their respective societies in various forms. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should ensure that societies or communities in which these institutions operate are not left behind but are developed, so that they could be on par and able to cope with reforms taking place worldwide (Maassen, 2019; Bidandi, Ambe & Mukong, 2021; Olo et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Resch, Fellner, Fahrenwald, Slepcevic-Zach, Knapp and Rameder (2020) concur, adding that these institutions of higher learning are pressurised by various sectors to initiate changes and be in the forefront in the development of the communities that they serve, especially in the developing countries. Likewise, Balázs, Rajcsányi-Molnár, András and Sitku (2021) stress that the importance of involvement of the higher education sector in the activities of the communities as a means of empowering and improving such communities cannot be over-emphasised, especially during these times of technological change. Meyer and Sporn (2018) maintain that societies expect institutions of higher learning to take a leading role in the upliftment of these communities and also to provide comprehensive education so that youth are employable.

Dzimińska, Fijałkowska and Sułkowski (2018) regard higher education institutions as essential partners of societies and maintain that institutions of higher learning are supposed to uplift their societies intellectually, build social capital, train students for the world of work, including outside realities, provide access to knowledge and assist in creating democratic and sustainable communities. Jones, Leask, Brandenburg and De Wit (2021) agree and warn that if institutions of higher learning neglect and/fail to attend to the needs and benefits of their communities, these needs and benefits can be produced somewhere else. Consequently, these higher education institutions would lose value, meaning and above all respect, from the communities that they mean to serve. Mense, Lemoine, Garretson and Richardson (2018) opine that those complex challenges, especially organisational ones and the ever-changing technology, are forcing higher education to change as the world itself is changing at an alarming speed. Institutions of higher education should remain relevant and strong to meet their local, national and international challenges (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev & Gimranova, 2021; Jones et al., 2021).

Undoubtedly, institutions of higher educations are seen as solutions in the development of economy of the nation, as well as promoting diversity and trade in different countries (Rena, 2010). Hazelkorn (2017) concurs, highlighting, however, that higher education institutions, especially universities have been responsible for the development of societies for decades, but

new developments and challenges put more pressure to these institutions and their students to work hard for the advancement of the communities in which they function. Rena (2010) asserts that the world economy is experiencing change as never before. Scientific and technological developments, competition, a media revolution and organisational change, have impacted the education sector. Higher education is witnessing a paradigm shift, not only as the focus has moved from local and national education to global education but also as numerous and demanding reforms are experienced in the sector globally. Undoubtedly, the role of higher education institutions is significantly impacted by these changes. Like all new changes or reforms, changes bring new demands and challenges, which higher education institutions need to contend with and in most cases, these institutions find it difficult to handle these challenges. For example, many countries are faced with a challenge of the shortage of the required skills and the TVET sector, in spite of being regarded as a solution to train people who will be able to address the challenge of skills shortage, is failing to address this need (Batholmeus & Pop, 2019; Kamin & Buntat, 2019).

3.3 THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, before a democratic form of government was introduced in 1994, the education system was marked by discrepancies emanating from the discriminatory laws of apartheid. For example, the system of education in the country was divided according to racial lines, unequally funded and its structural development was skewed (Universities South Africa, 2015; Mzanga, 2019). Compounding the problem was that people who were discriminated against were in the majority and this negatively hindered the development of the economy of the country, since most people were side-lined in the economy of the country. Cloete (2016) concurs, stating that prior to 1994, the South African higher education system was differentiated, and these disparities needed to be addressed together with other discrepancies in the country before a democratic form of government was established in 1994.

The CHE (2022) states that for decades, the South African tertiary education system in South Africa was fragmented and did not function as a single organisational system of education. Therefore, it was imperative to transform the system of higher education in order to address the inequalities, inefficiencies and imbalances of the past. To date, the dream of transforming the system of education in South Africa completely has yet to be organised (Mzanga, 2019; Senekal & Lenz, 2020). Adonis and Silinda (2021) denote that to overcome the discriminatory practices

of the apartheid era, the government needs to properly plan, govern and fund the system of education as a single coordinated system. As a means to an end, a piecemeal and racialised higher education sector inherited from the previous regime has altered its structure and tertiary institutions have been merged and the number of public institutions has been reduced substantially (Universities South Africa, 2015; Mzanga, 2019). Subsequently, higher education institutions in South Africa have been categorised as traditional universities, comprehensive universities, universities of technology and TVET colleges. In total, South Africa has 26 public universities, 50 public TVET colleges and 95 private higher education institutions. Figure 3.1 below shows the three types of South African public universities (cf. 1.2.2).

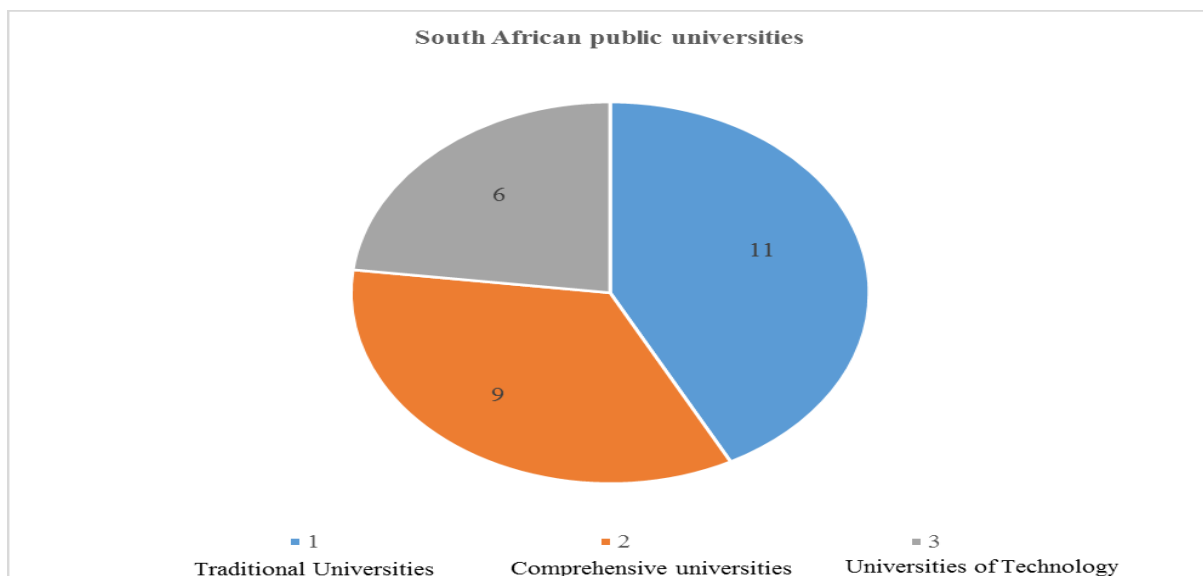


Figure 3.1: South African public universities after merger, extracted from Sheppard and Cole (2016).

In South Africa, universities are divided into three categories and the difference is based on the programmes offered by each category. For example, traditional universities offer general formative and professional academic programmes, including undergraduate, Masters and PhD programmes, while universities of technology are more focused on providing undergraduate career-focused programmes (Sheppard & Cole, 2016; DHET, 2019). Meanwhile, comprehensive universities combine attributes of both these types of universities (Sheppard & Cole, 2016; DHET, 2019). This new set up came into being through mergers of different higher education institutions in South Africa. Such mergers are regarded as the key drivers of transformation whereby the fragmented further and higher education systems, which were inherited from apartheid regime were unified.

Mosadeghrad, Majdzadeh, Arab and Mohamadi-Bolbanabad (2019) assert that a merger needs the support of all stakeholders. Therefore, the purpose of the merger should be well communicated to the stakeholders before such a merger is implemented. According to Bibu and Isac (2018), generally, the reasons for merger are to achieve administrative, economic and academic benefits. Bibu and Isac (2018) substantiate these reasons as follows: (i) administrative reasons – the scaling of the number of administrators to get more professional and efficient administration; (ii) economic reasons – to save money and to focus on crucial things, and (iii) academic reasons – to eliminate duplications and improve academic performance, as well as to ensure that the position of the new institution is strengthened to meet the international standard of higher education. Notwithstanding these reasons, the mergers of tertiary institutions in South Africa was mainly propelled by the history of the country. Therefore, the main purpose that drove the mergers was to address the discrepancies which emanated from the apartheid regime. For example, Petrus (2019) lists the following as reasons for mergers: (i) to increase access (increase student enrolments) and enable those students who were previously disadvantaged and could not access tertiary institutions, and (ii) to address the issue of equity for effective and efficient organisation of the available sources and to respond to the changes and needs because of the change from a government of oppression to a democratic form of government.

According to Petrus (2019), the main purpose of a merger process was to restructure higher education at an institutional level in order to facilitate transformation for higher education institutions. This process led to the establishment of one organisational education system for higher education. According to Nzimande (2012), South Africa's post-school sector located at the nexus between the formal education system and the workplace is seen as a conduit to the world of work and it comprises: (i) public universities; (ii) public TVET colleges (formerly known as further education and training – FET colleges); (iii) public adult learning centres (which have been absorbed into community colleges); (iv) private post-school institutions (registered private FET colleges and private higher education institutions, which had also been renamed TVET colleges); (v) the SETAs and the National Skills Fund (NSF) and (vi) regulatory bodies responsible for qualifications and quality assurance in the post-school system such as the CHE and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). As Nzimande (2012) puts it, these institutions are expected to prepare the individuals to enter the workplace as well qualified and competent individuals for the growth of the economy of the country.

Undoubtedly, tertiary institutions in South Africa can only address the challenges that engulf the sector and also deal with socio-economic needs of the country with assistance from other sectors, especially from the private sector. Machingambi (2020) contends that changes have been marginal, and the system of higher education is still struggling to make inroads to achieve these desired changes. Without addressing the fundamental problems of the past, transforming higher education will always be an ideal (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019; Machingambi, 2020). For example, Scott (2018) argues that higher education in the country still struggles to produce competent graduates who meet the needs of the country.

3.3.1 Transformation in South African higher education

Political changes in South Africa witnessed since 1994 have made a tremendous contribution to transform the system of education in different spheres (Levy, Cameron, Hoadley & Naidoo, 2019; Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). Majee (2020) agrees that transformation in the higher education sector that started immediately after 1994 in South Africa was part of political and socio-economic transition influenced by changes in the political landscape. The end of apartheid system in 1994 with its unjust practices was an indication that reforms in the education system of South Africa were eminent. This was exacerbated by the belief that if South African higher education could be transformed, the sector would be able to produce competent graduates who would assist the country to grow socially and economically, as well as to build a rainbow nation.

Amosun, Naidoo and Maart (2018) maintain that for transformation in the system of higher education to be meaningful, such transformation must reflect the changes taking place in society. Fourie (1999) identifies the following five interlinked and interdependent issues that organisational institutional transformation in South African higher education: organising the governance structures of institutions; increasing access for educationally and financially disadvantaged students; restructuring of curricula; focusing on developmental needs in research and community service, and redressing inequalities in terms of race and gender. However, these issues are not peculiar to South African higher education. Lange (2020) lists multiple issues, including student access, race and gender discrimination that precipitated the need for transforming the South African higher education. However, Meela, Libhaber and Kramer (2021) argue that despite transformation being found in the higher education sector, disparities or inequalities have not been eliminated. Likewise, Adonis and Silinda (2021) complain that reforms in the higher education system in South Africa are moving a slow pace since the end of

apartheid. Luvalo (2019) claims that efforts to transform the system of higher education in South Africa have not yielded fruitful results so far.

Sułkowski et al. (2019) argue that the concept of transforming higher education by using mergers is not something new because mergers of higher education institutions have taken place across the globe. Changes or reforms in the system of education in South Africa like most other reforms introduced after South Africa became a democratic country were politically-driven (Morwe, Garcia-Espana & Luescher, 2018; Petrus, 2019). Thus, the political masters saw the need of incorporating the system of higher education with what scientific and technological changes were taking place globally. Changes must also occur in the composition of students and staff and changes in governance structures and course content. To achieve this, all stakeholders and role-players need to change their mind-sets fundamentally. Fourie (1999) distinguishes between different levels in which the reformation of the higher education sector takes place in South Africa. These are the structural or governance level, the demographic level, the level of the institution's core function, and the vision/mission and organisational structure levels. For South African higher education institutions to transform, they need a synergy of creative strategies to engage issues of redress (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Matsiliza, 2022).

Demands for higher education institutions to change began long before a democratic government was formed in South Africa in 1994 (Fourie, 1999; Morwe et al., 2018). Fourie (1999) maintains that organisations for students such as South Africa Students Congress Organisation (SASCO), Pan African Students Organisation (PASO), Workers' Union, such as the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Unions (NEHAWU) and Staff Associations such as Union Democratic University Staff Association (UDUSA) spearheaded these demands. However, the demand for change in higher education gained momentum after the country transitioned to democracy. As Wiese et al. (2010) allude, the landscape in South African higher education received more attention after a democratic form of government was formed in South Africa. However, Mampane, Omidire and Aluko (2018) argue that the reformation of the sector in the country driven by equality, equity and redress of the past inequalities has been too slow. Badat (2020) concurs, ascribing this to the lack of inadequacy of resources that could assist the higher education sector to transform comprehensively.

3.3.2 Challenges facing higher education in South Africa

Although South African higher education has managed to make a number of reforms since the country achieved its democracy, the sector is still faced by a number of challenges. According to DHET (2012), the greatest challenge facing the system of higher education is its inability to meet not only the needs of the labour market, which may lead to the growth of the economy of the country but also to address the societal needs. Like institutions of higher learning in other countries, the sector in South Africa faces many issues from organisations. Among these issues, are increasing number of institutions of higher learning and most of these institutions are private institutions, which lead to high competition, policy changes, funding models, technological changes, transformation, mergers and changing student profiles (Wiese et al., 2010; Hamzah, 2020).

According to Musakuro and De Klerk (2021), tertiary institutions in South Africa face challenges that emanated from the imbalances of the past. However, tertiary institutions in South Africa are not the only institutions that face a multitude of challenges, institutions of higher learning in several countries, especially in developing countries, also face numerous complex challenges (Bajjnath, 2018; Tien, Ngoc, Trang & Mai, 2022). Calderon (2018) agrees, stating that key challenges facing institutions of higher learning worldwide include limited scarce resources, inadequate funding, increasing competition between institutions themselves, as well as between public and private tertiary institutions. Hazelkorn (2017) posits that there is no hope that challenges facing institutions of higher learning globally can subside soon and there is increasing uncertainty for the future. Thus, institutions of higher learning across the globe should gear up for such uncertainties. If they do not do so, many of these institutions of higher learning might well diminish. As Hazelkorn (2017) puts it, many universities have become civically unfastened.

Many students start their studies academically unprepared for higher education. Hassel and Ridout (2018) are of the view that this unpreparedness of the first-year students is a cause for concern because if not well-managed, these students can perform poorly and eventually drop out. Tewari and Ilesanmi (2020) concur, claiming that if the issue of underprepared students is not properly managed, it can affect the quality of graduate throughput in the country. However, most higher education institutions have responded by creating remedial programmes aimed at

assisting struggling students to cope with the new challenging environment (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020; Sekonyela, 2021).

Tanga and Maphosa (2018) regard the following as challenges faced by the first-year students at higher education institutions: adjusting to the new environment, the language barrier and struggling to use computers because of their backgrounds. Governments, institutions of higher learning and private sector should work together to create an enabling environment for those who are less advantaged so that they can also acquire higher education. Rena (2010) argues that the distribution on people and resources affect different people differently. For example, those who live in remote areas are disadvantaged in a number of ways and this compromises their standard of living. As a result, governments in many countries are trying to address the issue of access for students who were previously denied access opportunities to higher education. A case in point, in South Africa, is that the government through the NSFAS has made funds available for students coming from disadvantaged families. However, the graduation rate of those students who have been assisted financially is not known and Cloete (2016) maintains that the reason is that NSFAS disperses billions of rands without monitoring outcomes.

Challenges facing both TVET, and universities have a negative impact on these institutions of higher learning. As Vught (2021) puts it, public trust in higher education is decreasing not only because a number of students graduating are unable to find employment but also fake news, including fake science, are destroying the image of higher education institutions. However, challenges are by no means confined to South African higher education institutions. Globally, higher education is confronted by numerous challenges, which may not be necessarily similar across all countries.

3.3.2.1 Globalisation of higher education

Tight (2021) states that globalisation and internationalisation have become buzz terms that have not only led to a series of educational reforms but also to frameworks of higher education research. According to Hazra (2018), globalisation have affected many spheres of human life, including education. Meanwhile, Kaur (2020) argues that globalisation has revolutionised the higher education sector globally. Roy (2021) agrees, arguing that because of the changes that are brought by globalisation in the higher education sector worldwide, predicting the future of this sector has become extremely hard. Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness

between societies and/or countries. Globalisation means that the world is interconnected politically, economically, culturally, socially and educationally (Ogeh & Abe, 2020; Pacho, 2020). According to Strielkowski, Grebennikova, Razinkina and Rudenko (2021), the impact of globalisation is seen as strong as industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation put together.

Kaur (2020) citing India as an example maintains that organisational change holds both threats and opportunities for leaders of institutions of higher education. With regard to India, there is a migration of students to European and advanced or more developed countries to further their studies – both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Patil, Javheri and Achaliya (2020) concur, maintaining that higher education system in India is facing numerous challenges emanating from organisations. However, these challenges are universal challenges and India is not the only country faced by educational challenges. Higher education systems in many countries are struggling because of challenges brought about by organisations. For example, students in most under-developed or developing countries are lured by better opportunities for furthering their studies abroad. Talukdar (2019) views organisation as a process that breaks down all barriers (political, economic, cultural, social, ecological, geographical & educational) and integrates the whole world into a global village. Tight (2021) opines that organisation has increased competition among institutions of higher learning, locally, nationally, continentally and internationally. Waller, Lemoine, Mense and Richardson (2019a) purport that institutions of higher learning are forced by technology and globalisation to compete globally in order to survive. Talukdar (2019) concurs, adding that institutions of higher learning in developed countries welcome globalisation and these institutions deal with it well because it is rewarding to them, but most institutions of higher learning in developing countries find it difficult to deal with it because of a number of reasons.

According to Talukdar (2019), globalisation is forcing those institutions of higher learning that are found in developing and/underdeveloped countries to adjust willingly or unwillingly with the fast changes with scarce or limited resources. Thus, the majority of those institutions found in developing and/underdeveloped countries struggle to keep pace with the fast changes brought about by globalisation and the ever-changing technology (Waller et al, 2019a). Although societies, particularly higher education institutions around the globe find it difficult to cope with globalisation and technology, institutions of higher learning in developing and/under developing countries are the ones that struggle the most (Mense et al., 2018). Roy (2020) agrees, adding that for these higher education institutions to survive or face the demands posed by globalisation and

new technology, these higher education institutions, especially those who are from developing and/or under developing countries, require new skills and competencies in order to adopt more innovative approaches to education. Against this backdrop, Waller, Lemoine, Mense, Garretson and Richardson (2019b) state that institutions of higher learning have not only been forced to rethink the purpose of their existence in the global sphere but also to reassess their involvement in the global market.

Undoubtedly, because of globalisation, higher education institutions have to prepare students for the unpredictable changes taking place worldwide so that these students can widen their scope for job opportunities (Janks, 2014). However, Meyer, Bushney and Ukpere (2011) are of the view that many tertiary institutions in many countries are finding it difficult to cope with and/or adapt to realities of globalisation. The institutions need to develop strategies that can help them to cope with globalisation and compete in the global market. Meyer et al. (2011) argue that if South African institutions of higher learning have strategies to deal with globalisation, these institutions will be able to produce citizens that could contribute significantly to the global economy. As a result, Meyer et al. (2011) recommend the following for higher education institutions in their attempts to address the challenge of organisation: (i) to scan general trends and realities and make them an explicit part of institutional planning and curriculum in all fields of study; (ii) to form alliances with international universities and other bodies such as professional associations or research institutions, and (iii) to have dynamic leaders devoted to the sound governance of universities in a global world.

3.3.2.2 Quality of primary and secondary education

Chetty and Pather (2016) assert that the fact that primary and secondary education and post-school education are interdependent is a challenge on its own because poor education in primary and secondary education directly affects the performance of students at tertiary level. What compounds the problem is that most schools have a shortage of resources (human, capital and physical). As a result, most students enter institutions of higher learning ill prepared. Consequently, a big gap exists between basic education (normal schools) and higher education (tertiary institutions) in South Africa. Janks (2014) denotes that the gap is worsened by the fact that it is relatively easy to pass matriculation in South Africa. For example, requirements to pass matriculation have been lowered drastically lately. Furthermore, many schools, especially those in townships and rural areas, are dysfunctional.

Although apartheid was buried decades ago, the remnants of apartheid still exist in the country. For example, children coming from poor communities and rural areas are still disadvantaged, as they find themselves in poor and dysfunctional schools (Janks, 2011). Meanwhile, those children that come from well-to-do families are able to access affluent schools and acquire quality education because these schools have enough resources. Chetty and Pather (2016) state that in spite of the system of education in South Africa being overhauled immediately after 1994, the performance of students from poor backgrounds is still disturbing because these institutions do not have well-qualified teachers and lack adequate and appropriate resources. Janks (2014) provides the reasons for the dysfunctionality of schools in South Africa, as follows: (i) insufficient infrastructure; (ii) problems with school leadership; (iii) teachers' limited content and pedagogic knowledge; (iv) a poor work ethic; (v) powerful unions; (vi) trial and error curriculum reform; (vii) change fatigue; (viii) quick-fix, short-term planning, and (ix) corruption or the misappropriation of funds.

3.3.2.3 Access to higher education

Before 1994, institutionalised discrimination and exclusionary practices limited access for the vast majority of the people, particularly Blacks and Coloureds who came from disadvantaged backgrounds to higher education. As a result, higher education under this democratically elected government is under pressure to rectify the ills of the past created during both colonial and apartheid regimes. This has compelled many tertiary institutions in South Africa to review their admission and recruitment policies with an aim of redressing the imbalances of the past (Mouton et al., 2013). Wiese et al. (2010) maintain that government has increased pressure on the institutions of higher learning to increase access by recruiting more students from the previously disadvantaged communities. However, Altbach et al. (2009) argue that addressing the issue of access cannot be a solution because problems facing tertiary institutions in South Africa are complex.

Cross (2018) maintains that the focus should be on both formal and epistemic accesses because both are crucial in addressing the imbalances of the past. Cross (2018) further argues higher education institutions in South Africa face high dropout rates, poor performance and low graduation rates, especially from those students from disadvantaged communities. Therefore, to improve access (both formal access and epistemic access), primary and secondary education should improve. Cross (2018) distinguishes between formal and epistemological access.

According to Cross (2018), formal access is about the student entering the higher education system and this process is driven by policy whereby students should be allowed entry on the basis that they meet certain criteria. Akoojee and Nkomo (2007) regard formal access as access with participation, which was influenced by political changes when a democratic form of government was established in South Africa in 1994. This type of access aimed purely on increasing access of those previously denied access because of the legacy of apartheid (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007).

Meanwhile, the second part of access is called access with success, which means that the previously disadvantaged, especially black students, based on their performance and irrespective of their financial backgrounds, should access institutions of higher learning. Cross (2018) calls the second access epistemological access, which means that students are provided access to learning at higher education institutions because they are viewed as capable students. These students, if provided with academic support, can become successful academically in a tertiary institution. Therefore, students need assistance to understand the new environment well. Cross (2018) argues that students should be assisted because a student needs help to transition from the familiar environment to the new environment to achieve epistemological access.

3.3.2.4 Funding

According to Wangenge-Ouma and Kupe (2020), higher education institutions depend on financial resources to accomplish their goals and to become effective organisations. Without financial resources or with limited funding, higher education institutions struggle to achieve their goals. Ayuk and Koma (2019) regard funding as the provision of the financial resources that are required to pay for the inputs of effective higher education delivery. Kwasi-Agyeman, Langa and Swanzy (2020) opine that funding challenges affect the higher education institutions severely and the cost makes it difficult to access higher education.

Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh and Susuman (2018) claim that loans and bursaries that are offered to students are not enough because they do not cover the full expenses borne by the students and the students often struggle to survive during the period of his/her study at the higher institution of learning. Students who do not have enough financial resources have find other ways of getting income in order to survive, such as financial support from their families, doing part-time jobs, loans and/or other means of financial support (Matsolo et al., 2018). However, Naidoo and

McKay (2018) argue that some students do not qualify for bank loans, and they fail to find part-time jobs. What compounds the problem is that some of these students come from destitute families or have no families at all and cannot get financial support from their families.

Mgaiwa (2018) states that globally, tertiary institutions have financial problems but because African countries are still at the developmental stage, problems are greater than anywhere in the world. Likewise, Salmi (2020) concurs that many institutions of higher learning in both developed and developing countries have a problem of funding, but the challenge is more prevalent in developing nations, as funding for higher education is insufficient and this has dire consequences. However, not only students are struggling with funding, but also higher education institutions are struggling with funding. As Ogeh and Abe (2020) indicate, institutions of higher learning also need increased funding that would enable them to translate their dreams and desired status into the reality of the global standard.

The National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE) (in Mouton et al., 2013) identified five fundamental goals that are compromised by lack of funding of higher education institutions in South Africa. These fundamental goals are: (i) producing the graduates needed for social and economic development in South Africa; (ii) achieving equity in the South African higher education system; (iii) achieving diversity in the South African higher education system; (iv) sustaining and promoting research, and (v) restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system. According to Mouton et al. (2013), South African institutions of higher learning get funding from the government by student fees and by third-stream income, mainly from donors, entrepreneurial activities, and contract research activities. Mouton et al. (2013), however, state that the big chunk of financial support for public tertiary institutions comes from the government, and this income has historically provided the core support for institution's operating and capital expenses.

3.3.2.5 Accommodation for students

Generally, the majority of students who attend institutions of higher learning study away from home and have to be provided accommodation by these institutions. However, these institutions do not have enough accommodation to provide their students (Gopal & Van Niekerk, 2018). Compounding the problem is that in most developing countries, including South Africa, governments that are supposed to build student accommodation are unable to do or to meet the

demand because of financial constraints. Gbadegesin, Marais, Von Maltitz, Cloete, Lenka, Rani, Campbell, Denoon-Stevens, Venter, Koetaan and Pretorius (2022) assert that the increasing numbers of students accessing institutions of higher learning globally has overstretched facilities and created a shortage of accommodation for students attending these institutions. Because these institutions have limited funds to build more student residences, these institutions are forced to move their students and house them off-campus or through private service providers (Gbadegesin et al., 2022).

Mzileni and Mkhize (2020) state that student accommodation has emerged as a bone of contention at all tertiary institutions in South Africa. According to Mzileni and Mkhize (2020), the issue of inadequate and poor student accommodation is always raised whenever students are protesting. Compounding the problem is that resources to provide student accommodation have become scarce. Gopal and Van Niekerk (2018) state that from 2009 to 2013, South African higher education experienced 39 student protests over student housing. These protests resulted in the then Minister in the DHET forming a task team to investigate the national student housing crisis in South Africa (Gopal & Van Niekerk, 2018). The report of the task team discovered that student accommodation is a major problem which has forced many students to look for private accommodation outside campuses and to travel to attend classes (Sikhwari, Dama, Gadisi & Matodzi, 2020). Often, students are subjected to exorbitant rents and unsafe places that are not conducive for learning or studying. For students to concentrate or focus on their studies and succeed academically, they need decent and safe accommodation where there would be no disturbances (Gopal & Van Niekerk, 2018). Chiguvi and Ndoma (2018) concur, adding that the issue of accommodation by students studying at tertiary institutions is one of the main issues that students raise whenever they are having protests.

Chiguvi and Ndoma (2018) regard the rise in intake or increasing access to more students in tertiary institutions as the reason why there is a shortage of accommodation for students studying at these institutions. However, the issue of student accommodation has been a challenge for years. Students who travel far to higher learning institutions have always contended with the issue of accommodation. Thus, the dearth of decent student housing needs to be addressed immediately. It is a contributing factor to students' underperformance, which is seen by the high dropout rate. Legodi (2019) denotes that accommodation for students should not just imply providing students with beds and meals, but students should be provided with places suitable for living, learning and social amenities.

3.3.2.6 Increased emphasis on technology

The ever-changing technology exerts extreme pressure on institutions of higher learning. The speed in which technology is moving always makes it difficult for these institutions of higher learning to adapt. Without any doubt, technology has made a tremendous impact on tertiary education environments and will keep on growing in the future. Definitely, this impact will affect not only academic activities but also the manner in which tertiary institutions do things, generally. Waller et al. (2019b) regard technology and globalisation as pressuring institutions of higher education to make significant changes.

Lemoine et al. (2017) claim that technology has changed the way in which institutions of higher learning do things. For example, virtual teaching and learning have become a major solution to a number of challenges, as teaching and learning can take place anytime and anywhere. Waller et al. (2019a) state that technology has not only changed the higher education landscape but has also made global higher education more complicated and competitive. Waller et al. (2019a) view technology as central to global changes, as it transforms higher education, which results in global interconnectedness. Clearly, everyone associated with tertiary institutions needs to understand technology and technological demands well. The challenge, however, is that the majority of students from disadvantaged schools are not familiar with these technologies, especially during their first year at tertiary institutions. Thus, tertiary institutions need to provide support to these students by offering quality education, especially technology literacy.

However, Waller et al. (2019b) warn that technology alone cannot determine the success of any institution, including institutions of higher learning. For any institution to succeed that institution also requires strong leadership, especially strategic leadership. Therefore, technology should not be viewed as the end but should be viewed as the means to achieve the end, which is the success of institutions of higher learning.

3.3.3 Opportunities for the higher education institutions

Although institutions of higher learning have many challenges, the future is bright for those institutions that will grab the opportunities presented by the changes taking place globally. García-Morales, Garrido-Moreno and Martín-Rojas (2021), citing the transition from traditional

teaching to online or digital teaching and learning during the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, point out that challenges can be turned into opportunities. García-Morales et al. (2021) contend that although the outbreak of the pandemic was a time of risk and uncertainty, it was also a time of opportunities whereby talents and innovation were brought to the education system. García-Morales et al. (2021) further argue that digital transformation was not something new in the sector, but the outbreak of the pandemic accelerated it at a higher speed. Without any doubt, technological changes taking place are revolutionising teaching and learning practices and delivery systems for higher education (Gumport & Chun, 2007; Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). Gumport and Chun (2007) claim that technology aiming at improving the performance of institutions, including higher education institutions globally, is moving at an alarming speed.

Sarker, Davis and Tiropanis (2010) state that technology keeps everyone on their toes because new things appear now and again, and people are expected to learn these new things. Sarker et al. (2010) are of the view that failing to invest in technology-based learning will be counter-productive and higher education institutions will struggle to compete in new or changing markets. As Gumport and Chun (2007) point out, technology taking place worldwide is busy reshaping the manner in which institutions function, including the institutions of higher learning. For example, nowadays, prospective students do everything online, starting from inquiring and acquiring information on the programmes the institution offers to the finalisation of the registration process, including submitting the bursary application and the outcome of the application. Likewise, technology has also provided better and more improved opportunities for research. For example, the use of not only computers but even cellular phones enable one to access information, which was hardly accessed previously with a great ease. As Gumport and Chun (2007) put it, gone are the days when people were to spend hours in libraries searching for information in textbooks.

3.4 THE TVET SECTOR: A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

All proponents of the TVET sector across the world regard the sector as the solution to the development and growth of the economy of the country (HRDCSA, 2014a; Chelimo, Guyo & Moronge, 2020). Kuehn (2019) maintains that the TVET sector is very important for creating and providing the relevant skills that can help in the development of the economy of any nation. Ramadan and Xiaohui (2019) concur, arguing that the TVET system is the master key in the

economic development of a nation through providing the necessary skills to secure employment, which could assist in developing the economy of the country.

According to Oviawe (2018), the TVET sector has proven to be the key to skill development. It is for this reason that Okolocha and Baba (2016) postulate that considering the significant role that the TVET sector plays to the socio-economic development of every society, it has become imperative in the 21st century that TVET can be seen as a tool for development. Matsumoto (2018) regards the sector as a best way of providing the skills required by the labour market, which can assist in improving the economy of any nation but also in ensuring sustainability of such economy. According to Riyanda, Jalinus, Abdullah, Ranuharja, Islami, Adi and Aminuddin (2022), there is a growing awareness among the people around the world that jobs require multidimensional skills and the TVET sector has the potential to influence the labour market and transform the economy by providing these much-needed skills (Chukwu, Anaele, Omeje & Ohanu, 2020). It may be inferred that skills provided by the TVET sector are essential in the development of any country, community, individual or enterprise. Although previously, the TVET sector was not taken seriously, many countries are beginning to realise how important the sector is in developing economies through providing skills needed by the labour market (Matsumoto, 2018; Bhattarai, 2020; Gachunga et al., 2020). Mutebi and Kiplagat (2022) concur, stating that the TVET sector, is now applauded as it plays a crucial role in building an educated workforce. As a result, the sector has become more prominent as a vehicle for sustainable development globally. Chinakwe and Njoku (2018) allude that any country's national development is dependent of the strength and the capability of the TVET sector to provide those scarce skills, which are required to enable graduates to be considered by the labour market or for self-employment. For any country to be economically sustainable, the TVET sector should be prioritised and provided with the necessary resources.

Chukwu et al. (2020) point out that TVET colleges are strengthened in order to ensure that a workforce with the necessary skills that can improve productivity in the country is developed. In many countries, the TVET sector is seen as key in the development of a nation because it does not only contribute to the human resource development, but it also contributes to work productivity and economic development (Shefiu & Ayika, 2019; Gachunga et al., 2020; Bello & Muhammad, 2021). As a result, many people in developed and developing countries recognise TVET sector's important role in equipping individuals with requisite skills, allowing them effective participation in socio-economic and technological changes. Likewise, Oviawe (2018)

acknowledges the impact of the TVET sector on the development of different nations, adding that the TVET sector should be seen as a real tool that can be used to empower people for national betterment. Students who have undergone TVET acquire life skills that enable them to be productive entrepreneurs (Oviawe, 2018; Bhattarai, 2020). In most countries, the TVET sector is considered as the master key because it can help in unlocking or addressing challenges facing the country, including unemployment, poverty and improving quality life for communities and achieving sustainable development (Chinakwe & Njoku, 2019; Mukhwana, 2019). Mukhwana (2019) argues that the sector has been a missing critical link in addressing a number of problems and priorities in Africa for a very long time and he questions the time that it has taken the African continent to realise the importance of the TVET sector. Bano, Yang and Alam (2022) concur, adding that the TVET sector has been proven by various studies as the key to skill development.

Shefiu and Ayika (2019) state that the emphasis of the TVET sector is on work productivity. This aspect differentiates it from other forms of education and training. According to Salabson (2018), TVET is important to any nation because: it increases productivity that promotes the growth and development of the nation, it attracts and increases the workforce as more people are absorbed by the labour market, reduces unemployment and subsequently alleviates poverty in the country. TVET sector can be regarded as one of the key solutions to poverty alleviation because it can equip individuals with employment skills or entrepreneurial skills that can result in sustainable national development (Oviawe, 2018). As a result, countries worldwide are doing their best to promote the TVET sector (Alhasan & Tyabo, 2013; Bhattarai, 2020). Alhasan and Tyabo (2013) are of the view that the sector can lead into self-reliance, economic prosperity, and political supremacy of a nation. Tun and Juchelková (2022) citing Myanmar as one of the developing countries in Southeast Asia states that TVET sector has made a tremendous impact on the sustainable development of the country.

Undoubtedly, a functional and effective TVET can provide opportunities for the development of human resource capital, resulting in the improvement of the economy of the country. Chinakwe and Njoku (2019) assert that TVET sector is applauded by different stakeholders not only for its potential in creating entrepreneurships but also for the critical role that the sector plays in addressing socio-economic issues in societies. The success of the sector in achieving its objectives is also dependent on the support it gets from these stakeholders, especially governments and industry. Shefiu and Ayika (2019) state that governments should prioritise the

TVET sector if they want to win the battle against challenges that they face. Mukhwana (2019) puts the blame of governments, especially African governments, for failing to do enough to support and promote the TVET sector. Mukhwana (2019) feels that African governments must pour enough funds into the sector if they are serious about addressing the challenges they face with sustainable development.

Indeed, the TVET sector is seen as a powerhouse for economic development. For example, in Singapore, the TVET system was reorganised to strengthen the high technology and capital-intensive industries in the 1990s and service sectors in the 2000s respectively (Tarat & Sindecharak, 2020). As a result, the vocational education model used in Singapore is considered as an excellent model which is praised as a success model of vocational education in Asia (Tarat & Sindecharak, 2020). Hence, the TVET sector is considered as a cornerstone to the success of the economy of Singapore (Tarat & Sindecharak, 2020). Jamil and Iqbal (2020) postulate that the socio-economic growth and development of any nation is greatly dependent on the skills and knowledge of the citizens of that particular country and how these individuals use those skills and knowledge for the upliftment of the nation.

According to Chukwu et al. (2020), several developed and developing countries across the globe have adopted and positioned the TVET sector as a major solution to the current and future labour market demands. However, this will depend on the functionality of the sector and the quality of interconnectedness of the TVET sector and the world of work (Russo, Serafini, & Ranieri, 2019). Remington (2018) denotes that TVET systems always result in mismatches between the demand of the industry and the supply of skills by the TVET sector. It is a worldwide phenomenon that the development of economies, particularly emerging economies, will not succeed without the governments organising skills development and expanding the pool of artisans. Although the TVET sector in many countries is claimed to be the primary driver of the socio-economic growth and development in such countries, because it provides people with skills and creates job opportunities, the sector has been unable to yield the desired objectives in many countries (Ayonmike, 2016). In many countries where students have graduated from TVET colleges, graduates struggle to find employment because the labour market claims that these graduates do not possess the skills that the employers actually require. Nonetheless, Manabete and Umar (2018) regard the TVET sector as a panacea to unemployment because the TVET sector trains students to acquire skills in different occupational programmes. However, literature suggests that in many countries what the labour market demands or needs from the

TVET system and what the sector can provide to the labour market is disconnected (Manabete & Umar, 2018).

Ayonmike (2016) maintains that the TVET sector can only make a difference in the development of the economy and reduction of poverty through the customisation of the vocational education towards the societal needs. Bano et al. (2022) insist that for the TVET sector to be able to deal with the issue of shortage of skills, unemployment and sustainable development, the sector needs to provide demand-driven programmes. This can be possible if the industry is actively involved in the activities taking place in the sector, especially if experts from the industry take part in the crafting of occupation qualification standards and skills proficiencies (Zuva & Zuva, 2020). Mukhwana (2019) believes that programmes offered by the TVET sector can be only successful if these programmes have the support and contributions of the industry. Bano et al. (2020) concur, arguing that without connection of integration between what the TVET is providing and what the industry requires, the issue of mismatch will be hardly addressed and the TVET sector will always produce redundant graduates.

Ayonmike (2015) cautions that all relevant stakeholders should play a significant role, so that the TVET sector can accomplish its desired goals and objectives. As a result, Ayonmike (2016) stresses the importance of partnership between governments and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the implementation of TVET curricula is taking the right direction in order to reach the intended goals. Pinnow (2019) purports that TVET systems play a critical part in social participation and economic development by ensuring the young people acquire skills relevant to the needs of the industry. Therefore, the role of TVET colleges is to ensure that not only current employees have skills required by the labour market but also that they prepare future employees to be able to meet the future demands of the labour market to enhance and maintain the economic development of the country (Pinnow, 2019).

3.4.1 Contextualisation of TVET

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as integral part of education and lifelong learning refers to all forms of learning of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relating to the world of work. TVET refers to education, training, and skills development activities leading to occupational fields, production, and livelihoods. TVETs involve a wide variety of learning and skills development opportunities. Different countries have different models of TVET systems,

which are structured according to their individual needs. For example, in some countries, TVET starts at secondary schools and continues to tertiary levels. Ideally, the sector should offer programmes that can lead to vocational qualifications and skills development that provide opportunities to the graduates to be employable locally, nationally and internationally. From the South African perspective, the TVET sector is promoted to provide skills that can enable those who cannot be absorbed by ordinary universities and/or universities of technology to further their studies.

Oviawe (2018) argues that every nation requires the TVET sector to foster its socio-economic development. As a result, governments in many countries consider the TVET sector as a solution to their socio-economic related issues. Winther-Schmidt and Shrestha (2020) regard the sector as a bridge that links the workplace and the world of education and training, including the lifelong learning. For Ayonmike and Okeke (2015b), the sector accelerates economic growth because it can supply the labour market with people with relevant skills and this can reduce the rate of unemployment and subsequently the level of poverty in the country. However, Ayonmike and Okeke (2015b) caution that definitions, scope, and shape of TVET should consider the developments of Information Technology (IT) and globalisation. Therefore, the sector should always try to keep pace with technological changes so that it should be relevant to the ever-changing needs and demands of this world. Okolocha and Baba (2016) concur, stating that in the era of organisation technological change places more emphasis on vocational skills for the production of self-reliant citizens.

The speed of technology and organisation is forcing the business environment to change rapidly, and this places more demand on the employees to acquire new skills, so that these individuals can deal with these drastic challenges for the development of the economy (Okolocha & Baba, 2016). Okolocha and Baba (2016) citing Nigeria as an example, assert that although TVET has long been perceived as critical to national development, it has not been accorded the seriousness that it deserves. This unfortunate situation is not unique to Nigeria; other countries, especially developing countries, are faced with a similar situation.

3.4.2 The genesis of TVET sector in the global arena

According to Maclean and Wilson (2009), it is difficult to trace the origin of the TVET sector because its history is embedded in other histories. Mosisa (2016) concurs, arguing that tracing

the history of the TVET sector implies that one should also trace the history and development of humans. Likewise, Carruthers and Jepsen (2020) state that tracing the origin of the TVET sector means that one must trace it back to the ancient times. However, vocational education and apprenticeship have grown and changed with times and societal purposes.

For one to understand the history and development of the TVET sector, one should go back to the origin of tools and technologies and the association of the development of tools and technologies to education (Mosisa, 2016). Compounding the problem is that different countries use various terms for TVET (Maclean & Wilson, 2009). According to Maclean and Wilson (2009), some countries use terms like apprenticeship training, vocational education, industrial arts, technical education, technical/vocational education (TVE), occupational education (OE), vocational education and training (VET), career and technical education (CTE). This alone makes it difficult to understand the genesis of the TVET system. Maclean and Wilson (2009) further assert that the concept of TVET has changed with the changing needs in response to society's demands. Mosisa (2016) notes, however, that the starting point of TVET is not clear.

3.4.3 Global challenges facing TVET sector in the 21st century

Ayonmike (2016) argues that there is no way that the TVET sector can achieve its goals and objectives without proper infrastructure, enough training facilities and competent lecturers to implement TVET curricula. Proper infrastructure, adequate training materials and efficient lecturers are the backbone of the successful TVET sector, as these requirements are necessary for acquiring knowledge and skills needed by the labour market. As Ayonmike (2016) puts it, skills are acquired through practical learning not theoretical learning; thus, proper workshops with adequate training materials and qualified lecturers or instructors with the necessary skills are essential for the sector to attain the set goals and objectives. Although the TVET sector is faced with numerous challenges, which in most cases, hinders its performance, Kayode and Adeyemi (2016) single out the shortage of funds as the major challenge and/or obstacle to make it difficult for the sector to perform effectively and efficiently.

Field et al. (2014) regard fragmentation in the system, lack of collaboration with the industry and poor quality of most programmes offered as the three significant challenges facing TVET sector in several countries. The result of fragmentation is poor cooperation between

stakeholders, namely students, lecturers and employers (Field et al., 2014). Poor partnership makes it difficult for the graduates to find employment because colleges do not provide these prospective employees with the skills required by the labour market, since colleges do not know exactly what the labour market requires (Field et al., 2014). In other words, partnerships would enable the engagement between the TVET sector and the labour market, which would assist in understanding the requirements of the labour market better and this would enable a transition to employment favourable for the graduates. Generally, the majority of TVET colleges globally struggle with quality issues. Field et al. (2014) assert that programme quality is often invisible. Batholmeus and Pop (2019) are of the view that TVET colleges must not only redesign or reshape their programmes in order for these programmes to be receptive to what the labour market wants but must also ensure that lecturers visit the workplace on a regular basis to keep themselves abreast of the ever-changing industry's new developments. Thus, effective partnerships between the TVET colleges and the place of work should be forged in order to provide students with practical training linked to what is required at the workplace.

Ayonmike (2016) maintains that without addressing the obstacles that the majority of TVET colleges in most developing countries operate under, the TVET sector will never realise its goals, including contributing to the national development. The study conducted by Islam in Bangladesh revealed that TVET colleges do not have sufficient practical apparatus, for example, tools, equipment, workshops and other relevant materials to do practical work (Islam, 2021). The issue of insufficient resources, including required workshops and other equipment that would enable students to do practical work, is a universal problem across the globe. This affects the manner in which training is offered to these students and consequently it makes these students irrelevant to the labour market.

3.5 HISTORY OF THE TVET SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

Terblanche and Bitzer (2018) state that the vocational training sector is not new, as the sector was established in the eighties in South Africa. According to Terblanche and Bitzer (2018), technical colleges can be traced back to 1922 when the Apprenticeship Act was passed in order to ensure that theoretical training for apprentices at workplaces was provided. Although technical training or apprenticeship was initially meant to equip the white working class with the necessary skills, developmental changes in the South African economy resulted in these colleges

also open to Africans, Indians and Coloureds, but these three groups did not acquire the status of apprentices, like their white counterparts.

Sooklal (2005) argues that it would be difficult for one to understand the current reforms of the South African TVET sector without understanding the original history of the technical college sector in South Africa. Gamble (2021) asserts that the discovery of diamonds and golds in late 1880s exacerbated the need for skilled workers in the South African economy. Sooklal (2005) asserts that the demand for technicians with the relevant skills by the railways, as well as the demand for engineers in the mining industry led to the establishment of technical colleges. This resulted in railways opening classes for apprenticeship in Durban, Salt River and Pretoria in 1884, 1890 and 1902 respectively (Sooklal, 2005). As De Beers Mining company wanted apprentices to attend evening classes, in 1896, the school of mines was established in Kimberly where subjects like machine construction, carriage building and sketching were taught (Malherbe in Terblanche, 2017).

Sooklal (2005) maintains that interest in the technical education started to grow in the early 1890s. This interest led to the conference convened for the colonial heads of the four departments of education in 1902, whereby it was agreed that technical schools should be established to meet the needs of the four colonies, the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal (Sooklal, 2005). The ever-increasing industrialisation period led to the growth of white South African enrolments in technical colleges (Sooklal, 2005). As a result, a number of colleges were established between 1906 and 1916 and these colleges were established in East London, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, while technical institutes were established in Bloemfontein and Uitenhage (Terblanche, 2017). Terblanche (2017) maintains that during this time technical colleges concentrated on providing day and block-release technical instruction.

After South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, the technical college sector was restructured with the aim of addressing not only the inequalities of the past in the sector but also other social ills (Terblanche, 2017). In South Africa, the TVET sector that came into being through the merger of 152 former technical colleges in terms of the Further Education and Training Act 98 of 1998 in 2002 (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). This merger resulted in 50 TVET colleges across the nine provinces in South Africa. Figure 3.2 below shows the number of technical colleges per province in South Africa before the merger.

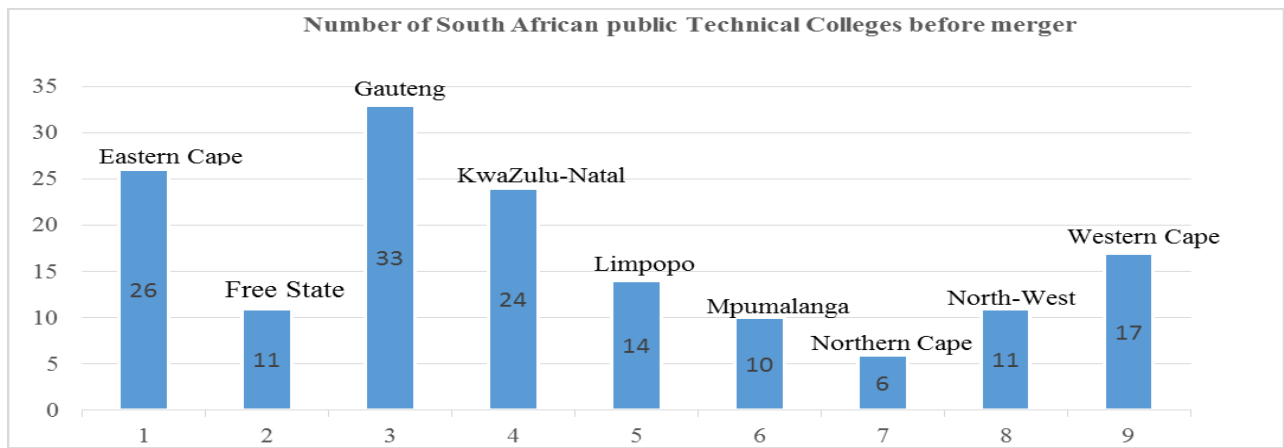


Figure 3.2: Number of South African public Technical Colleges per province before merger, extracted from Powell and Hall (2000).

The 152 technical colleges with two hundred and 32 delivery sites consisting of 152 campuses and 80 satellite sites, found in different corners of the country were located in most major towns and townships (Powell & Hall, 2000). Although these colleges could be found in the whole country, most colleges were in urban areas, with some in peri-urban areas and there were very few colleges in rural areas. Powell and Hall (2000) posit that colleges situated in urban areas and to some extent, those located in peri-urban areas could be accessed through rail, bus and taxi but those located outside could not be easily accessed by any mode of transport. These colleges had different histories. For example, some of them were state-aided, and others were state colleges. As a result, Powell and Hall (2000) state that some colleges were advantaged (historically advantaged institutions – HAI) and others were disadvantaged (historically disadvantaged institutions – HDI). Before 1994, colleges operated as independent bodies and were racially segregated (Robertson, 2015; Terblanche, 2017). Terblanche (2017) asserts that the process of merger dismantled existing segregation, brought the sector closer and created mega multi-campus delivery sites.

3.5.1 The image and status of TVET in South Africa

Billet (2018) states that, despite the fact that the importance of TVET is acknowledged internationally, the image of TVET is still a big challenge compared with other educational pathways, namely, the universities. According to Billet (2018), the challenge is not only facing the developing countries but even countries that have a high-quality of TVET system; students still make universities their first choice. Dahal (2022) concurs, maintaining that low image of

TVET is a major challenge globally. Omar, Rauf, Ismail, Rashid, Puad and Zakaria (2020) concur, arguing that the image of the TVET sector is not good globally, suggest that this image needs to be rebranded in order to attract more students. Generally, TVET sector is not considered as a good option compared with universities and this negative image stems from prospective students, parents and many other sectors of societies. However, this is a global phenomenon, which is not unique to South Africa (Kuehn, 2019).

Rus and Yasin (2020) maintain that different countries around the globe do not only use different terms when referring to the meaning and purpose of vocational training but the status of the TVET systems also differ according to countries. As a result, different countries view the TVET sector differently based on what they attach to this sector. The Department of Science and Innovation (2021) states that students view the TVET sector in South Africa as the third option, after a university and a university of technology. Consequently, TVET is seen less as an educational option. The negative image and low status attributed to TVET colleges globally discourages young people from enrolling at TVET colleges. Rosenberg and Burt (2009) share that in many countries, including South Africa, the sector is viewed as inferior to other institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, in countries like Germany, the TVET sector is viewed in high esteem, for example, in Germany the sector is regarded and respected as the major contributor to the growth and development of the economy and industry (Rosenberg & Burt, 2009). Rosenberg and Burt (2009) state that because of the value attached to the TVET sector, in Germany students and staff with good academic performance go to the sector confidently to study and as career direction of choice without having any inferiority complex, as there is no stigma attached to the sector. In South Africa students enter the sector as an option of last resort because they can do no better. The low status of the TVET sector in South Africa can be ascribed to its British origins where apprenticeship was meant to provide relief for the poor (Rosenberg & Burt, 2009; Maclean & Wilson, 2009). The poor were allowed to become apprenticed and learn a trade for their livelihood. This was the stigma that many countries, especially those who were colonised by Britain, inherited when they introduced apprenticeship in their countries.

Nonetheless, Rosenberg and Burt (2009) point out that despite its low status, the TVET sector in South Africa, particularly the public TVET colleges, have a broad remit, including the following: (i) opening access to education for all; (ii) providing opportunities for lifelong

learning; (iii) building a new citizenry, and (iv) contributing to national and organisational human resource objectives, especially at the intermediate skills level.

3.5.2 The importance of TVET Sector

Kayode and Adeyemi (2016) state that the TVET sector is acclaimed globally as the only system of education that offers the provision of skills required by the labour market. The sector focuses on providing training and enhancing those skills that are necessary for the workplace. Kayode and Adeyemi (2016) assert that the TVET sector prepares individuals for a variety of careers and occupational choices, as the sector provides skills, abilities, understanding of the workplace and work habits. However, the acquired skills, depending on various factors may help to address the major challenges faced by the youth across the world (Kayode & Adeyemi, 2016). For example, unemployment and poverty that leads to crime are considered as a grave menace to the socio-economic development of any country. As a result, as in other countries, the rising unemployment in South Africa has increased the need for TVET colleges. Despite its critical role in addressing unemployment, poverty, and other social ills, the TVET sector in South Africa has not been given the attention that the sector really deserves. Nonetheless, the sector in South Africa is still considered as a crucial sector for the development of the country. Like in many other countries, the TVET sector is regarded as a major contributor in improving the competitiveness of various enterprises and economic development of the nation (Makgato, n.d.).

Fien and Maclean (2009) assert that evidence demonstrates that the TVET sector is essential for promoting socio-economic development of countries. Thus, the sector can help to empower individuals, so that they could be employed and alleviate poverty. As a result, the TVET sector is regarded as a doorway not only to alleviate poverty but also for countries to compete in the global market (Fien & Maclean, 2009). Bullem and Akpama (2021) do not only see the TVET sector as one of the roads to productivity enhancement and poverty reduction but also as key levers to wealth creation. Makgato (n.d.b) argues that the TVET sector cannot be completely divorced from global economic growth because the sector should provide the labour market with essential skills.

Okolocha and Baba (2016) maintain that, unlike general education, education in the TVET sector centres around skills, which focuses more on what the individual can do. In other words,

the sector concentrates more on the ability for the individual to apply the skills that the individual has learned. Globally, TVET is regarded as an important tool through which any nation can create jobs, generate wealth, experience economic growth and development and reduce poverty (Bhattarai, 2020; Bello & Muhammad, 2021). Rosenberg and Burt (2009) state that too much pressure has been placed on the TVET sector to deal decisively with the high rate of unemployment by addressing the issue of skills shortages. So far, the sector is struggling to address the issue of unemployment because the graduates that it produces do not meet the expectations of the workplace. Although TVET colleges are viewed as tools for empowering the people, especially the youth with practical training to enable them to either gain employment or to be job creators and become more productive, the TVET sector is failing to deal with unemployment and poverty successfully (Salabson, 2018; Bhattarai, 2020).

The importance of TVET providing skills and opportunities for employment to people who would not be able to access these skills in any other education sector cannot be over-emphasised (Salabson, 2018; Kuehn, 2019; Danladi, Adamu, Usman & Doma, 2020; Marcellinus, 2020). Salabson (2018) sees TVET as necessary to address poverty, unemployment, crime and equity. Kuehn (2019) denotes that South Africa's TVET colleges should provide the skills that would help the country to ensure that the economy of the country does not only improve, but is also sustained. Ngcwangu (2019) concurs, arguing that in developing countries, including South Africa, TVET colleges are considered to have the potential of contributing to the skills training required for employability in the formal economy, as well as for entrepreneurship.

3.5.3 Challenges facing the TVET sector in South Africa

Most countries, especially developing countries, are faced with the same challenges as South Africa when it comes to developing a vocational system to meet the required standards. Field et al. (2014) are of the view that South Africa as a developing country should network with other countries in order to share best practices and this may help South Africa to gain experience, including learning from successes and failures of these countries. As in most other parts of the world, TVET colleges, especially public colleges, are given a low status and/or they lack respect from the public. TVET_MUST_RISE (2018) denotes that that the majority of the people in South Africa still regard university education as the best option and look at the TVET college as the last resort.

Badenhorst and Radile (2018) maintain that South African TVET colleges are faced by numerous challenges and the sector is struggling to cope with these daunting challenges. Likewise, TVET_MUST_RISE (2018) states that the TVET sector in South Africa is faced by the following challenges: (i) architecture of the South African TVET system poses a confusing mix of overlapping and competing programmes and qualifications and inadequately developed programmes; (ii) poor certification rates and massive delays of exam results because of different exam result documenting processes; (iii) students who have completed grade twelve not being accepted at universities and flooding at TVET colleges to avoid experiencing an idle year; (iv) both rural and urban TVET colleges use the same curriculum, whereas the conditions in the rural areas are different and there are very different industries situated there; (v) TVET programmes are not in tune with current labour markets; (vi) lecturers with inadequate skills and qualifications and the need to improve professional college leaders; (vii) inadequate student accommodation, and (viii) lack or unavailability of academic support for those students who are struggling academically, discourages some students to continue with their studies.

TVET_MUST_RISE (2018) states that besides the challenges that the TVET sector is faced with, the sector has failed to win the hearts of the people and TVET colleges are still not institutions of choice as envisaged by the current government. According to TVET_MUST_RISE (2018), almost all public TVET colleges in South Africa are always confronted by challenges, like student protests for different reasons, especially funding, maladministration et cetera. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) opine that challenges facing the TVET sector in South Africa are complex and should be treated as such.

3.5.3.1 Quality assurance in TVET

According to Ellis (2019), quality assurance is used to check and ensure that the product or service consistently meets the set and specified standards. Khosla and Srivastava (2021) regard quality assurance as a criterion to measure and to assure the quality of what has been produced or rendered, in terms of goods of services. As Ellis (2019) puts it, the established processes and procedures whereby producers and/or any interested parties ensure that standard systems that support and ensure effective delivery of services must be consistently met. Ellis (2019) further states that to be able to provide quality assurance, there is a need of a system of quality management in the organisation or institution.

Eton, Eton, Ogwel and Mwosi (2019) state that policymakers have identified ineffective or absence of quality assurance as factors that hinder the organisation of the goals and objectives of the TVET sector in many countries. Ogundola, Fabamise and Fadipe (2020) concur, arguing that many countries, especially developing countries, struggle to implement quality assurance because of ineffective or absence of supervision and administration. Undoubtedly, failure to implement the process of quality assurance adequately impedes the performance of the TVET sector because there are no proper yard sticks to measure if the goals and objectives are achieved. John and Yusri (2021) regard the following as some of the factors that inhibit TVET colleges to apply quality assurance properly: politics; lack of public support; poor implementation of quality assurance policies; poor infrastructure and learning facilities and inadequate financial resources.

Akpomudjere (2019) denotes that quality assurance is about ensuring that activities are organised, so that targets that the organisation has set for itself will be effectively and efficiently attained. Akpomudjere (2019) posits that quality assurance focuses on the following: (i) learner' entry behaviours, characteristics, and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate learning; (ii) the teacher entry qualification, values, pedagogic skills, professional preparedness, subject background, and philosophical orientation; (iii) the teaching and learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment, and (iv) the outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives. Ogundola et al. (2020) are of the view that for the TVET sector, quality assurance should be measured against the achievement of the mandate set by the South African government. For Ogundola et al. (2020), lack of supervision and monitoring results in poor quality assurance and this affects the national development of the country negatively. To ensure that there is quality in the TVET sector, Ayonmike et al. (2015) propose that quality assurance frameworks that can apply to all issues related to the TVET sector should be established.

Currently, South Africa has three TVET quality authorities, which are the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (UMALUSI), and Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). For the quality assurance system to yield the desired consequences, the system needs to be well-coordinated and manageable (Ayonmike, 2016). Gasmelseed (2021) concurs, arguing that if quality is not maintained, the TVET sector cannot achieve the intended goals. For the TVET

sector to deliver quality, strong leadership is required, including other support mechanisms to drive the whole structure (Gasmelseed, 2021).

3.5.3.2 Funding in South African TVET

The success of the TVET institutions globally depends on the adequate funding, that is, the funds that are poured in to ensure that the sector achieves its goals. Oviawe (2020) is of the view that to ameliorate the quality of the programmes in the TVET sector, strategies for adequate funding should be developed. According to Akoojee (2016), in South Africa, funding for TVET colleges is regulated through funding norms (the National Norms and Standards for Funding FET Colleges of 1998). Funding is a post-provisioning model where lecturers are distributed to the provinces depending on the weighted full time equivalent (FTE) of students. The weight depends on the programmes. Non-personnel costs are provided based on simple FTE-based formulas that vary from province to province (DHET, 2012; Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe, 2021). RSA (2009) states that public funds are utilised for funding public tertiary institutions, including TVET colleges and the beneficiaries of these funds are mainly the historically disadvantaged communities.

According to RSA (2009), the responsibility of ensuring that the TVET sector achieves its mandate should be a joint government and the private sector effort and both parties should fund this big elephant because both benefit from the sector. DHET (2012) states that funds should be allocated efficiently, and that government and colleges should forge strong partnerships with the private sector, in order to strengthen and expand TVET colleges. To ensure that students from previously disadvantaged communities access the TVET sector, the funding norms and standards stipulate that the government should subsidise eighty percent (80%) of the total programme cost for each student enrolling in the public TVET college (RSA, 2009; Needham, 2019). The remaining twenty percent (20%) of the whole programme cost should be recovered from the student. In addition, the South African government introduced a bursary scheme for students who perform well academically but are financially needy to assist them gain access to the TVET sector, so that these students can acquire skills (RSA, 2009; Needham, 2019). As a result, NSFAS was tasked to administer and manage bursary funds on behalf of the DHET (DHET, 2012). Undoubtedly, the introduction of this bursary scheme helped many students whose parents or families would have been unable to send them to institutions of higher learning because of their financial backgrounds.

Since the inception of the NCV programme in 2007, students who qualified for financial assistance have been assisted with tuition fees, transport and accommodation allowances and these funds have grown substantially, since then (RSA, 2013; Needham, 2019). In spite of such assistance, inadequate and/or poor funding is still considered as a challenge that impacts negatively on the development of the TVET sector because it affects the quality of training programmes in this sector (Akinyele & Bolarinwa, 2018). Oketch (2009) argues that there is a contradiction between the outcry for addressing the issue of skills shortage and the funds that governments in many countries contribute to funding the TVET sector, which is considered a major solution to the addressing the shortage of skills.

3.5.3.3 TVET and partnership with labour market

Although many TVET colleges worldwide have established partnerships with industry in their respective countries, in most cases, these partnerships are not solid (Bello & Muhammad, 2021; Raheem & Ayika, 2021; Widiastuti et al., 2021). Widiastuti et al. (2021) are of the view that TVET institutions should enhance their partnerships with the industry in order to minimise the skills gap. TVET colleges should work collaboratively with industries. In planning and developing the TVET curriculum, TVET institutions and industry should be part of the planning and development committee. This enables the industry to inform the TVET institutions of the skills they require from graduates from TVET institutions. The TVET institutions could address the issue of unemployment by producing graduates equipped with employable skills (Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018; Kuehn, 2019 & Awolola & Fasasi, 2020). However, the lack of depth in the colleges' teaching capacity is exacerbated by a shortage of meaningful partnerships with industry. Because of this gap, college curricula are not well aligned with, or responsive to, the needs of industry.

Mustafa et al. (2022) maintain that TVET colleges and industries need each other, since colleges need to ensure that their students are placed and/or find employment after graduating. On the other hand, the industry needs skilled workers to be competitive in this technological world of work. Mustafa et al. (2022) call this a win-win situation between the education sector and industry. Nkondola, Kumwenda, Hilary, Millinga and Mwinuka (2019) state that partnerships between the TVET colleges and the industries come in various forms. Such partnerships include collaboration in determining training needs for programmes, funding training, curriculum development and review, involvement of experts from the industry in teaching, student

internships and teacher exposure to the industry (Nkondola et al., 2019; Obidile, 2019). If properly managed and/or well forged, the partnership helps in ensuring that students are absorbed after finishing their studies but also that there is smooth transition from college-to-work, as graduates had been exposed to the workplace, while studying.

Makgato and Moila (2019) believe that strong partnerships between TVET colleges and the labour market can undoubtedly ensure that colleges respond to the requirements because these two sectors will not be working in isolation. As a result, the issue of incongruity between what the labour market requires and what the TVET sector produces would be addressed and employability chances for graduates will be improved substantially. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) argue that because partnership between TVET colleges and the labour market is inadequate, colleges are unable to provide the industry or the labour market with people with relevant skills that industry requires. HRDCSA (2014b) recommends that partnerships should be based on mutual benefits because partners will respect and cement the partnership if they know that there are potential benefits for them.

3.5.3.4 Shortage of qualified teaching personnel

Without qualified teaching personnel, practical work, which is an essential component of the TVET programme, will be challenging to implement. The acquisition of skills requires that strict attention and supervision should be given to every student. However, due to a shortage of qualified teaching staff, individualised instructions become very difficult for practical activities, which affects the performance of both the teaching staff and students (Okolocha & Baba, 2016; Van der Bijl & Oosthuizen, 2019; Hofmeyr & Vally, 2022). Okolocha and Baba (2016) attribute this shortage to poor salaries of the teaching personnel, arguing that many people who are qualified to teach TVET courses abandon teaching for other better jobs that have prestige and better remuneration. However, Sinha and Sinha (in Ashley, 2018) argue that retaining employees not only in education but in general workforce is a challenge. Likewise, public colleges have a challenge of retaining people with good qualifications because these people always look for attractive jobs, in terms of remuneration and benefits.

Although Field et al. (2014) are of the view that the teaching staff and their skills are critical to the sector, they regard poor quality of lecturers as a hindrance to the success of the sector. They (2014) maintain that skills and lecturers' qualifications in the sector should be improved, but

this should be accompanied by salary improvement in order to keep well qualified lecturers in the system. Field et al. (2014) recommend that for TVET lecturers to be well qualified, pedagogical skills and work experience should form part of the professional training. DHET (2012) raises concerns about the mismatch among college lecturers in South Africa. The majority of those who teach in the TVET sector either lack pedagogical training but have workplace experience because they were recruited from industry. On the other hand, others have skills in pedagogy, but lack workplace experience because they have academic qualifications, but have never been in the workplace (DHET, 2012; Yeap, Suhaimi & Nasir, 2021).

Subsequently, DHET has introduced a policy on professional qualifications for TVET lecturers in South Africa, as means to address the problem of qualifications. This policy stipulates the qualifications a TVET college lecturer should possess. The policy proposes that (i) vocational lecturers need to be competent in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the courses; (ii) a strong workplace component must be built into lecturer qualification programmes, and (iii) curricula and qualifications need to adapt and respond to economic and technical change. The policy accords with what Field et al. (2014) suggest, that TVET college lecturers should be able to impart knowledge and skills to their students. Importantly, they need to keep themselves abreast with new developments such as new technological changes.

3.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FOR THE TVET SECTOR

The role of strategic leadership and practice of leadership in the TVET sector cannot be over-emphasised, especially when one considers that the sector has a vital role in the economic growth and competitiveness of any country. In this regard, Gyimah (2020) suggests that the sector needs strong and effective leaders and managers who possess good professional and pedagogical skills to drive the mandate of the sector successfully. Although the TVET sector is gaining tremendous popularity in recent literature, not much has been done to address the issue of strategic leadership in the sector globally (cf. 1.9).

Literature suggests that when it comes to non-profit organisations, empirical research on strategic leadership is lacking (cf. 2.1). The study of literature on both strategic leadership and the TVET sector also identified this gap of knowledge. A review of literature on higher education institutions, especially the TVET sector showed that the performance of the majority

of TVET colleges countrywide is plagued by many challenges. This can, to some extent, be attributed, but not limited to ineffective leadership. This created a research gap that culminated in the following research question: What role does strategic leadership have in guiding performance of higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges? Thus, the main purpose of this research was to explore the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance looking it from the public vocational colleges' perspective. For TVET colleges to perform optimally, both locally and internationally, leadership, especially strategic leadership in these colleges needs to be adequately addressed. This study seeks to address this gap. Literature also reveals that over the past years, in South Africa not much has been done to support and prepare college principals or leaders to carry out their duties competently (cf. 1.3). This can be regarded as a bottleneck in advancing the TVET agenda and this is part of the gap that this particular study seeks to fill.

Willis et al. (2022) point out that the survival of any organisation is dependent on the effectiveness and efficiency of its leaders. Therefore, leadership is central to the success, growth and prosperity of TVET institutions as well. Ultimately, the survival and growth of the TVET sector is guided by the manner in which strategic leaders perform their strategic leadership roles. Therefore, in order to assist the TVET sector address the challenges that they face globally, a need exists to study the role of strategic leadership extensively. Literature suggests that in South Africa, poor leadership, lack of management skills, poor performance, and inequitable resources are the most pressing issues facing the TVET sector (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018; Sithole et al., 2022). Strong leadership can help to overcome the massive challenges that beset the TVET sector. Although literature studied has contributed to the understanding of strategic leadership and the TVET sector with its challenges, the researcher is of the view that there is still a gap that needs to be filled. Therefore, a study on the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance, particularly in the TVET sector, is the focus of this study.

3.7 SUMMARY

The first part of this chapter focused on higher education institutions of higher learning in general and South Africa, in particular, as set out in both local and international literature. The second part of this section (chapter three) looks at TVET colleges from both national and international points of view. The study reveals that higher education systems, both locally and

internationally, have been transformed with the aim of ensuring that they keep pace with the global changes.

Reforms are taking place in different countries with an aim of addressing challenges that these countries face. However, globally, institutions of higher learning are struggling not only to address the challenges of the twenty-first century but also to exploit new opportunities presented by globalisation in order to compete across the globe. The study confirms that institutions of higher learning cannot be left out in the socio-economic development of any country. As Olo et al. (2021) point out, tertiary institutions should not only be regarded as agents for promoting knowledge but also as agents for socio-economic development through their teaching research and social responsibilities. Abosede (2020) indicates that, through improving and sustaining national growth and development, institutions of higher education play a significant role in the development of any country.

However, the literature review led to the identification of some crucial gaps in literature on TVETs globally, especially in South Africa. The major concern is that the literature ignores the leadership role, particularly the role of strategic leadership in the performance of the TVET colleges. This is the void, which has been identified in the literature that this study intends to address. As Matenda (2019) puts it, one should build upon the available literature in order to understand this sector of tertiary education in South Africa. This study built on the available literature by exploring strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance, looking it from a TVET college perspective.

The next chapter (chapter four) focuses on the research methodology, as well as the methods or strategies to be used in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters form the important background to the investigation contained in this study. Chapter two provides a theoretical background to strategic leadership in higher education institutions, in general, and the TVET sector, in particular. Chapter three looks at the transformation occurring in higher education institutions, especially in South Africa, not only because of rapid and unprecedented global changes but also because of the imbalances of the apartheid regime.

This chapter (chapter four) begins with outlining the research paradigm relevant to this study and the essential elements of a research paradigm. The chapter then discusses qualitative research as an approach adopted in this research project and the design of the research. It looks not only on the rationale for doing research in KwaZulu-Natal and the choice of TVET colleges in this province, but also at the rationale for the choice of the individual participants. In this study, steps in data collection for this research, including the justification of the methods used in collecting and analysing data, are discussed (Mazibuko, 2007; Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Briefly, this chapter narrates the approach that was used when conducting and designing the study, including describing the method of investigation used, as well as data gathering techniques.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

In this subsection, the researcher gives a brief definition of research paradigm, with reasons for positioning himself within the interpretivist paradigm. According to Okesina (2020), the research paradigm is a researcher's perspective, thinking and assumptions about how the world works and how the knowledge about the world is viewed. Khatri (2020) regards the research paradigm as a philosophical foundation or framework of a research work, which provides guidelines on what should be studied, how it should be studied and how results should be

interpreted. It influences the manner in which the researcher views and interprets material about reality and guides the consequent action to be taken. Of the most commonly used research paradigm, the researcher was of the view that interpretivism was the most appropriate research paradigm for this particular study because interpretivists believe that there is no single reality or truth; reality needs to be interpreted. This is done through the use of qualitative methods which reveal multiple realities (Omodan, 2020; Ugwu, Ekere and Onoh, 2021).

Brown and Dueñas (2020) assert that the research paradigm influences a researcher's choice of methods directly. As explained before, the researcher has chosen a qualitative research approach and the justification for choosing this approach has been provided (cf. 1.7). The researcher was of the view that this paradigm (interpretivism) was an appropriate paradigm as it sought to understand values, beliefs and meanings of social phenomena from the participants' standpoint. For this research project, the researcher has no desire to find the truth and prove it through empirical means; he was concerned with a deep interpretive understanding of social interactions (Ugwu et al., 2021). Because of this, this research project was located in the interpretivist model. The researcher was able to capture the lived experiences of the participants in order to understand and interpret meaning as perceived by the participants through the interpretive research paradigm.

4.2.1 Interpretivism paradigm as a chosen paradigm

The researcher wanted to understand the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance, especially TVET colleges, from the participants' perspective. He intended interacting with the participants in their natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how individuals create and maintain their social worlds (Siddiqui, 2019; Ugwu, et al, 2021; Mwita, 2022a). By means of interpretivism, it was hoped that the researcher would be able to discover how the participants not only give meaning and make sense of the role of strategic leadership, but how they interpret it in terms of guiding public TVET colleges in ensuring a high standard of performance.

For this research, the researcher wanted to understand the subject from the participants' point of view (cf. 1.7). He wanted to comprehend how the participants describe and construe their experiences of the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of TVET colleges in

general, and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular. Pulla and Carter (2018) assert that interpretivism is interested in the manner in which the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced from understanding the viewpoints of the individuals. The researcher was of the view that interpretivism would assist him to understand the meaning participants attribute to their actions and the reactions of others. Siddiqui (2019) maintains that interpretive researchers study the social settings from the perspective of the participants or informants in their lived situations, using approaches that would allow the attainment of in-depth information from the viewpoint of the participants. In this study, to discover meaning as construed by the participants, the researcher interacted with the participants. According to interpretivism, the world is constructed through interaction of individuals and the natural and social worlds are not distinct; researchers are part of that social reality and are not detached from the subjects they are studying (Siddiqui, 2019; Omodan, 2022; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

4.2.2 Essential elements of a research paradigm

Loya (2021) states that a paradigm consists of the following four essential elements, namely, axiology, epistemology, ontology and methodology. Musmini, Yuniarta, Sulindawati and Yudiantara (2019) maintain that fundamental concepts constitute a philosophy of knowledge that has specific characteristics. For example, ontology (the nature of reality and how the researcher understands what is); epistemology (the relationship between the knower and what is known, and how the researcher knows what is); axiology (the nature of ethics and what the researcher values), and methodology (approaches used in search of that knowledge). Sundler, Lindberg, Nilsson and Palmér (2019) emphasise the importance of considering ontology and epistemology as the foundations that guide the procedure for the research, especially the research analysis upon which the study is built. In this study, the researcher opted for an ontological view of reality (how reality is perceived), as well as applied the epistemological view of knowledge (how knowledge is acquired), as these views are considered crucial in any research inquiry (Musmini et al., 2019). This was in line with what Don-Solomon and Eke (2018) indicate, that the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher are the foundations on which the researcher must build his/her research because they inform the choice of methodology and methods to be used in a study.

On the ontological assumption, realities include the researcher's realities, and the realities of the participants as individuals being investigated, including those of the reader or audience,

interpreting a study. To discover how the individuals interpreted their social world in the natural setting, the researcher mingled with the participants. Subsequently, he reported these realities through extensive quotes which the researcher used verbatim. This was in accordance with the interpretivist epistemological view, which acknowledges that there is no way that the researcher and the participants can be completely separated in the research study (Ryan, 2018; Thurairajah, 2019; Holmes, 2020). As a result, the researcher tried to organise distance between the participants (those who are being investigated) and himself (the researcher). Basically, the researcher went to the fields (different colleges) where the selected participants work and spent time collecting data and delving deeply, allowing the participants to express themselves extensively on the subject.

Consequently, the researcher's ontological assumption (the way the researcher perceives the world), as well as the researcher's epistemological assumption (researcher's knowledge) influenced the researcher in choosing the methodology and the methods of collecting data for this particular study. This stance shaped the structure of the research project, the direction of the study, the choice of participants, and the approach to data collection.

4.3 THE USE OF A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO RESEARCH

According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research is mainly about understanding the social setting from the participants' point of view. The researcher used a qualitative research approach to explore the experiences of the participants because he wanted to comprehend the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions from the participant's perspective. This is in accordance with Roberts (2020), who regards the purpose of qualitative research as being to discern the meanings that the participants attach to their experiences from their own perspectives. Studies suggest that not much has been done on strategic leadership when it comes to TVET colleges (cf.1.3). Since not much is known about the topic, the use of qualitative research approach can help to understand the phenomenon better because the subject is viewed from the perspective of those who are regarded as having in-depth knowledge. The researcher strove to understand the role of strategic leadership from the participant's frame of reference (Mazibuko, 2007; Damen, Van Amelsvoort, Van der Wijst, Pollmann, & Kraemer, 2021). As a result, participants are regarded as the key source of information. The researcher opted for a qualitative research approach, as he was of the view that the quantitative research approach cannot describe and/or interpret the situation appropriately.

The researcher opted for qualitative research with the view that exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals (participants) attribute to a social or human problem cannot be easily achieved through quantitative research, because this approach deals mainly with numbers. Thus, qualitative research approach is appropriate as meaning, thoughts, feelings and experiences can be described and interpreted by means of words and pictures. This is in accordance with what Merriam and Grenier (2019) maintain, that researchers conduct studies qualitatively in order to establish how people (participants) describe their own experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they ascribe to their experiences. The researcher chose a qualitative approach also because he wanted to have a clear understanding of the role of strategic leadership in the performance of public TVET colleges from the angle of the participants. As Appanah and Pillay (2020) put it, the researcher thought that qualitative research was more appropriate for this study because the results or outcomes of the study would rely on the experiences, beliefs, perceptions, views and thoughts of the participants.

The researcher thought that a qualitative research approach was an appropriate research approach because he wanted to collect data using a small number of participants for this research. Choosing this approach was based on the fact that the researcher was of the view that he would be able to discover the attitudes, thoughts, and feelings of the participants about the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions. This enabled the researcher to provide a rich description from the investigation (Bearman, 2019; Kamal, 2019). Besides, he was more comfortable with and felt more confident in using qualitative methods than using quantitative methods. The nature of the research phenomena being studied convinced the researcher that the qualitative research approach was an appropriate approach: it was better suited to elicit information from the participants on how they perceive the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions from their perspectives.

Tracy (2018) maintains that qualitative research exists in a range of disciplines and topic areas. Being concerned with human behaviour, the researcher was of the view that qualitative research was going to assist him in revealing the perspectives of the participants (Bearman, 2019; Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). The researcher used qualitative research to explore several areas of human behaviour (Mohajan, 2018; Willig, 2019). The researcher was convinced that qualitative research was appropriate for studying the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, especially TVET colleges. The researcher is working at one of

the nine public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province and the rationale for studying this topic was influenced by his personal experiences and perceptions of the sector. Therefore, he opted for qualitative research because he wanted to have an in-depth knowledge of the meaning that the participants ascribe to the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public vocational colleges. Tracy (2018) maintains that qualitative research sometimes reveals things that the researcher never expected and that this broadens the understanding of the research topic. The researcher was of the view that it would be advantageous to study the role of strategic leadership using qualitative research in accordance with the advantages of qualitative research as identified by Wang (2018). These advantages are as follows: (i) the researcher would explore and describe the views, experiences, perceptions, beliefs of those who participated in the study from their own viewpoint; (ii) because qualitative research approach is interpretation-based, the researcher would examine and interpret the phenomenon in its complexity, and (iii) the researcher would get close to the participants and this would enable the researcher to understand their lived world.

Nakash and Bouhnik (2021) state that qualitative research allows for maximum access to the human experience. As a result, the researcher was convinced that this research approach was appropriate for this research project, as it allowed him to immerse in the gathering and analysis of data in the participants' settings. In accordance with what Leedy and Ormrod (2019) mention, the researcher was convinced that this approach would enable him to collect abundant data because about real-life people and situations.

4.3.1 The choice of qualitative research for this study

The choice of methodology should be determined by the purpose of the research and the nature of the research questions (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is used to gain an in-depth understanding of human behaviour, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motivations, on the basis of observation and interpretation, to find out the way people think and feel (Ahmad, Wasim, Irfan, Gogoi, Srivastava & Farheen, 2019). The researcher conducted qualitative research in order to understand meaning constructed by the participants about the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges. He was of the view that qualitative research would enable him to explore information from the perspective of individuals and generates case studies and summaries rather than lists of numeric data. Qualitative research

would also be able to explore relationships and perceptions held by affected persons and communities.

This research aimed to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance of higher education institutions, from the perspective of public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. However, the lack of clarity regarding this role dictated that an exploratory methodology be used that would enable the problems explored and the questions asked to become more specific. The researcher was of the opinion that qualitative research is an appropriate method for this study. As indicated (cf. 4.1), scholars who specialise in leadership and who are seeking to answer questions about culture and meaning, have found experimental and quantitative methods to be insufficient on their own in explaining the phenomenon they wish to study. Since this particular study focuses mainly on leadership, it was felt that using other methods, such as quantitative or mixed methods (quantitative & qualitative), would not be able to yield desired outcomes. As a result, the researcher is of the opinion that qualitative research was a suitable mode of inquiry.

Gundumogula (2021) suggests that qualitative research methods help researchers to understand human actions and individuals' lived experience through understanding the meaning that participants attribute to those actions, namely their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptions. The researcher was of the view that qualitative methodology would be appropriate for the purpose of this study. This is in accordance with Mohajan (2020), who claims that the choosing a proper methodology can ultimately lead to a successful research outcome.

4.3.2 The characteristics of qualitative research methodology

Several authors have identified the prominent characteristics of qualitative research (Royadi, Susiana & Khumaida, 2019; Shava & Nkengbeza, 2019; Garad, Qamari & Hartono, 2020). For this study, qualitative research is regarded as an appropriate research methodology because of the following attributes:

4.3.2.1 The researcher works in natural settings

Because the researcher conducted a qualitative study, he collected data at colleges or natural settings of the participants. He talked directly to participants and watched them doing things,

behaving and acting within their context. For the researcher to understand the world of the participants, he had to interact with them face-to-face in a natural setting. However, he organised his interference with participants' natural settings and this helped him to understand how the participants felt about the role of strategic leadership better.

In this study, the researcher studied behaviour as it occurred naturally. At no stage did he attempt to manipulate or control behaviour of the participants and he considered the sources of data as the real-world situations (Mohajan, 2018; Nassaji, 2020). The researcher was concerned with how the participants interact in their situations, including the perceptions the participants attribute to their settings. As a result, he went to the participants in their institutions and settings, as people being studied cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts (Mohajan, 2018; Aspers & Corte, 2019). Pulla and Carter (2018) maintain that because human behaviours are influenced by the settings when and where they occur, qualitative research helps the researcher to understand human behaviours in their social context. The qualitative researcher goes to those locations to understand how the individuals perceive things as they happen on a daily basis.

When conducting this study, the researcher felt that it was necessary for him to enter and spend enough time in those public colleges that were under study, because he would be able to observe and understand the actions taking place in these settings, as these actions occur.

4.3.2.2 Qualitative data is descriptive

The researcher used descriptive data to ensure that the reader understands what has been captured. Therefore, he ensured that the collected data were sufficiently descriptive to enable the reader to get a comprehensive grasp of what happened and how during the research process. Descriptive qualitative data helped the researcher to ascertain that nothing said by the participant was taken for granted and he provided a detailed description of the findings in order for the readers to accept the outcomes of the study (Korstjensa & Moser, 2018; Mohajan, 2018; Seixas, Smith & Mitton, 2018). The researcher scrutinised every statement given by the participant to ensure accurateness and/or to avoid misconceptions.

Because the researcher opted to use a qualitative research approach in this particular study, the gathered data were described narratively rather than numerically. He tried to describe the perspectives of the participants who experience the phenomenon clearly and unambiguously

(Sullivan-Bolyai & Bova, 2021; Taherdoost, 2022). Therefore, interview transcripts and notes that were taken in the field before the interviews, during the interviews and immediately after the interviews, were recorded and reported unambiguously. Direct quotations were used in order to capture participants' personal perspectives and experiences.

4.3.2.3 Qualitative research is concerned with process rather than outcomes

Understanding the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance would be better understood by observing how the college principals are performing their daily activities, that is, during the process. The significance of this approach lies on the description of the processes or events rather than the research outcomes or products. As Van Wyk (1996) suggests, the researcher wanted to understand certain behaviours, not the outcomes of such behaviours. The collection of data was not shaped by any anticipated outcomes. Qualitative researchers focus on how behaviour occurs and explanations of such behaviour as it happens in the setting. Hence, the main concern of the qualitative researchers are activities and events witnessed in the real world, instead of the outcomes and products (Williams, 2018; Nassaji, 2020).

In this study, the researcher wanted to know how and why behaviour occurs. He was of the opinion that focusing on the process would enable him to reach conclusions that would explain the reasons for the results. As a result, he focused on how strategic leaders guide (process) the performance of public colleges, instead of being concerned with outcomes.

4.3.2.4 Data are analysed inductively

The researcher analysed the data inductively in order to establish patterns and themes (Mohajan, 2018; Shava, Hleza, Tlou, Shonhiwa & Mathonsi, 2021). He used inductive data analysis to provide a clear picture of the interaction between himself and the participants. Williams and Moser (2019) state that inductive data analysis is important not only because it helps the qualitative researcher to discover new ways of understanding but also because it helps to explain research findings.

“Codes, categories, or themes are directly drawn from the data” (Mezmir, 2020:23). In this research, the researcher followed this approach. For example, he moved backward and forward

between the themes until he established a complete set of themes. To familiarise himself with the data collected, he read the transcripts and notes repeatedly. This was in accordance with what Tuckerman et al. (2020) recommend that familiarising oneself with all the transcripts is the best stance to adopt prior to data analysis. In this study, the researcher also listened to all recordings of individual interviews with participants, while confirming the accuracy of the transcriptions.

4.3.2.5 Qualitative research is holistic

The researcher developed a complex picture of what was studied. He was of the view that he could not understand the situation in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, he should look at the overall context, so that he could have a clear picture of the situation. He identified and reported on a number of things observed taking place in the situation.

From a holistic point of view, qualitative research is not only concerned with a contextual understanding of the phenomena; it also allows the researcher to become entrenched in the investigation (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018; Anas & Ishaq, 2022). The researcher studied the participants and the chosen public colleges in their entirety and in the wide context in which these individuals and colleges are located. Barrett and Twycross (2018) state that a holistic approach allows themes and findings to emerge through careful analysis. Based on this background, the researcher opted to study the phenomena holistically. He followed a holistic approach in the sense that interviews were conducted with different participants, so as to enhance understanding the complexity and dynamics of the environments under study.

4.3.2.6 Small samples are used

Qualitative research has no over-riding formal criteria to determine the sample size. Therefore, there are no rules that dictate when the size is small or large enough for the study (Young & Casey, 2019; Memon, Ting, Cheah, Thurasamy, Chuah, & Cham, 2020; Nassaji, 2020). Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young (2018) argue that in qualitative research, what is significant is the quality or richness of the collected data, not the number of participants who participated in the research. This study concentrated on public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, and public TVET colleges in other provinces in South Africa were excluded. The study was also narrowed down to college principals, their deputies and two officials from the regional

office. As a result, not only was one province selected for this study but also a limited number of individuals from public colleges were selected to be part of the study. The researcher selected only a small number of individuals who were regarded as information-rich people.

Not intending to generalise the outcome of the study, the researcher selected a small number of participants that could help to better understand the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, especially public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. He was more concerned with the gist of the information to be obtained from a small number of the participants based on their experiences, beliefs and perceptions. This was in line with what Moser and Korstjens (2018) assert, that a small sample size can provide rich information, depending on certain factors, including the purpose of the study, the research problem under study and the strategy used in data gathering.

The researcher is of the view that a small sample was going to be appropriate because it was manageable, and he could obtain rich and detailed information from each participant (cf. 1.6). It was against this background that he decided to use a small sample in this study.

4.3.2.7 Qualitative researchers try to understand people from their own frame of reference

According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research aims at describing, interpreting and documenting issues or phenomena from an individual's viewpoint or frame of reference. Since the purpose of this study was to comprehend reality as being viewed or interpreted by those who experience it (reality), the researcher in this study entered the field open-minded, without any pre-conceived ideas. The researcher is of the view that the understanding of the phenomena would emerge from his interaction with the participants. He felt that to obtain a clear understanding of the participants' lived experiences, he should understand the framework within which these participants interpret their thoughts and feelings (Gundumogula, 2020; Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

Mohajan (2018) says a qualitative researcher must have a grasp of the participants' beliefs, experiences and perspectives from the participants' viewpoint. As the researcher was mainly concerned with the perceptions of the participants regarding the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges, he remained open to the perceptions of the participants. The researcher did not attempt to attach his meaning to their experiences at any point. Instead,

he allowed the participants to speak openly about their own perspectives using their frame of reference and ideas and meanings that are familiar to them (Mohajan, 2018; Damen et al., 2021).

4.3.2.8 Meaning is of essential concern in the qualitative approach

During the study, the researcher entered the fields (public colleges) as a learner to learn from the participants. He focused on acquiring knowledge that the key informants hold about the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public vocational colleges in general and KwaZulu-Natal in particular. The researcher attempted to understand meanings from the angle of the participants and within the context in which these participants live (Chigbu, 2019; Aspers & Corte, 2019; Kandel, 2020).

Bodgan and Biklen (2003) maintain that the meaning that individuals attach to their experience and the manner in which such experiences are interpreted should be seen as equally important. Therefore, participants were allowed to express their views freely during interviews to enable the researcher to clearly understand the meaning that these participants construct as they interact with the world they are interpreting.

4.3.2.9 Qualitative research is hypothesis generating

The researcher opted for qualitative research because he had no intention of testing the hypothesis. Simply put, the researcher did not collect data in order to support or reject a hypothesis. He wanted to explore, describe and generate theory, instead of having a hypothesis to address or to attempt to answer any questions (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003; Chigbu, 2019). He developed the hypothesis as he collected data and by listening to the participants during his interactions with them.

In this research, the researcher collected data by means of individual interviews whereby all participants were interviewed individually. He used the responses of the participants to develop or generate the hypothesis (Chigbu, 2019; Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). To generate the ideas (hypothesis generating), he coded data that he collected.

4.3.3 The role of the researcher

The importance of the role played by the researcher in qualitative research cannot be over-emphasised. From the onset, the researcher played a pivotal role as he negotiated for gaining access or entry with the gatekeeper as this was critical for the success of the study. Roberts (2020) asserts that the researcher should remain aware of his/her role and influence throughout the process of the research. In this particular research, the researcher as an integral part of the investigation acted as an initiator and a facilitator of the study. He was physically and actively involved in data collection. Thus, he became the primary instrument not only in data collection but also in data analysis. This was in accordance with what Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020) posit, that the researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research. Shufutinsky (2020) concurs, stating that the researcher is an instrument in qualitative research because he/she collects, analyses, interprets and finally reports the study finding. In this study, the researcher was a participant (learner) in the research process. As a major instrument, he observed behaviour in settings, conducted individual interviews with thirty-one participants, took notes during the interactions with the individuals at different sites, analysed the collected data, interpreted the data and presented his findings.

The researcher visited campuses closest or adjacent to the central offices and observed the interactions among all employees (teaching and non-teaching), as well as the students. In some instances, central offices and the campuses are located in one building in a way that makes it difficult for an outsider to distinguish between the central office and the campus. During these visits, the researcher interacted with everyone associated with colleges under study, including the general staff and the security personnel at the gate. The researcher often posed questions to whoever he had an opportunity to speak with. The researcher recorded everything that was regarded as important during these visits and what had been recorded was checked and edited immediately after visits had taken place. He observed everything that was happening at the visited colleges to gain insights into certain settings and behaviour, because these activities were considered to be rich sources of information (Mazibuko, 2007; Busetto et al., 2020; Kandel, 2020).

Shava and Nkengbeza (2019) maintain that the researcher sees the world from the participants' perspective. Therefore, participants as important role-players who shape the process of the interviews should be respected. The researcher did his best not only to make the participants feel

valued and interested in the topic, but also to motivate them to participate in this particular study. Roger, Bone, Heinonen, Schwartz, Slater and Thakrar (2018) maintain that qualitative research cannot be successful without strong interpersonal skills and researcher/community networks. Therefore, qualitative researchers should not only ensure that they gain the trust of key stakeholders but that they sustain that relationship for the success of their studies. A qualitative researcher needs to be a good researcher and/or interviewer. For Roger et al. (2018), being a good researcher means being able to communicate, empathise and connect with others (participants). In addition, a good researcher should be a member of the group (participants) but should also not be a member. Thus, a good researcher should know how to handle different participants, how to retreat, and how-to re-approach reluctant participants. The researcher adopted this approach when some of the potential participants showed their unwillingness to be part of the study. He decided to retreat for a while, giving these would-be participants breathing space. Then, he re-approached them, and not only persuaded them to participate but also clarified to them why their participation in this study was extremely important. Surprisingly, this idea of retreating and re-approaching reaped the rewards as the participants who were initially reluctant to participate changed their minds when the researcher re-approached them, and they agreed to take part in this study unconditionally.

The researcher, as not just as learner but as a curious learner, entered the field to obtain comprehensive and rich data for the learning process. In the process, he made some choices that shaped and are shaped by the emerging processes of inquiry. The researcher should be transparent about the procedures adopted and the choices that he/she made, including the reasoning behind making such choices when collecting data (Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope & Jamieson, 2018; Jacobs, Büthe, Arjona, Arriola, Bellin, Bennett, Björkman, Bleich, Elkins, Fairfield & Gaikwad, 2021). It was essential for the researcher to be mindful and to avoid entering the field with his preconceived ideas of what to expect after the study has been completed. During the individual interviews, the researcher as a facilitator persuaded participants to speak about their thoughts, feelings, views, and experiences. As Coleman (2019) cautions, both the researcher and the participant can influence the effectiveness of the interviews. In this study, the researcher managed the research processes and ensured that topics were covered in-depth without influencing the actual views articulated by the participants. As the idiom goes, in ‘sifting the wheat from the chaff’, the researcher identified and recorded only what he considered important and left out what he considered trivial. During this study, the researcher became captivated not only in the setting but also with what was being studied (Mohajan, 2018).

The researcher ensured that he enhanced his insight by the following (Nathan, Newman & Lancaster, 2019; Levitt, Morrill, Collins & Rizo, 2021): (i) he was always open to new insights and encouraged participants to speak freely about things affecting them; (ii) he remained genuinely open to be surprised by what he heard from the participants; he noted and captured things that were not anticipated but were raised by the participants during the individual interviews; (iii) he actively pursued further insights from participants on the subject under study; he did not overlook participants who raised valid viewpoints, and (iv) he avoided identifying himself to the participants or becoming too attached to the participants, as this compromises judgment and insight. Although the researcher is familiar with the TVET sector and activities taking place in this sector, he ensured that he suspended his opinions while interacting with the participants during interview periods. Jones and Bartunek (2021) caution that although proximity to the phenomena is strongly recommended, researchers must be careful of getting too involved or too close because such closeness to the participants could jeopardise the research.

4.3.4 Study population

Shukla (2020) maintains that the researcher should not only identify the population but should also define it precisely to avoid the inclusion of irrelevant activities. Thacker (2019) states that readers need to have sufficient understanding of the target population in order to have a frame of reference that would enable them to evaluate the generalisability of the study. In this study, the population is public TVET colleges in South Africa. College principals, deputy principals in KwaZulu-Natal TVET colleges and regional officials at DHET were the target population for this study. The researcher chose this population because he resides in KwaZulu-Natal, works in one of the TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province, and is familiar with the locality and the TVET colleges in this province. The researcher knows most of the college principals; thus, obtaining access to these colleges was not difficult.

The researcher chose to study only the TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province, as it would have been time-consuming and expensive to study all 50 TVET colleges in South Africa. This is in line with what Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) suggest, that when choosing a sample, qualitative researchers must select a relatively small sample, but the sample chosen must be a representative number of cases from the population of interest. Tamminen, Bundon, Smith, McDonough, Poucher and Atkinson (2021) caution that qualitative researchers should ensure that the topic chosen and the population to be involved in the study are correctly chosen because these two

(topic & population) influence the outcome of the undertaken study. The researcher, residing in KwaZulu-Natal province and being familiar with the locality of the TVET colleges in the province, chose TVET colleges in this province as these colleges could be easily reached. However, he was aware that different information might have been obtained if all 50 public TVET colleges in the country had been included in the study (cf. 1.7.2). Similarities among the public TVET colleges in the country, however, suggest that studying only TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal may still provide relevant information with regard to public TVET colleges in the country.

4.3.5 Sampling method

Sampling method is the approach that researchers use to obtain members of the sample (cf. 1.7.3). Since there are many sampling approaches used when studying research topics, the researcher must ensure that he/she chooses the most appropriate sampling method for his/her research topic (Rahman, Tabash, Salamzadeh, Abduli & Rahaman, 2022; Thomas, 2022). Deshpande and Girme (2019) maintain that the sampling method is important because it assists the researcher to identify and collect data from the correct individuals or sites. However, Thomas (2022) cautions researchers to consider a number of factors, for example, the advantages and disadvantages of each sampling technique before making a final decision as to which sampling technique to employ. Therefore, researchers need to make informed choices when deciding or selecting the sampling method. Because this study is qualitative in nature, purposeful sampling has been used.

In line with what Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) suggest, for the purposes of this study, the researcher intentionally selected the participants and sites to learn or to understand the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions, particular public TVET colleges from the participants' point of view, because these participants are positioned to render rich information. These individuals were selected because the researcher was of the view that they have experience in strategic leadership as well as knowledge of the performance of public TVET colleges which are being explored in this study. The researcher deliberately selected certain individuals and settings because they could provide crucial information, which could not be obtained through other means.

Participants were selected purposefully because they were regarded as information-rich individuals and could provide in-depth information on the topic under study. Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) regard information-rich cases as individuals, events or settings from which researchers can not only learn extensively about the issues being investigated but can also address the research purpose effectively and efficiently. For this study, public TVET college principals, their deputies and two regional officials were purposefully selected. These participants were chosen based on not only their accessibility and the willingness of their organisations to participate in the study, but also because these individuals would be able to provide useful information (cf. 1.7.3). This was in accordance with what Joseph and Elejo (2019) advocate, that the normal procedure used in choosing participants and sites is based on the researcher's judgement because the prospective participants have specified characteristics or meet the required attributes for the undertaken study. The researcher chose the purposive sampling with the view that the chosen participants would be able to produce ample significant data, given not only the researcher's topic of study but also the role these participants play at their respective colleges, and the vast information that officials from the regional office have regarding public TVET colleges, in general, and those that are in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in particular.

4.3.4.1 Choice of TVET colleges

Because qualitative researchers value people's lived experiences, they visit participants in their own settings to gather information in order to understand the phenomena or contexts better (Thurairajah, 2019; Lanka, Lanka, Rostron & Singh, 2020; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). In line with what Bodgan and Biklen (2003) posit, the researcher visited some of the participants and spent time with these participants in their workplaces during the data collection period. However, not all participants were visited face-to-face, since some interviews were conducted virtually. The researcher conducted this study in public colleges only in KwaZulu-Natal province because of their proximity and accessibility.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that choosing a site requires a negotiation process to obtain freedom of access to a site that is suitable for the research problem and feasible for the researcher's resources of time, mobility, and skills. Moser and Korstjens (2018) assert that the ideal research setting is one with easy access whereby the researcher can recruit participants who can provide the richest information. However, such settings, where participants are knowledgeable and are willing to communicate with the researcher at length and in depth, are

not always easy to find (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Nevertheless, the researcher being familiar with most TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, chose to study public colleges in this province only because he was of the view that it would be easy for him to access these colleges, as he works in one. Mocănașu (2020) stresses that accessing the population is one of the factors that affects the researcher's selection of sample size. Van Wyk (1996) is of the view that the researcher should select sites where he/she feels that the atmosphere would be conducive to conduct research, since such an atmosphere is not always possible. Against this backdrop, the researcher selected public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province as they were viewed as suitable for him to conduct this particular research.

4.3.4.2 Choice of participants

The researcher first visited the DHET Regional Office in Pietermaritzburg to request permission from the Regional Manager to conduct a study in the colleges under his jurisdiction and to ask him to speak to two senior officials to request them to take part in the study. The Regional Manager granted permission to the researcher to conduct the study and referred the researcher to two other officials (cf. Appendix C). The researcher then approached the other two officials who were also known to him and discussed the purpose of the study with the officials who agreed to take part in the study.

The choice of participants was influenced by the purposes of the research. After colleges had been identified, permission to conduct a study at these colleges was sought from the college principals. These principals were also informed that the DHET KwaZulu-Natal Regional Manager had already allowed the researcher to conduct the study at these colleges. Permission was also sought from these principals to access their deputies who were also identified as potential participants for this study. Therefore, not only principals, but also their deputies, were identified as participants in this study because they were regarded as information-rich individuals.

The purpose of the study including other logistics, were discussed with the college principals who subsequently introduced the researcher to potential participants (deputy principals). However, the researcher was quite aware that these participants (deputy principals) may be reluctant to co-operate with the researcher because they might feel under obligation to their principals to participate in the study and co-operate with the researcher. As a result, the

researcher was sceptical when approaching the deputy principals, feeling that some of the suitable participants would be unwilling to be part of the study. Again, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to these potential participants (deputy principals), who were then requested to be part of the study. Although some were initially reluctant to participate, they eventually agreed after a lengthy discussion and assurance from the researcher that their identities would be protected. All participants were assured that their names, their institutions and responses would be treated with confidentiality. It was against this background that the information of all participants was not included in this study. Although the researcher understood the importance of including the information of the participants in the study because it enables the reader to build a clear understanding of the participants, he decided not to include this information to protect the identity of the participants and to maintain confidentiality. Since there are only nine public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, it means that there are only nine public college principals, and twenty-eight deputy principals, because one college in the province has four deputy principals, while others have three deputy principals. Similarly, the DHET regional office has limited personnel. In addition, these individuals (participants) interact on a regular basis and all participants are well known in the TVET sector; the researcher thus felt that it would have been easy to identify or recognise the participants if their information, for example, gender, age, academic and professional qualifications, years of experience in the sector and years of experience in their positions.

4.3.5 Data collection strategy

Gathering data is one of the crucial parts of any research, regardless of the nature and form the collection or gathering of that particular data takes (Gundumogula, 2020; Tabuena Hilario & Buenaflor, 2021). Moser and Korstjens (2018) suggest that the collection of data needs to have a well-defined and open plan, which would become flexible during the data gathering process.

Flynn, Albrecht and Scott (2018) argue that the choice of data collection strategies is informed by the research question and the purpose of the study. Zhang (2020) concurs, adding that selecting an appropriate data collection technique is critical in obtaining reliable and valid research. However, this can be influenced not only by the availability of resources but also by the skills of the researcher. Although Salehi and Gholampour (2021) agree, they argue that credibility is the appropriate term and dependability should be used instead of reliability. This is

in support of Rivaz, Shokrollahi and Ebadi (2019), who state that researchers need to select appropriate data gathering techniques in order to ensure that their studies are trustworthy.

Qualitative researchers use a variety of data collection methods when conducting qualitative studies, but it is important that a researcher chooses an appropriate data collection method because the appropriateness of a data collection method may be determined by a number of factors, including the purpose of the study (Heath, Williamson, Williams & Harcourt, 2018; Aspers & Corte, 2019; Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Mwita, 2022b). Gundumogula (2020) lists the following as the strategies for collecting data in qualitative research: a qualitative researcher can collect data using observation, documents review and interviews (individual or focus group interviews) that may be semi-structured. Gill and Baillie (2018) list the following as qualitative data collection methods: interviews, observations, documentary analysis, audio and visual materials. As indicated earlier, the researcher used individual interviews in this study. Turhan (2019) posits that interviews and observations are the main data collection techniques in qualitative research.

According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative researchers spend considerable time in the field collecting data. In this study, the researcher collected sufficiently detailed, rich and complex data through semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions that provided direct quotations (Åström, 2019). The researcher wanted to describe and interpret the phenomena from the perspective of the individuals in order to generate new concepts and theories (Mohajan, 2018; Cadena, 2019). Therefore, participants were interviewed with the purpose of listening to their voices in their natural environments. This was in line with Barrett and Twycross (2018), who regard interviews as the main characteristics of data gathering in many qualitative studies.

The researcher in this study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants. This was in accordance with what Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi and Syam (2022) suggest, that the type of data collection technique should be determined by the information that the researcher wants to cover in his or her study. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because he wanted to have dialogues with the participants, which enabled him to pose follow-up questions, probe and delve deeply in order to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs about the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational

performance in higher education institutions (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

4.3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Most types of qualitative research use one of three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Alamri, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Out of these three types of interviews, the researcher opted for the semi-structured interviews as a tool for collecting data for this study. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews are used to gather information from the point of view of information-rich participants' regarding their experiences, beliefs and perceptions on the topic under study. As Roberts (2020) cautions, the researcher took cognisance of not just expecting the participants to answer the interview questions, but to listen to the stories as they narrated them, so that he would be able to get a clear picture of the meanings that the participants attached to their experiences and beliefs.

DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) regard the purpose of semi-structured interviews as to collect information from key informants and the exploration of their perceptions, experiences, opinions beliefs and attitudes on specific subjects or topics of interest. As a result, the researcher used in-depth interviews in order to dig deeply and ask probing questions for clarification from the participants to obtain true meanings that participants assigned to events, behaviours and experiences (Stofer, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Roberts (2020) warns that researchers must not put pressure on the participants or interrupt the participants because the former are running out of time but should allow participants without any interruption to tell their stories in their own words. Alamri (2019) maintains that interviewing is considered to be the most popular qualitative research method used and has become the gold standard for qualitative research. The researcher opted for the semi-structured interviews with the view that he would be able to gather open-ended data to enable him explore participants' perceptions, experiences and feelings about the topic and to delve deeply into participants' thoughts and issues that they might raise regarding the topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

However, Hawkins (2018) warns that when deciding on the interview method, the researcher must consider several factors. For example, the aim of the research, confidence that the research

would yield credible findings and strengths and weaknesses of the method when gathering data. As Barrett and Twycross (2018) put it, the type of interview that the researcher decides to use should be guided by the research question, the type of the prospective participants and the approach that the researcher prefers. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews that consisted of a number of open-ended questions based on the topic areas that the researcher wanted to explore (Alamri, 2019; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). The open-ended nature of the questions posed defines the topic under investigation but allows both interviewer and interviewee to discuss relevant topics in more detail.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews based on the following advantages as articulated by Alamri (2019): (i) flexibility of the semi-structured interviews – the researcher was part of the interviews and interacted with the participants. As a result, the researcher, ay not only alter and change the direction of the questions but can also make the questions clear to the participants; (ii) semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore the informant's thoughts, feelings, and opinions effectively – a researcher can ask more questions to obtain more detailed information if the participants have not given sufficient information. Furthermore, the researcher can pose follow-up questions in order to obtain more information from the participants; (iii) the subjective nature of the semi-interviews – the subjective nature is reflected as the interviewees expresses themselves through the opinions and experiences, and this helps the interviewer to know more about the interviewee; (iv) face-to-face interviews – semi-structured interviews provide a chance to explain or clarify questions or answers where necessary, which helps in increasing the accuracy of the collected data. The researcher, however, was aware that interviews, like all other data collection strategies, also have limitations that should be considered when deciding which interview technique to organise (Ragab & Arisha, 2018). For example, conducting interviews is time-consuming, and limited understanding of the topic under discussion can also be a challenge (Alamri, 2019; Kakilla, 2021).

4.3.5.3 Process followed

De la Croix, Barrett and Stenfors (2018) regard individual interviews as the most widely used method in qualitative research. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), individual interviews should be conducted in the form of a dialogue or conversation whereby the researcher interacts with the participants, instead of being a strict question-answer interview. If properly conducted,

one-on-one or individual interviews may provide an opportunity for a detailed investigation of people's personal perspectives for an in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located and for very detailed subject coverage. As indicated in chapter one (cf. 1.7), the DHET officials in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and leaders (principals and their deputy principals) of public TVET colleges in the province were each interviewed individually because it would have been too expensive and time-consuming to assemble them. Since individual interviews are conducted in a one-on-one situation, usually participants are able to express themselves freely and truthfully, and this helps to enrich qualitative data.

Mazibuko (2007) is of the view that individual interviews provide the participants with the opportunity to reveal more information because they are not in the presence of their colleagues who might be a threat if they are present where interviews are taking place. The researcher felt that conducting individual interviews would be useful, as it would enable them to speak freely about the subject. These individuals (principals and deputy principals) were regarded as key-informants because they are in charge of their respective institutions. The provincial officials are responsible for the functionality of these public TVET colleges and should know the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges. Cossham and Johanson (2019) regard key informants as individuals who are more knowledgeable, people who are well informed about the phenomenon or situation that is being studied. The researcher chose individual interviews with the understanding that through participant's incidental comments, facial and bodily expressions, and tone of voice, he would be able to acquire information that would not be conveyed in written replies and would be able to supplement the verbal responses obtained from the participants. This is in accordance with what DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) postulate, that social and non-verbal cues give the researcher a clue about the process of the interview. Hence, the researcher was of the opinion that individual interviews would be more suitable for him to gather data from the identified participants.

The researcher, with the chosen participants, agreed on the time, date, and venue for these interviews. The average length of these interviews was one hour, and the maximum was one hour and fifteen minutes. All of the participants permitted the interviews to be digitally recorded, and the researcher later transcribed the recordings. Recording gave the researcher a chance to be actively involved during the interviews. He also took notes during these interviews in order to supplement the recordings taken during these interviews. He used an interview guide

to assist with the structure and sequence of the questions (cf. Appendices I, J & K). It was used as a guide only, and participants were encouraged to reveal as much information as they could on the subject.

4.3.6 Validity and reliability of the research

Validity and reliability must be addressed in all studies because these two concepts are very important in justifying the quality of any research undertaken (Vu, 2021). Hayashi and Abib (2019) regard validity and reliability of the research as crucial elements in all social research as they provide evidence of the quality of research. According to Seattle (2011), there are various approaches a researcher can use to address validity (quality/rigour/trustworthy) and reliability (dependability) in qualitative studies, and the most popular include the triangulation of information among different sources of data; receiving feedback from informants (member checking) and expert review. The researcher increased participants' responses by ensuring that participants understood the reasons the study was conducted and what was expected of them and most importantly, what the researcher would do with the findings. The participants were made aware of how the researcher was going to collect data beforehand. The researcher also informed the participants that the study was conducted for research and an advanced qualification. It was pointed out to the participants that findings could be also used for purposes of publishing academic articles and presenting conference papers.

Since the researcher is permanently employed at one of the public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, it was relatively easy for him to build a trust-relationship with the participants. The researcher also took accurate and detailed notes whenever visiting the field (sites). Although interviews with participants were recorded, the researcher also took notes as back-up to the recordings and notes were used as a means of supplementing information obtained through recordings. The use of a digital recorder also enhanced the accuracy of the transcripts. As a means of addressing the incorrect, inaccurate or insufficient data from the participants or informants, the researcher used his judgement to choose participants who were not only regarded as knowledgeable or well vested with the subject, but also would be able to provide accurate answers to the questions asked. On the other hand, to reduce the threat of internal reliability, the researcher also used verbatim accounts of information provided by the participants during the interviews.

FitzPatrick (2019) argues that for the qualitative researchers to strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility of their studies, they need to integrate validity checks in to their research design. Thus, the researchers should ensure that the research is valid, meaning that it should possess validity. The researcher examined the trustworthiness of the data to ensure reliability in qualitative research, since failing to check the reliability of the data could result not only in inaccurate data analysis, but also in inappropriate research findings (Olabode, Olateju & Bakare, 2019).

4.3.6.1 Trustworthiness of the research

The quality of qualitative research depends on how much trust can be attached to the research process and the findings. This can be determined by means of trustworthiness. However, Pratt, Kaplan and Whittington (2020) warn that trustworthiness should not be seen as a checklist and/or be regarded as a one-size-fits-all template. Instead, trustworthiness should be guided by the methodology being used, and the purpose of the research. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is determined by credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability and authenticity. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, trustworthiness or rigour of the study would be ascertained with the credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability and authenticity.

In accordance with what Naz, Tehrani and Ozgoli (2019) suggest, the researcher opted to use the following criteria in ascertaining the trustworthiness or rigour of his study:

- (i) **Credibility:** This is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Nassaji, 2020). Data are credible if trustworthy, and the results can be verified when multiple methods were used. "Credibility ensures the study measures what is intended and is a true reflection of the social reality of the participants" (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & De Eyto, 2018:3). In this study, the researcher selected credible participants, namely, college principals and their deputies as well as department officials, to enhance the credibility of this study. The participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling precisely because they had experience of leadership at the different levels at their colleges. These participants were regarded as the best informants and/or to have the best knowledge on the research topic because of their positions at their respective colleges. The researcher ensured the credibility of the study by providing data that are genuine and free from the researcher's assumptions. The researcher enhanced the credibility of the data by comparing field notes

with the interview transcripts and cross-checking transcripts from interviews conducted with different participants.

- (ii) **Dependability:** This is the consistency of the research over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Kekeya, 2021; Nguyen, Ahn, Belgrave, Lee, Cawelti, Kim, Prado, Santagata & Villavicencio, 2021). Dependability ensures that the same study conducted all over again will arrive at the same findings and conclusions. The researcher used interview transcripts to cross-check the information obtained from different participants, instead of the audit, because of limited time. However, Kelly, Tymms, Fallon, Sumpton, Tugwell, Tunnicliffe and Tong (2020) argue that meeting the dependability criterion is not always possible, as fully replicating a qualitative study is a challenge because of its nature. Nonetheless, qualitative researchers should strive to enable future researchers to repeat the study.
- (iii) **Transferability:** Pathak (2019) states that transferability can be seen by the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. Transferability is a process performed by readers of research. For the readers to transfer the results of a study to another context, they need to have enough information about the original research situation. To assist researchers and/or readers not only to follow and understand, but also to transfer findings to other studies, the researcher has provided detailed records of the research process. Thus, the findings of this particular study can be applicable to other public colleges in comparable contexts. In accordance with what Maher et al. (2018) suggest, the researcher provided thick descriptions of the setting and participants to enable other readers to assess whether the research or study is transferable to their context or situation or not.
- (iv) **Confirmability:** This refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or collaborated by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Nassaji, 2020; Kekeya, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), the qualitative research findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry, not the researcher's biases. Kelly et al. (2020) maintain that to achieve confirmability, researchers must ensure that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions, which could be done by showing raw data, such as quotations. In this study, the researcher guarded against his bias, which may be influenced by his position as a student support manager in one of the TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province. The researcher prohibited his personal views and attitudes to influence the interview processes.
- (v) **Authenticity:** Mohajan (2018) regards authenticity as the genuineness of the data. It is the integrity and honesty of the research findings (Thondoo, De Vries, Rojas-Rueda, Ramkalam,

Verlinghieri, Gupta & Nieuwenhuijsen, 2020; Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Atkinson-Sheppard, 2022). Verbatim accounts, transcripts, and direct quotations were used in this research. Considering the fact that fairness is one of the key factors in establishing authenticity of the study, the researcher ensured that his study represents the viewpoints of various research participants fairly. Patias and Von Hohendorff (2019) regard authenticity as the extent to which the researcher's effort aims at ensuring that his/her interpretation of the data reflects realities and realistically conveys participants' lives. Therefore, to ensure that the study and its findings were authentic, the researcher used the same interview guide for all participants.

4.3.7 Ethical considerations in qualitative research

According to Al Tajir (2018), research ethics committees play a critical role in research, especially if the research involves human participants. It is important that a research study should be guided by the Institutional Ethics Committee (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; Vincent, 2021). The researcher should only conduct the study or research after he/she has obtained consent from the Research Ethics Committee, as part of these ethical principles. The most important principles in the research ethical issues are discussed below:

- (i) Protection from harm: the researcher made sure that the participants were not exposed to any physical or psychological harm. All participants were treated in a dignified manner. Individual interviews were conducted at the place, time and venue chosen by the participants. All participants were assured that all h-19 protocols were going to be observed whenever the researcher visited the respective colleges, including during the interviews. However, individual interviews were conducted face-to-face with some participants and other individual interviews were conducted virtually because of the pandemic. Some participants preferred virtual interviews. Individual interviews that took place at the participants' offices not only because both the researcher and the participants wanted to avoid interruptions, but also to allow privacy for the participants. This was also done as the researcher was of the view that individual participants would be able to speak freely in the absence of their colleagues. The researcher was aware that some people are naturally shy and not comfortable to speak in the presence of others. Thus, no participant was subjected to unnecessary stress, and providing each participant a space protected them from embarrassment or loss of self-esteem.
- (ii) Voluntary and informed participation: the researcher avoided pressuring participants to participate in this study. He provided the participants with sufficient information regarding

the purpose of the research project to enable them to decide accordingly whether or not to participate in this study. The researcher ensured that he was transparent when seeking the consent of the participants (Xu et al., 2020). For example, he provided the participants with adequate knowledge about the type of information required from them, the reasons for seeking the information, how they were expected to participate and how their participation would affect them. Although the researcher persuaded the individuals to participate in this study, it was made clear to them that they were not compelled to participate. It was indicated to them that they would participate voluntarily and could withdraw their participation at any time. This was in line with what Xu et al. (2020) state, that informed consent is a cornerstone of research ethics. Thus, it is important that participants participate in the study voluntarily, with full understanding of what their participation or involvement in the study entails. In other words, participants should take part in the study because they are amenable to share their experiences with the researcher (Manti & Licari, 2018). Hence, the researcher asked all participants to sign a consent form that they were not coerced to participate in this study, but that they participated voluntarily (Xu et al., 2020).

- (iii) Right to privacy: the researcher assured the participants that their identities would not be disclosed to other people and that he would keep the identity of each participant confidential. As a result, names of participating colleges and those of the participants were kept confidential and any information that could identify or jeopardise the dignity or integrity of the participants was omitted from the findings. In this case, the researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants and those of the organisations (Mazibuko, 2007; Sim & Waterfeld, 2019; Gerrard, 2020). However, literature cautions that the use of pseudonyms does not necessarily guarantee anonymity, as some information in the study could be easily used to identify the individuals that actually participated in the study (Surmiak, 2018; Gerrard, 2022). Nonetheless, the researcher assured privacy not only by using confidentiality and anonymity but also by proving appropriate storage of data. As Al Tajir (2018) suggests, the researcher ensured that participants' information is protected from being accessed by anyone except the researcher and those authorised and agreed upon by the participants.
- (iv) Honesty with professional colleagues: to ensure that the researcher was honest with professional colleagues, he reported his findings completely and honestly. He avoided misrepresenting what was done during the study as well as misleading others when presenting his findings. In this study, the researcher observed the moral principles in order to ensure the credibility of the study.

Al Tajir (2018) emphasises the importance of maintaining ethical considerations in all research from the inception or its design to the conclusion, including the sharing of results. For the purposes of this study, the researcher first requested ethical permission (clearance) from the University of South Africa (UNISA), School of Business Leadership Research Ethics Committee for this study before fieldwork commenced, asking to conduct research as well as explaining the purpose for research of this particular nature. The researcher then sought permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Office of the DHET to conduct the study at public TVET colleges in the province, since these colleges are under the jurisdiction of DHET. After permission had been granted, the researcher proceeded to write official letters requesting entry into each site organisation and requested these individuals to participate in this study. These official letters were hand-delivered and were accompanied by the ethical clearance obtained from the School of Business Leadership Committee, as proof that the university permitted the researcher to conduct such research, as well the permission obtained from KwaZulu-Natal Regional Office of the DHET.

Official letters, together with clearance from the School of Business Leadership Committee and permission from the regional office, were forwarded to the prospective participants (as outlined), requesting them to be included in this study. All participants were requested to sign the consent forms acknowledging that they agreed to participate in this study. The researcher guaranteed participants' confidentiality. Therefore, the names of their colleges and their names as participants will remain anonymous and the information will not in any way be used to harm them or bring their names and/or their organisations into disrepute. Although the participants were encouraged to participate in this study, the researcher categorically advised them that their participation was not compulsory. He also informed the prospective participants that they were free to pull out from participating if they felt like withdrawing. To earn the trust of the participants and to ensure that participants cooperate with the researcher and disclose the information willingly, the researcher ensured that he was honest and open to the participants.

4.4 THE CASE STUDY DESIGN AS A RESEARCH STRATEGY

The case study method is used in situations where the purpose and objectives of the research are to answer what, how and why questions in order to understand the dynamics of the setting (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Mohajan (2018) regards case studies as in-depth analyses of people, events, and institutions etcetera that are studied holistically using one or

more methods. According to Fàbregues and Feters (2019), in a case study, the researcher is able to adopt a holistic approach to the social issues being studied. Case study is useful when the researcher wants to have a holistic understanding of a situation, phenomenon or community. Alpi and Evans (2019) regard case study method as a way used by the researcher to explain, describe or explore phenomena under study. Asenahabi (2019) asserts that a case study is used to determine the factors that lead into the phenomena of participants under study behaviour in a particular way.

According to Asenahabi (2019), a case study is used to study the phenomena intensively in order to obtain a detailed information about the phenomena being studied. However, Asenahabi (2019) cautions that a case study gives subjective information. Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Waseem (2019) state that the case study research studies an issue explored through one or more cases in order to provide an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon. In accordance with what Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam (2018) indicate, the researcher selected not only one province out of nine provinces in South Africa but also a limited number of individuals as the participants in the study as a case study. This was done in order to closely examine the data within a specific context, as case studies provide insight to the issue at hand. As indicated before, this research was undertaken for the purpose of understanding the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance from the participants' viewpoint, as a result, case study is regarded as an appropriate research design. Although the commonly used data collection method when conducting case studies is the interview, other data collection strategies such as direct observations and documents can be used in order to collaborate and enhance the research findings (Alpi & Evans, 2019).

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature; thus, case study design is appropriate. This is in line with what Fàbregues and Feters (2019) suggest, that case study can be descriptive or exploratory. The choice of the case-study approach derives from the assumption that reality is socially constructed rather than objectively determined. For the purposes of the current research, there was a need to consider the experiences and perceptions of the research subjects in order for the researcher to provide a detailed exploratory description of the phenomena in their real-life context (Mohajan, 2018). As a result, the researcher studied, described and interpreted behaviours, values and interactions of the people in the study field.

The use of a case study approach provided the opportunity to the researcher to learn from the participants, as they described and made sense of their own experiences of the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges. The case study enabled the researcher to provide detailed new insights and information on a small representative sample of informants; nine TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province were studied, instead of all TVET colleges in the country (Lucas Fleming & Bhosale, 2018). It was, thus, against this background, that the researcher selected a case study design as it was thought that it would be the best approach to answer the research question. He was of the view that a case study would enable him to explore a phenomenon under study through a variety of lenses.

4.4.1 Statement of subjectivity

According to Patias and Von Hohendorff (2019), qualitative research is based on subjectivity because the researcher is influenced by his or her subjectivity. As the researcher is involved directly in the qualitative research, the researcher may experience some challenges to deal with facts and/or interpretations of the data. However, Miyahara (2019) argues that although it is acknowledged that the subjectivity of the researcher shapes the research activity and findings, literature shows that most researchers do not reveal personal information, like their values, ideologies and experiences. This information or natural subjectivity is crucial for qualitative researchers because it shapes their research activity and findings.

The researcher should gain some understanding, even empathy for the research participants, in order to enter their world. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) argue that the progress of the study often depends primarily on the relationship the researcher builds with the participants. Likewise, Mazibuko (2003) maintains that in qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to build a relationship with research informants in order to obtain reliable information from them because the quality of data that the researcher obtains from the field depends on his/her relationships with the informants.

The researcher's subjectivity is essential to establishing and building the intimate relationships with participants because intimate relationships can influence the gathering and interpretation of data, as well as the outcomes of the study (Alley, 2018). Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019) assert that the researcher should ensure that his/her individual subjectivity does not influence data analysis and interpretations. This can be done by revisiting the subjectivity statement and

reflecting on all prior experiences related to the phenomenon under the study. Fusch, Fusch and Ness (2018) argue that no qualitative researcher would be able to remove or dismiss his or her subjectivity completely. Holmes (2020) concurs, arguing that there is no way that the researcher can avoid his/her subjectivity in the research and there will always be some form of subjectivity that the researcher should deal with. As a result, qualitative researchers must do their best to mitigate their subjectivities.

Given the effect that the researcher's subjectivity has on the qualitative inquiry, qualitative researchers must make their subjectivities transparent (TalkadSukumar & Metoyer, 2019; Egerer & Hellman, 2020). Subjectivity can positively or negatively influence the study; hence the researcher should ensure that subjectivity is covered in the research design (Mazibuko, 2007; Holmes, 2020). Wa-Mbaleka (2019) cautions that the researcher as an instrument in the qualitative inquiry must guard against his/her bias because this can jeopardise the research trustworthiness. Therefore, in his/her report, the researcher must include information about himself/herself. Here, he has included the following information in this study as possible subjectivities that may inform it.

4.4.1.1 The language issue

The role of language as a tool for communication in qualitative research cannot be over-emphasised (Mengmeng, 2018). Squires and Dorsen (2018) stress the importance of managing language barriers between the researchers and participants, especially in situation where the two parties do not speak the language. Buarqoub (2019) concurs, arguing that if language barriers are not managed, sharing of ideas, thoughts, feelings, experience and expectations would be hindered and this could negatively affect the outcome of the study.

Since the researcher is a local person and born and bred in KwaZulu-Natal, he is familiar with the surrounding areas where all public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal are located. He also knows and understands the dynamics of the sector because he works as a Student Support Manager at one of these public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Since most participants knew the researcher, it was easy for them to discuss issues comfortably because they shared a common understating with the researcher of all issues discussed. Because the researcher speaks the same language, which is *IsiZulu*, as most of the participants, it was easy to use this language occasionally to clarify certain points. As indicated, interviews were conducted in English, except

where a certain point needed to be clarified. When both the researcher and participants had agreed on that particular point, the point would then be translated into English. However, in instances where participants were English speakers, only English was used.

4.4.1.2 The status of the researcher

Mazibuko (2007) asserts that because the status of the researcher can influence not only the collection of data but also the outcome of the study, the researcher should reveal his/her status or the position that he/she holds in the society to the participants. As mentioned, the researcher in this study is a Student Support Manager in one of the TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. As a result, the researcher was well placed to interact with all participants. Tolgensbakk (2020) states that the status of the researcher impacts the setting of the interview and how the participants respond or react throughout the interaction with the researcher. Hence, the interviewer entered the chosen sites fully aware that his positionality may influence the responses of the interviewees and ultimately the outcome of the study.

4.4.1.3 The gender issue

The issue of gender is considered as one of the important characteristics of the researcher and many studies have investigated issues of gender differences in research (Abramo, D'Angelo & Di Costa, 2018; Jan, 2020). Lefkowich (2019) denotes that the gender issue is a contentious point in the role of a qualitative researcher. As a result, gender can hinder the chances of the researcher of gaining a rich information from the informants. Lui (2018) indicates that women may struggle not only to gain access in male-dominated fields, but they may also be subjected to sexual advances. Sallee and Harris III (2011) assert that gender cannot only determine whether the researcher is granted permission to conduct a study with the intended or potential individuals or at a particular place but can also influence the participants responses to the researcher. Thus, a researcher must be aware of the issue of gender because of its potential influence on the researcher and the research project (Wadams & Park, 2018).

Lefkowich (2019), citing her experience as female researcher, states that gender and power can complicate the manner in which data are generated and this could compromise the actual study undertaken. It is, therefore, imperative that the researcher embarking upon the study is as prepared as possible about how his/her gender will affect his/her ability to invite and influence

the people to participate in the study. Gender, including the character of the researcher and the participants, can positively or negatively influence the undertaken research (Jan, 2020). Beebeejaun (2022) argues that other social attributes, for example, race, and ethnicity, still persist and may shape the manner in which the study is conducted. Lefkowich (2019) is of the view that gender relations between female researchers and male participants and *vice versa*, is under-theorised. Thus, the researcher should consider the issue of gender when undertaking qualitative research, because gender norms can sway the outcome of the research (Mohajer & Mohd Jan, 2019).

4.4.2 Negotiation of access

The researcher was doing a qualitative research study, and thus he depended largely on data gathered through semi-structured interviews. For him to obtain such data, he had to negotiate for access not only to conduct a research project in the identified institutions, but also to the participants, to collect data from them. Gaining access to the field or to the prospective participants started with negotiation and engagement with the gatekeeper. Fobosi (2019) cautions that negotiating for access has challenges that can facilitate or inhibit access to information, and this depends on how the researcher interacts with the gatekeeper and subsequently on the quality of how the researcher projects himself/herself to the participants or interacts with the participants. Fobosi asserts that the researcher cannot conduct a research or study in the chosen field if access has not been granted. For the researcher to gain access or entry in order to conduct research, irrespective what data collection method is being used, is of utmost important (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; Dahlke & Stahlke, 2020). Chitac and Knowles (2019) posit that getting permission and maintaining permission gained to conduct the study in the field or site is the first step that the researcher needs to deal with when collecting data in the fieldwork. Fecke, Fehr, Schlütz and Zillich (2022) regard gaining access to conduct research as a complex process that is influenced by power structures. Gatekeepers have the power to deny or grant the researcher access to the participants (Maunganidze, 2019; Williams, 2020; Vasquez & Rodriguez, 2022). Kaufmann and Tzanetakis (2020) state that gaining access to the research subjects and the field is crucial in qualitative because qualitative researchers are active parts of the study in the field.

Fobosi (2019) asserts that the manner in which the researcher has negotiated with the gatekeeper on the ground determines the success of the researcher in collecting quality data. Fobosi argues

that obtaining access to the field is not always easy because the researcher has to negotiate and convince the prospective participants to be part of the study, to sign the consent forms and request permission to record the interviews. As a result, the researcher has to request access as many times as the number of the prospective participants required to participate in that particular study (Manti & Licari, 2018; Leigh, Disney, Warwick, Ferguson, Beddoe & Cooner, 2021). Researchers argue that there is no guarantee that everything will run smoothly once access has been granted and the researcher has entered the field, but the position and behaviour of the researcher also shape and influence how the gained access is maintained (Leigh et al., 2021). As Reid et al. (2018) indicate, although the researcher might have been granted access to the field, the researcher may experience unanticipated or unexpected dilemmas, which the researcher might not have planned for. These unpredictable eventualities require a magnitude of reflexivity on the side of the researcher to ensure that the researcher responds ethically (Reid et al., 2018; Taquette et al. 2022). Thus, the researcher must be fully prepared to handle or deal with such unexpected incidents. To be able to handle these challenges, the researcher must be always attentive of what happens not only in the context of his/her study but also on how these incidents affect the participants, the researcher, as well the research itself (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). Haven and Van Grootel (2018) list the major problems that may have an influence on qualitative studies: (i) the interviewer/interviewee relationship; (ii) the researcher's subjective interpretations of data, and (iii) the design itself (the flexibility required for conducting qualitative research).

4.4.3 Interview guide

An interview guide or schedule is regarded as a list that consists of questions that the interviewer uses to guide the content of the interview (Gill & Baillie, 2018). This list directs or guides what happens when the researcher interacts with the participants or between the interviewer and interviewees during their interactions. Roberts (2020) maintains that the interview guide should be always regarded as a guide for the process of interactions but should not be used to dictate the process or shape of the interviews. Young, Rose, Mumby, Benitez-Capistros, Derrick, Finch, Garcia, Home, Marwaha, Morgans and Parkinson (2018) argue that interview guide allows the researcher to ask standard questions in each interview and this helps not only in comparing but also in maintaining data quality. Furthermore, the researcher may ask or raise new questions during the course of the interview. However, Moser and Korstjens (2018) caution that the researcher should be able to pick up that some relevant topics or questions have not been covered in the interview guide and be able to add such topics

or questions during the interview process. In addition, a researcher using an interview guide should have good listening skills, not only to ensure that the interview is on track to its end, but also that everything has been covered during the interview process (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2021). Kothari (2020) posits that an interview guide serves as a memory aid as it ensures that all salient points are covered in the study.

According to Ruslin et al. (2022), the interview guide enables qualitative researchers to keep focused on the topic and this helps to ensure that the limited time allocated for the interview is used economically. Roberts (2020) states that the interview guide should not be regarded as cut-and-dried but the researcher could be flexible and modify the guide to focus on crucial areas and the researcher could leave out anything that does not add value to the goals of the research. Roberts further asserts that questions in the guide should be developed in such a way that they provoke the participant to think deeply about the topic being explored. Although topics are selected in advance, the researcher should ask questions in a conversational style, not in the manner in which they appear in the guide (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). In accordance with what Alamri (2019) recommends, the researcher has to decide not only on the sequence of how the questions would be structured, but also on the wording of these questions during the interview. Therefore, questions should not always follow a strict sequence as they appear in the interview guide; the researcher has the prerogative to alter the phrasing of questions (Roberts, 2020).

The interview guide as a key to obtaining data to address the goal and objectives of the study, can be fine-tuned during the interview process. McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2019) maintain that adjusting the questions can help the researcher to eliminate irrelevant questions that may be outside the scope of the study. According to Adosi (2020), the interview guide has these advantages: the interview guide provides flexibility to the researcher or interviewer because the interviewer is under no obligation to follow the sequence of the questions rigidly; it enables the interviewer to decide how the limited time for the interview could be used appropriately because questions to be asked are prepared before-hand; it enables the interviewer to carry out and complete the interview without wasting much time because questions are prepared before-hand, and it does not limit the interviewer and interviewee to a confined setting. According to Roberts (2020), it is advisable to always remember that the interview is just a guide that provides the structure of the interview; researchers must ensure that there is freedom to explore more than what is in the interview guide.

For the purposes of this study, an interview guide was used because the researcher wanted to make sure that all areas were covered during the interviews (cf. Appendices I, J & K). He ensured, however, that the guide did not dictate the structure of the interviews and provided the participants space not only to expand on their responses but also to raise issues if they wished to do so. Therefore, questions on the interview guide were adjusted as and when necessary. As Roberts (2020) points out, the quality of the interview guide as a tool for data collection can swing not only the direction that data collection can take but also the manner in which data can be analysed.

4.4.4 Data gathering

Dharmowijoyo, Susilo and Karlström (2018) maintain that when studying human life, extensive and rich data must be collected in order to understand its complexity and variability well. This can be only possible if the researcher is not only relying of using one data collection strategy. In this study, the researcher conducted individual interviews (semi-structured interviews with a number of information-rich participants) and these interviews were considered as appropriate for this particular study. Mezmir (2020) posits that because the success of the research is influenced by the appropriate research method (s), the researcher must justify the appropriateness of the methods chosen for his/her research purpose. In instances where individual interviews were conducted face-to-face, Covid-19 protocols were strictly observed. For example, the researcher was screened at the gate to check his temperature, was asked to answer some questions to check his Covid-19 status and sanitised before being allowed into the college premises. He also ensured that he wore a mask whenever visiting sites for conducting individual interviews. He ensured, along with the participants, that they observed social distancing, according to Covid-19 requirements when individual interviews were conducted. Although all colleges visited had sanitisers for everyone to use, the researcher always carried his own sanitiser whenever visiting the colleges to conduct interviews with the participants.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with principals of KwaZulu-Natal public colleges. The interviewer and interviewees agreed on times, dates, and venues for the interviews. This was in accordance with DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) and Sivell, Prout, Hopewell-Kelly, Baillie, Byrne, Edwards, Harrop, Noble, Sampson and Nelson (2019), who suggest that participants must be comfortable with the venue where the interviews would be conducted, as well as the time. Interviews with all principals went smoothly without any

disturbances. Although the initial plan was that interviews would take place at the offices of the college principals, this changed because of the pandemic. Some interviews were conducted virtually. However, in both scenarios (interviews that were conducted in the offices of the college principals and those interviews that took place virtually), there were no interruptions.

All principals who participated in this study agreed to be recorded. The recordings made it easier for the researcher to actively interact with the participants during these interviews. Notes were also taken during these interviews, as a back-up to the data recorded. This was in accordance with what DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) denote, that the use of audio recording should not be considered as a replacement of note taking but the researcher should also take notes not only to supplement the recordings but also as a backup, in case the recorder failed. Since all principals could comprehend in English, this language was used during these interviews. However, where necessary, *IsiZulu* was intermittently used; what was discussed was translated into English after both the interviewer and interviewee had agreed on that particular point. There was no need of a translator because the researcher's first language is *IsiZulu*. However, where the participant's first language was English, *IsiZulu* was never used.

Although principals of all nine public TVET colleges had agreed to take part in the study, not all principals participated in this study. In total, there were seven college principals, instead of nine college principals that participated in this study. The other two principals did not participate in the study, citing personal and work-related commitments. The characteristics of those principals are not discussed comprehensively in chapter five for reasons that will be explicated at that point in the thesis.

Individual interviews were also conducted with deputy principals from all nine public colleges. Deputy principals who participated in this study decided on the time, date and venue convenient for their respective interviews. The researcher also conducted separate individual interviews with two or three deputy principals from each public college. Individual interviews were conducted according to what the researcher and participants had agreed upon. For example, the schedule times, dates and venues were observed by both the researcher and the participants. As indicated, participants must be comfortable with the venue and time for the interviews (cf. 4.4.6.2). The rationale behind this thinking is that if participants are comfortable, they are likely to open up and provide the researcher with more relevant information.

Generally, all interviews with the deputy principals went well. Interviews took place at the offices of deputy principals and other interviews were done virtually because of Covid-19, but there were no interruptions. Since all deputy principals could comprehend in English, this language was used during these interviews. However, where necessary, *IsiZulu* was intermittently used but what was discussed was translated into English after both the interviewer and interviewee had agreed on that particular point. There was no need of a translator because the researcher's first language is *IsiZulu*. However, where the participant's first language was English, *IsiZulu* was never used.

All individual interviews with deputy principals were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants. The tapes were later transcribed. The researcher also took notes during the interviews in order to supplement the digital recording. In total, 22 individual interviews were conducted with deputy principals. Some deputy principals who had agreed to participate in this study were unable to participate, citing various reasons. The characteristics of those deputy principals who took part in the study are not discussed comprehensively in chapter five for reasons that will be explicated at that point in the thesis.

The researcher also conducted two individual interviews with the two KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Officials who are responsible for the functionality of public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. These interviews were conducted in their respective offices. These two officials were chosen not only because of their positions in the hierarchy of the DHET Regional Office but also because the researcher is of the view that they would be able provide rich information because of their long service in the TVET sector. As a result, they were regarded as expert informants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Vasileiou et al., 2018). The two officials agreed to the tape-recording during the interview, and to supplement the recorded data, notes were taken during the interviews. Interviews were conducted in the officials' offices where there was no noise and/or any interruptions. As indicated, these officials were interviewed individually. The characteristics of these officials are, however, not discussed in order to protect their identity. Since both officials could comprehend in English, this language was used during these interviews. However, where necessary, *IsiZulu* was intermittently used but what was discussed was translated into English after both the interviewer and interviewee had agreed on that particular point. There was no need of a translator because the researcher's first language is *IsiZulu*. In total, two individual interviews were conducted with two department officials. However, their characteristics will not be discussed, as the researcher is of the view that it would

be easier to identify these officials if their characteristics are discussed. This would be tantamount to breach of confidentiality clause with both parties (the researcher & the participants).

4.4.5 Transcribing the data

McGrath et al. (2019) posit that data collected through audio-recording or notes taken during the process of interviews and/or notes written during and after the observation period need to be converted into typed text so that the data can be analysed. McMillin (2021) recommends that transcription of data should be outsourced to people with special expertise, including familiarity with the accents of the participants. However, in this study, transcriptions were done by the researcher because he was familiar with the accents of the participants. As recommended by Lavee and Itzchakov (2021), he listened carefully during the interview processes or during the interaction with the participants in order to be able to capture the exact words said by the participants during the interview processes.

To capture rich data accurately, a qualitative researcher needs to have good listening skills (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2021). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) warn that the researcher should ensure that he/she captures the actual words said by the participants because the words of the participants in the research interview are the actual data. McGrath et al. (2019) recommend that the researcher should start transcription as soon as possible after interviews have been completed when the memory of the researcher is still fresh, as this would assist in adding what could have been missed during the interview process. In line with this recommendation, the researcher decided to transcribe all tape-recorded interviews verbatim immediately after the interviews were conducted. McGrath et al. (2019) regard verbatim as the common form of transcription of data in qualitative research.

McMullin (2021) suggests that the researcher should also record a sarcastic tone or body language as these can have a bearing on what the participant intends to say. Ruslin et al. (2022) concur, asserting that the interviewer's voice is at the centre of what happens during the interviews. Scholars maintain that nonverbal communication is also very important during the interview process. Hall, Horgan and Murphy (2019) denote that non-verbal communication should be considered during the interview because this means of communication also conveys meanings, in some cases, deeper meanings than the meanings conveyed verbally. Non-verbal

communication includes, but is not limited to, facial expression, hand gestures, body positions, eye contact, paralanguage and any other means of communication which can assist the researcher in obtaining more information from the participants (Wahyuni, 2018; Venter, 2019). The researcher ensured that he captured all nonverbal communications in a notebook during the individual interviews with all participants.

4.4.6 Analysis of the data

Qualitative data analysis is regarded as an iterative and complex process (Ravindran, 2019; Lester, Chao & Lochmiller, 2020). Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie (2019) regard data analysis as the most important but difficult step in the qualitative research. Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith and Kegler (2019) concur, arguing that in spite of data analysis being one of the critical stages of qualitative research process, not much emphasis is given to this important stage. According to Ravindran (2019), qualitative data analysis focuses on understanding meanings that participants attach to their actions and responses whereby the researcher reviews, sensitises and interprets the collected data in order to enable him/her to explicate the phenomena being studied.

Mezmir (2020) maintains that because qualitative data is messy, bulky and unstructured, the qualitative researcher needs to provide coherence and structure to the qualitative data in order to interpret the data and give the underlying meaning to the data. Maietta, Mihas, Swartout, Petruzzelli and Hamilton (2021) stress the importance of sorting, sifting, thinking and shifting qualitative data, regarding this process as is diving in and stepping back process. The qualitative researcher has to move forward and back during the data analysis phase (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Mohajan (2018) advises that for the researcher to locate information in the set data easily, the analysis should be well done, in a systematic way. Mohajan (2018) asserts that if the analysis is systematic and well organised, the researcher would be able to trace provisional results of the analysis back to the context of the data. In accordance with what Johnson et al. (2020) suggest, the researcher decided to analyse the data immediately after he gathered the data. He felt that it would be easier to analyse data immediately after the interviews, while everything was still fresh in his mind. However, he was aware that the intensive process of data analysis was to take place after the collection and preparation of all data had been done (Mohajan, 2018).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected data through digital recordings and notes taken only. After data were collected, the researcher first transcribed data collected through digital recordings verbatim. During the process of analysing data, the researcher linked his notes with transcripts using different fonts. This was done in order to differentiate between the researcher's voice and the participant's voice in the data. To get the whole picture of what was said, he read the whole data set. Through this reading, insights and understandings started to emerge and the researcher wrote these down as memos. Davidson, Edwards, Jamieson and Weller (2019) state that the researcher should be mindful of the context generated when conducting the pre-analysis because this analysis can influence future steps of analysis. The researcher used analysis not only for originating developing categories or themes with regard to the research questions but also to identify gaps in data collected from the participants (Lochmiller, 2021). Quintão, Andrade and Almeida (2020) regard analysis as a method commonly used for analysing semi-structured interviews and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

Kiger and Varpio (2020) are of the view that because analysis is flexible, it can be organised in a variety of epistemologies and research questions. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) regard this flexibility whereby analysis changes during analysis as a strength and advantage of qualitative research. Kiger and Varpio (2020) caution that researchers should avoid a mere description of findings or paraphrasing participants' responses. Instead, researchers should be engaged in a more vigorous interpretation and analysis of the data. The researcher used thematic analysis as it is highly recommended for researchers who want to discover themes using interpretations. The researcher opted for this data analysis method, as he is of the view that it would assist him to generate themes that would be used to draw conclusions (Costa, 2019). According to Peel (2020), thematic data analysis helps in organising and simplifying the complex data into meaningful and manageable codes, patterns, themes and categories, which can be used to address the research. Lochmiller (2021) concurs, adding that analysis is about interpreting and attempting to ensure that data collected from the informants do make sense. Kiger and Varpio (2020) provide clear guidelines on how to conduct an analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of analysis, as well guidelines on how to deal with the shortcomings when conducting analysis.

In this research, the data consisted of the transcripts and notes taken during and immediately after the interviews and notes taken during and after the observation periods. In analysing the

data, the researcher initially read the transcripts and the notes repeatedly in order to gain familiarity with them (cf.1.8). Sundler et al. (2019) maintain that reading the data open-mindedly several times helps the researcher to become familiar with those data in intimate ways. The researcher also listened to all recordings of the interview, at the same time checking the accuracy of the transcriptions. He then started the editing process after data have been read repeatedly. During the editing period, he had to decide which data to keep and omit or delete. Undoubtedly, redundancies, repetitions and unessential or irrelevant data should be omitted and/or deleted. Data analysis as the central step of qualitative research is embedded in data reduction, data display and interpretation (Mezmir, 2020).

4.4.7 Organising the data

Qualitative research always produces voluminous amount of data, which the researcher should organise, analyse and interpret and this is undoubtedly time-consuming (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Hackett and Strickland (2018) state that organising data is important because it enables qualitative researchers to retrieve data easily for analysis. The voluminous amount of data produced by the qualitative researchers can threaten the reliability of the study if not properly organised and effectively analysed. The researcher organised and managed data that he had gathered and verified. Maher et al. (2018) regard the organisation and management of data as important parts of the research. Therefore, the researcher should make sure that the collected data is managed correctly and systematically.

Since the researcher had collected a bulk and unstructured information, he needed to organise and manage such amount of data in order to provide some coherence and proper structure to this bulky data (Maher et al., 2018; Mezmir, 2020). He was guided by the objectives of the study, the focus of the entire process and the desired audiences when selecting the material to include. He then grouped data into common segments that formed meaningful or potentially meaningful units of information. Data were organised by segmenting, labelling, and encoding the information to form descriptions and broad themes. Lester et al. (2020) regard preparing and organising the data into categories based on themes, as the first steps in qualitative data analysis. The researcher read and re-read the transcriptions and notes and organised the data into units. This was in accordance with what Moser and Korstjens (2018) assert, that the researcher needs not only to revisit and listen to the recording but to also read the transcriptions repeatedly to acquire a deep grasp of the phenomena under study. For this particular study, verbatim

quotations were used to authenticate data collected through individual interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Busetto et al., 2020). Akinyode and Khan (2018) advise that the researcher doing qualitative research should have a clear understanding of how to analyse and present qualitative data meticulously.

4.4.8 Coding of data

According to Beresford, Wutich, Du Bray, Ruth, Stotts, SturtzSreetharan and Brewis (2022), the coding of text is usually organised for analysing qualitative data. Since this study was qualitative in nature, data collected through individual interviews were organised through coding. Mohajan (2018) regards coding as a way of identifying important words and segments in the transcripts and labelling them in a manner that would make sense so that the researcher would understand. The researcher transcribed and categorised the data into patterns based on themes or concepts. In accordance with what Aspers and Corte (2019) suggest, coding started immediately when the first individual interview had been completed, since the first data was considered as a foundation for both gathering and analysis of data. The researcher began coding each incident in his data into as many categories as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit into existing categories. This was done in order to enable the researcher to organise and compare data gathered from different sources (Akinyode & Khan, 2018).

Through coding, the researcher managed to define units of meaningful information and he grouped, categorised and thematically sorted according to the commonality of the information in order to construct meaning (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding helped the researcher to locate key themes, patterns, ideas and concepts that existed within the collected data (Mohajan, 2018). In order to form a single idea or theme, similar codes were combined. Identified patterns or themes were allocated names and placed into respective categories. The researcher opted for the manual method of colour-coding. The researcher colour coded the categories and themes, as they emerged. He filed each category separately and data were stored under the different headings (Tracy, 2018). The researcher then went through categorised patterns and generated a report that enabled an interpretation of the outcomes, using coding as a key structure in data organisation (Williams & Moser, 2019). Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) are of the view that coding is very important for enhancing not only the quality of data analysis but also the quality of research findings.

4.4.9 Presentation of the data

Presentation of the data collected is regarded as largely the most important part of the research project (Ningi, 2022). Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) state that the researcher has the responsibility of ensuring that the collected data make sense to the readers. Thus, the collected data have no significant value if the researcher cannot accurately and adequately present or report the collected data to the readers. Salamzadeh (2020) emphasises the importance of presenting the findings because the presentation has a bearing on the quality of the outcome of the study. Salamzadeh (2020) adds that findings must be properly and accurately presented because poorly presented findings can affect the study negatively.

Archer (2018) states that the researcher must ensure that the collected and analysed data are presented in a systematic manner so that findings make sense to the readers. Ningi (2022) concurs, insisting that qualitative researchers must make every effort to try to make sense of the data. Akinyode and Khan (2018) assert that if qualitative data is carefully and thoughtfully presented, the report can convince other researchers and users of the findings leading to accept the presented data. Therefore, the researcher organised data collected into readable, narrative descriptions with significant themes, categories and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis (Van Wyk, 1996; Shava, Hleza, Tlou, Shonhiwa & Mathonsi, 2021). This is in line with what Ningi (2022) suggests, that when presenting qualitative data, the researcher must follow the step-by-step approach.

Patel (2021) lists the following three ways of communicating and presenting the analysed data: (i) text; (ii) tables, and (iii) graphs. However, Patel (2021) claims that the nature and purpose of investigation in qualitative research necessitate that data collected in qualitative research should be mostly conveyed in text. The researcher was mindful of ensuring that quotes are captured, selected and presented accurately and appropriately without any over-quoting or omissions (Mazibuko, 2007; Lingard, 2019; Younas, Fàbregues, Durante & Ali, 2022).

4.4.10 Issues of reliability and validity in the present study

Asenahabi (2019) denotes that for any research to be acceptable, the researcher must ensure that the research meets the relevant norms and standards for reliability and validity. Asenahabi further states that the research undertaken must be systematically and methodically conducted.

According to McDonald, Schoenebeck and Forte (2019), reliability measures the extent to which the analysis of data yields reliable results that can be repeated or reproduced at different times or by different researchers. On the other hand, validity measures the extent to which the research is accurate and the extent to which truth-claims can be made based on the research – that it measures what is intended. Vu (2021) argues that although validity and reliability are closely associated with quantitative research, the two (validity & reliability) are also important quality assurance criteria in qualitative research.

Bodgan and Biklen (2003) postulate that researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data in qualitative studies. Qualitative researchers view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations. Alamri (2019) asserts that qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of strategies to enhance reliability in data collected. In this research, the researcher used the following to ensure that the data collected were reliable: (i) verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotations were used as data; (ii) mechanically recorded data was done (a digital recorder was used during different individual interviews), in order to ensure that participants' responses were captured in their own words/verbatim; (iii) low-inference description: concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interviews elaborations were used, and (iv) member checking, where each participant received a copy of the transcript of the interview to crosscheck its accuracy.

The researcher and participants agreed on the description or composition of events, especially the meanings of these events. In this study, the researcher used these strategies to enhance internal validity: (i) participants' verbatim language – participants' words were transcribed as they were spoken; (ii) triangulation – multi-data collection techniques were used, and (iii) feedback from participants – each participant was given a copy of the transcript of the interview to crosscheck its validity (Patino & Ferreira, 2018; Hameed, 2020). During the crosschecking by the participants, no errors were identified. Thus, the interpretations and concepts had common meanings between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

4.5 SUMMARY

Chapter four focuses on the research methodology and design that the researcher employed in the study. The chapter provides reasons for choosing a qualitative approach for the study of the

role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance in the context of TVET colleges in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. It also describes interviews as the method used to obtain the data. Ethical considerations were applied to protect privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The trustworthiness and credibility of the data collected were also discussed in detail.

Data collected and analysed for the purpose of this study are presented and discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapters 2 and 3 respectively, the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of public higher education institutions in the 21st century, as well as transformation in the higher education institutional landscape looking from the South African perspective were discussed. Chapter four focused on the research methodology, reasons for choosing a qualitative research method and the research design used in this study.

This chapter presents and describes the data generated during interviews with 31 participants. This included individual interviews with two officials from KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Office, seven college principals and 22 deputy principals. Firstly, public colleges that form part of this study are discussed. The summary of the characteristics of these public colleges is given in Tables 5.1 to 5.9. Although section 5.3 is about the characteristics of the participants, these characteristics are not fully given to protect the identities of these participants. However, the importance of the experiences of the participants is discussed. Meanwhile, participations by colleges are summarised in Tables 5.10 and 5.11. All college principals and deputy principals work at public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, the two departmental work at the KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Office and directly monitor the functionality of the colleges from the regional point of view. To protect the identity of the participants, the characteristics of these participants were excluded. Since there are few public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal and officials in the Regional Office, the researcher is of the view that to identify these participants could easily just by looking at their personal information (Mazibuko, 2007). The researcher had assured all participants of confidentiality and anonymity, so the researcher felt obliged to do so in the cases of the Department of Education officials (Mazibuko, 2003).

The subsequent sections, from 5.4 to 5.7, focus on themes that emerged from the interviews. Although all interviews were conducted in English, where necessary, *IsiZulu* was occasionally used with participants whose first language is *IsiZulu* for clarifying certain points. Because the researcher's first language is *IsiZulu*, there was no need for a translator when *IsiZulu* was used

(cf. 4.4.6.1; 4.4.6.2 & 4.4.6.3). The researcher used the participants' words verbatim and no alterations were made to correct the language usage. Quotations are presented in indentations and any comments within quotations are indicated in brackets. Direct quotations are in italics.

5.2 PUBLIC TVET COLLEGES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

In the province of KwaZulu-Natal, there are both state-owned (public) and private colleges. However, this study focuses only on public colleges. Private colleges do not form part of this study (cf. 1.2.3). Public TVET colleges, like other social structures found in society, are influenced by what is happening within the surrounding communities and the context of their environments. As Mazibuko (2003) states, in the case of schools, TVET colleges do not operate in a vacuum and cannot be divorced from the communities that they serve.

Although the researcher was born in KwaZulu-Natal, he cannot claim that he is familiar with communities surrounding all TVET colleges in the province. Public TVET colleges are distributed all over KwaZulu-Natal. Thus, understanding and knowing what is happening in the communities surrounding all these colleges is difficult. However, the researcher is a Student Support Manager in one of the public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal (4.3.6.1 & 4.4.3.1). The researcher used to attend Student Support Managers' monthly meetings, which rotate from college to college and are held at the central offices of each college. Therefore, the researcher was familiar with the public colleges that are included in the research. He visited these colleges to gain permission from the college principals not only to conduct the study at their colleges and gain access to their deputy principals, but also to request these principals to be part of the study as participants. This visit was also undertaken in order to show the importance of the study to the college principals and their deputies.

5.2.1 The context of public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal

The Republic of South Africa has nine provinces and KwaZulu-Natal is one of these nine provinces. KwaZulu-Natal is situated along the east coast of South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Treasury, 2020). In terms of size, it covers 94,361 square kilometers, which is 7.7% of the land area of South Africa (Mueni, 2019). According to Mueni (2019), IsiZulu speaking people not only predominantly populate KwaZulu-Natal province, but IsiZulu is the most

spoken language in South Africa, with *IsiZulu* speakers constituting 22.7% of the population. Statistics South Africa (2019) regards the province of KwaZulu-Natal as the province with the second largest population, with an estimated 11.3 million people (19.2%) living in the province. The province is relatively poor and most people living in rural areas are unemployed. Because of the poor conditions in the province, the majority of the youth in KwaZulu-Natal, like in most parts of the country grow up in poverty-stricken circumstances (Mazibuko, 2007). These circumstances culminate in low socio-economic status, poor education and high rates of unemployment. The literature suggests that TVET colleges can be a solution in addressing the issue of poverty, the shortage of skills and unemployment (cf. 1.1; 1.2 & 3.5.2).

In South Africa, currently there are 50 public TVET colleges. Out of those colleges, KwaZulu-Natal province has nine (9) public TVET colleges, which are scattered all over the province (cf. 1.2.2 & 1.7.2). These colleges consist of campuses and/or sites where academic (teaching & learning) and other activities take place. Public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, like in other provinces offer different programmes but programmes that dominate in all nine provinces are Report 191 (previously known as the National Assembly Training and Education Department, in short NATED) programmes, consisting of N1 to N6 and the NCV programme, consisting of Level 2 to Level 4 and short-skills programmes (cf.1.2.3).

5.2.2 Public colleges in the research

All nine public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal were chosen for this study (cf. 1.7.2). Private TVET colleges do not form part of this study Three of the 9 colleges are situated in eThekweni Metropolitan. Generally, public colleges in South Africa are classified according to their location, for example, colleges situated in cities or towns are regarded as urban colleges and those situated in townships, in the outskirts of cities and in rural areas are called peri-urban and rural colleges respectively. Public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, like in other provinces, not only vary in size but also differ in their financial status. Comparatively, some colleges are wealthier than others and this affects the performance of these colleges. Normally, wealthier public colleges are found in urban areas, which were previously advantaged and belonged to the whites, and to some extent, Indians and/or Coloureds. The poorer ones are found in rural areas, which were previously disadvantaged and belonged to the Black communities.

These public colleges served different purposes before they were merged in 2002. For example, some of these colleges were for training teachers and others were technical colleges, which were providing vocational training. All nine colleges in the province have different campuses or sites where academic activities take place. The campus is differentiated from the site based on the full-time enrolled students (FTEs). This refers to the number of students registered at that particular learning place. A 'learning place' must have more than 600 students registered for all learning subjects to become a campus. On the other hand, a learning place, which has less than 600 students registered for all learning subjects is called 'site'. Although campuses or sites are usually separate from their central offices, some public colleges have central offices adjacent to their campuses. This arrangement has its own pros and cons, for example, the students, especially new students, are unable to distinguish between the campus and the central office, as well as between the staff belonging to the campus and/or the staff belonging to the central office. On the other hand, where the central office and the campus share the facilities (building and infrastructure) the college saves, in terms of paying the rent, rates and/or bills (telephone and water). Out of the nine colleges studied, two colleges have their central offices attached to campuses. Three colleges have central offices close to the campuses and the central offices of the other four colleges are situated a distance away from the campuses.

Generally, all colleges are well cared for and infrastructure and facilities at all colleges are well looked after, especially at central offices. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 robbed the researcher the opportunity of visiting more campuses or sites in order to acquire the first-hand information, such as meeting the staff (both academic & support) and seeing the students and seeing how they behave towards visitors. As a result, the researcher cannot claim to have a clear picture of the behaviour of the staff and students at different colleges, except the hospitality that he received at the gates from the security and receptionists at central offices and/or few campuses/sites that he managed to visit. However, it was noted that students at a number of visited colleges (campuses/sites) were spotted sitting outside during the normal teaching hours.

5.2.2.1 Public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal

Public TVET colleges that are found in KwaZulu-Natal are listed in an alphabetical order below. These colleges are scattered all over the province (cf. (cf. 1.2.2; 1.7.2; 5.2.1 & 5.2.2). These public colleges offer a variety of programmes, including skills programmes. These colleges, including their campuses/sites and the programmes they offer are as follows:

(i) Coastal KNZ TVET College

Coastal KZN College is one of the three public colleges situated in eThekweni Municipality. The college has a central office at KwaMakhutha township (Coastal KZN TVET College, 2021). KwaMakhutha township is 8 km from the town of Amanzimtoti, which is 20 km from the city of Durban. The college has eight campuses/sites of teaching and learning, which are found in different areas in eThekweni Municipality. The college has seven campuses/sites located within a 0-200 km radius of the central office. The college has campuses in both urban and rural areas in Durban and the surrounding areas. The college has three students' residences, and the majority of the students are compelled to look for private accommodation (Coastal KZN TVET College, 2021). The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: List of campuses/sites of Coastal KZN TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Appelsbosch	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	Yes	38	16	1 057
2	As-Salaam	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	No	18	6	414
3	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	65	–
4	Durban	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	No	48	26	819
5	Swinton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	107	47	1 734
6	Ubuhleboгу	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	No	14	12	255
7	Umbumbulu	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	Yes	64	38	974
8	Umlazi BB	Yes	Yes	Yes	–	No	43	26	751
9	Umlazi V	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	89	45	1 306
Total	9					3	421	277	7 310

(ii) Elangeni TVET College

Elangeni TVET College was previously known as Sivananda FET College, and the name was changed to Elangeni after merging in 2002. Elangeni TVET College is situated within the urban or metropolitan Municipality of eThekweni (Elangeni TVET College, 2020). Elangeni college is among the three public TVET colleges located in Durban, which is the central economic hub of KwaZulu-Natal province. The college has eight campuses in eThekweni Municipality and one campus in the Ndwedwe area, in the iLembe district. The distance between the campuses and the central office are between 0-100 km. The college has two students' residences, which have limited spaces (Elangeni TVET College, 2020). As a result, not only students from campuses who do not have students' residences, but even students from the two campuses that have students' residences are forced to look for private accommodation. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: List of campuses/sites of Elangeni TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	72	–
2	Inanda	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	28	8	997
3	KwaDabeka	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	34	11	1 127
4	KwaMashu	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	27	7	961
5	Mpumalanga	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	36	14	1 707
6	Ndwedwe	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	30	8	953
7	Ntuzuma	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	27	11	949
8	Pinetown	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	42	14	1 830
9	Qadi	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	55	19	3 527
Total	9					2	285	156	12 051

(iii) Esayidi TVET College

Esayidi TVET college is situated within the rural area in uGu district. Its central office is located at Port Shepstone on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal (Esayidi TVET College, 2020). The college has five campuses/sites, which are located within 5-250 km from the central office. Most students live far from the campuses and require accommodation. However, the college has one students' residence, which can accommodate a limited number of students (Esayidi TVET College, 2020). As a result, the majority of the students are compelled to look for private accommodation. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3: List of campuses/sites of Esayidi TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	58	–
2	Enyenyenzi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	46	16	2064
3	Clydesdale	Yes	No	No	No	No	20	9	471
4	Gamalakhe	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	70	41	2252
5	Kokstad	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	28	15	2120
6	Port Shepstone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	44	21	2102
7	Umzimkhulu	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	32	22	2709
Total	7					2	240	124	11 718

(iv) Majuba TVET College

Majuba TVET college has campuses in both Amajuba and uMzinyathi and is located in the peri-urban area with its central office located at the town of Newcastle (Majuba TVET College, 2020). The college has seven campuses/sites located within a 3-50 km radius of the central

office. Although this college has the highest number of students in KwaZulu-Natal, the college does not have a single residence for its students (Majuba TVET College, 2020). Therefore, students who live far from the campuses are forced to look for private accommodation in the surrounding areas. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.4:

Table 5.4: List of campuses/sites of Majuba TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	110	–
2	Centre for People Development	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	80	20	3 624
3	Dundee Technology Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	37	19	3 363
4	Information Technology and Business	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	68	14	2 839
5	Majuba Technology Centre	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	113	19	6 614
6	Newcastle Technology Centre	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	52	16	3 222
7	Open Learning Unit	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	18	13	6 642
Total	7					–	368	211	26 304

(v) Mnambithi TVET College

Mnambithi TVET college is situated in uThukela district, which covers the interior western edge of KwaZulu-Natal (Mnambithi TVET College, 2018). It is one of the nine public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province. Its central administration office is in the central business district (CBD) of Ladysmith (Mnambithi TVET College, 2018). The college has five campuses/sites situated within a 0-75 km radius of the central office. Although the majority of the students are from within the local municipal area, their homes are too far from the campuses. As a result, they require accommodation closer to their respective campuses. However, the college does not have enough students' residences. The only campus that has a students' residence is eZakheni A campus, and this residence caters for only 540 students (Mnambithi TVET College, 2018). Therefore, the majority of the students are compelled to look for private accommodations, where students are faced with exploitation by the property owners and are also exposed to unsafe environments. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.5:

Table 5.5: List of campuses/sites of Mnambithi TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	36	–
2	Estcourt	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	39	10	1 435
3	Ezakheni A	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	61	21	2 987
4	Ezakheni E	No	No	Yes	No	No	8	7	430
5	Ladysmith	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	67	14	2 346
Total	5					1	175	88	7 198

(vi) Mthashana TVET College

Mthashana TVET college is situated within the rural area in uMkhanyakude, uMzinyathi, uThukela and Zululand districts. Its central administration office is in Vryheid in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal (Mthashana TVET College, 2020). The college has eight campuses/sites situated within a 4-300 km radius of the central office. In most cases, students' homes are too far from campuses and should be provided accommodation by the college. Yet, the college has only one students' residence and the college cannot provide accommodation for students attending other campuses (Mthashana TEVT College, 2020). Thus, the majority of the students are forced to look for private accommodation closer to their respective campuses. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.6:

Table 5.6: List of campuses/sites of Mthashana TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Babanango	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
2	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	51	–
3	Emandleni	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	19	15	774
4	KwaGqikazi	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	27	12	1084
5	Maputa	No	Yes	No	No	No	3	4	146
6	Nongoma	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	18	911
7	Nquthu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	16	5	675
8	Vryheid	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	37	11	1445
Total	8					3	126	116	5 035

(vii) Thekwini TVET College

Thekwini TVET College is situated within the urban or metropolitan municipality of eThekweni (Thekwini TVET College, 2019). Three former technical colleges, one college of education and one mainstream school merged to form Thekwini TVET college. The college is made up of six campuses, which are located within a 0-10-kilometer radius of its central administration office (Thekwini TVET College, 2019). The majority of the students are not local students and require accommodation closer to their respective campuses, as the college has only one residence (hotel) for students. The only campus that has student accommodation is in Asherville and this residence cannot even cater for all students residing in Asherville. As a result, students not only from campuses that do not have student residences but also from Asherville could not be accommodated at the Asherville residence and are forced to look for private accommodation. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.7:

Table 5.7: List of campuses/sites of Thekwini TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Asherville	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	28	5	843
2	Cato Manor	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	19	6	523
3	Central office	–	–	–	–	–	–	61	–
4	Centec	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	36	8	1 803
5	Melbourne	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	30	8	1 882
6	Springfield	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	47	11	2 232
7	Umbilo	Yes	No	No	No	No	19	6	411
Total	7					1	179	105	7 694

(viii) uMfolozi TVET College

Umfolozi TVET college is one of the public TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal province. Its central administration office is located in Richards Bay in the uMhlathuze local municipal area in uThungulu district (uMfolozi TVET College, 2020). The college has two campuses in the uMhlathuze local municipal area, namely Esikhawini and Richtek and one campus, Eshowe that is under the uMlalazi municipal area. However, these three campuses, Esikhawini, Richtek and Eshowe are located in the uThungulu district, the other two campuses, namely Chief Albert Luthuli and Mandeni, are located in the KwaDukuza local municipal area and Mandeni local municipal area respectively. However, both campuses are in the iLembe district. Campuses are within a 0-145 km radius of the central office. The college has two students' residences (uMfolozi TVET College, 2020). The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.8:

Table 5.8: List of campuses/sites of uMfolozi TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	87	–
2	Chief Albert Luthuli	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	25	10	632
3	Eshowe	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	48	9	1 587
4	Esikhawini	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	70	14	1 342
5	Mandeni	Yes	No	No	No	No	55	15	1 131
6	Richtek	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	56	10	1 480
Total	6					2	254	145	6 172

(ix) uMgungundlovu TVET College

uMgungundlovu TVET college is located in the city of Pietermaritzburg within the Msunduzi Municipality that is a part of the uMgungundlovu district municipality (uMgungundlovu TVET College, 2020). Pietermaritzburg is the capital city of KwaZulu-Natal and the central administration office of uMgungundlovu TVET college is 3 km from the head offices of the province. The college has five campuses and one central administration office in the Pietermaritzburg area. The five campuses in the urban area were originally technical colleges before they were merged. All of these campuses are no more than 10 km away from each other. In addition, the college has new campuses and skills centres. These new campuses are Endaleni, Msinga and Greytown, which are 47 km, 200 km and 70 km from Pietermaritzburg respectively. While Endaleni is in Richmond in the uMgungundlovu district municipality, Msinga is in uMzinyathi municipal district and Greytown is in Umvoti municipality (uMgungundlovu TVET College, 2020). In all, the college has eight campuses and none of these campuses has a students' residence. The names and some characteristics of these campuses/sites are given in Table 5.9:

Table 5.9: List of campuses/sites of uMgungundlovu TVET College

No.	Campus/site	Programmes offered				Students' residence	Number of staff members		Number of students
		NCV	Semester	Trimester	PLP		Teaching	Support	
1	Central Office	–	–	–	–	–	–	47	–
2	Edendale	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	21	6	365
4	Midlands	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	24	10	348
5	Msinga	No	Yes	No	No	No	4	–	94
6	Msunduzi	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	34	13	622
7	Northdale	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	30	7	500
8	Plessislaer	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	47	12	826
9	Richmond	No	Yes	No	No	No	6	–	186
Total	9					–	179	95	3 295

5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The researcher decided not to include the characteristics of the participants who took part in this research, protecting their identities. The researcher is of the view that it would be easy to organise the participants by looking at their characteristics because there are very few public colleges in the province. By looking at the characteristics of the individuals, for example, gender, age, years of experience and qualifications, one could easily identify the participants and their contributions to the study would have been compromised and would have been not confidential, as promised to them by the researcher.

Although public colleges are distributed across the province, the participants know each other well. These participants (department officials, college principals & deputy principals) have regular meetings. For example, college principals have a principals' forum, and they meet once every month with the department officials. Likewise, deputy principals have their own forums where they meet once every month with the department officials to discuss issues pertaining to their areas of specialisations. It was against this background that the researcher opted not to disclose the characteristics of the participants. The researcher was protecting the identities of these participants, as he promised them that their identities would not be disclosed.

5.3.1 The College Principals

In spite of the province having nine public colleges, only seven college principals participated in this study. Two college principals were not available because of their busy schedules. Although these two college principals did not participate in this study, their deputies participated in this study, since they (the two college principals that did not participate in this study) committed that their colleges would be part of the study.

As explained in 5.3, details (characteristics) are not disclosed as a means of protecting the identity of the college principals that took part in this research. However, it should be pointed out that six college principals in KwaZulu-Natal province were males and only three were females. Out of the seven college principals who participated in this study, five of them were males and two were females. All college principals who participated in the study have been college principals for more than five years. These principals understand and know, or should understand and know not only their roles as college principals quite well, but also the dynamics

and challenges facing the TVET sector. The researcher conducted four face-to-face individual interviews and three individual virtual interviews with college principals. Some participants (college principals & deputy principals) preferred virtual interviews because of Covid-19 (cf. 4.3.7).

To ensure that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, the researcher used letters of the alphabet, instead of the names of public colleges. Only the researcher knows which letter name belongs to which college, as these were given according to the list of colleges per visit made. In essence, college A is the college that was visited first, B represents the college that was visited second, et cetera. Therefore, in this study, college principals would be called college principals of colleges A, B, C, D, E et cetera, instead of using the names of their colleges to protect the identities of these college principals. Participation by college principals is categorised and indicated as shown in Table 5.10 below:

Table 5.10: Participation by college principals

College	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Participation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	7
Number of participants	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7

5.3.2 The deputy principals

Generally, public TVET colleges have three deputy principals, these deputy principals are for the following divisions: academic services, corporate services and finance. However, some colleges have four deputy principals; the fourth one is the deputy principal for student affairs (Registrar) or innovation and development, and this is dependent on the needs of the college. In KwaZulu-Natal, eight colleges have three deputy principals and one college has four deputy principals. In total, there should be 28 deputy principals for the public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. However, there is a vacant post at one of the colleges. As a result, there are 27 deputy principals, instead of the 28 that were expected.

The intention was to include all deputy principals in the study as participants. However, because of various reasons, only 22 deputy principals participated in this study. As explained in 5.3

above, details (characteristics) of the deputy principals are not disclosed because the researcher needed to protect their identities, as they were promised before the study resumed.

The researcher conducted eighteen face-to-face interviews and four virtual interviews with deputy principals. Some participants preferred virtual interviews because of Covid-19. Out of 22 deputy principals who participated in this project, 11 were males and 11 were females. In terms of experience as deputy principals, two have one year of experience as deputy principals and one has three years of experience as a deputy principal. The rest of the deputy principals who participated in this research project have been deputy principals for more than five years.

As indicated above, to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, the researcher used letter names, instead of the names of public colleges. Only the researcher knows which letter name belongs to which college, as these were given according to the list of colleges per visit made (cf. 5.3.1). Deputy principals are also given the following codes as pseudonyms: deputy principal 1, 2, & 3 for each college in order to protect their identities. For example, deputy principal 1 for college A, and deputy principal 2 for college G.

Table 5.11: Participation by deputy principals

College	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	9
Number of deputy principals at the college	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	28
Number of deputy principals participated	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	22

5.3.3 The Regional DHET officials

Two regional DHET officials were interviewed in this study. The two officials are based at the KwaZulu-Natal DHET regional office in Pietermaritzburg. The two officials that participated in this study have been in the education sector, operating at different levels for many years. The

researcher is of the view that these officials were relevant to this study as they deal directly with public colleges. Their input would, therefore, be valuable to this study. Likewise, details (characteristics) of these officials were not disclosed, as indicated in 5.3.

The role of the regional officials is to provide support to the colleges. As a result, these officials do not only interact with colleges regularly, but they should also understand and know the challenges that colleges require. The researcher conducted a face-to-face individual interview with one department official, as well as virtual individual interviews with another department official. Department officials were also given codes, 1 and 2 to protect their identities. Therefore, these officials are known as department officials 1 and 2.

5.3.4 The importance of the experiences of the participants to the study

As indicated in 5.3.1 above, all college principals who participated in this study have been college principals for more than five years. The assumption is that these college principals are not only acquainted with educational changes taking place, especially in the TVET sector, but they also understand and know what implications these changes have on the sector. Undoubtedly, new changes imply that college principals should adapt their roles not only to cope with the new changes but also to ensure that changes meet their desired goals. Because of their experiences, both in the TVET sector and as college principals, they are in a better position to deal with challenges and demands brought about by these changes.

All college principals except for one have been in the education sector before becoming college principals. Therefore, they should be conversant with reforms witnessed in South African education, as well as the impact of these changes to their respective roles. College principals, as college leaders, should, thus, provide proper leadership, especially during the times of change because leadership is essential for a successful change in any organisation (Nandasinghe, 2020; Wiatr, 2022). By virtue of being college principals, these principals are strategic leaders and should be able to ensure that the people whom they lead are able to cope with changes for the benefit of their colleges. This study looks at the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance from the public colleges' perspective. The experiences of the college principals who participated in this study equip them to understand and know this role better because they perform this role at their respective colleges.

Meanwhile, all deputy principals, except three, have been deputy principals for more than five years. In addition, all deputy principals except one have been in the TEVT sector for more than ten years. Thus, they should be accustomed to the dynamics and challenges of the TVET sector. Therefore, they should be acquainted with the tasks that college principals perform. Furthermore, quite often, some of these deputy principals are asked to act as college principals when the college principal is not at the college. In fact, they deputise their college principals at different forums on a number of occasions. Positions that they hold at their respective colleges and their experiences are significant to this study and can assist in crosschecking the information obtained from the college principals.

The two regional officials that participated in this study interact with public colleges in the province regularly, as they provide support to these public colleges. They are responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of public colleges, on behalf of the national DHET. They monitor the activities of the public colleges in the province. As a result, they know or should know what is expected of the colleges and/or colleges' principals as college principals are in charge of their respective colleges. As indicated in 5.3.3, the lengthy experience of these Regional officials in the education system means that they know the roles that college principals should play in guiding the performance of their colleges.

The officials interact with all stakeholders when they visit colleges to conduct monitoring and evaluation. During monitoring, they identify areas that need improvement or development. As a result, they are familiar with the roles performed by various stakeholders at the public colleges. These officials are better positioned to know exactly the types of support that each of the colleges require. These officials are significant for this study because the information obtained from them can help in triangulating the data collected from college principals and deputy principals (Mazibuko, 2007).

5.4 EDUCATIONAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African education system is engulfed at all levels by numerous changes or educational reforms and these changes affect the performance of education institutions in the country. However, changes taking place in education are being witnessed worldwide, not only in South Africa. In fact, education is transforming in all corners of the world (cf. 3.1). Educational changes taking place in South Africa are compounded by the fact that other sectors are also

implementing reforms in their attempts to address the imbalances of the apartheid era. The onus is, therefore, on the shoulders of those who are tasked to lead and manage the education institutions to ensure that these changes are implemented successfully. This can only be possible if the leaders and managers understand and communicate changes and ensure that everyone in the organisation understands and copes with the changes (Wiatr, 2022).

Research demonstrates that leaders and managers have a crucial role to play during the organisational transition periods (Hussain, Lei, Akram, Haider, Hussain, & Ali, 2018; Junnaid et al., 2020). Clearly, the success or failure of the new changes introduced in the organisation is determined by how these changes have been communicated by those who lead these institutions. Therefore, college principals should ensure that changes are not only communicated but are also well understood by all stakeholders at all levels, so that changes can be implemented effectively and efficiently. In fact, the college principal should ensure that all stakeholders, especially those who have to implement these changes, are assisted to understand and cope with the changes. Coping with changes would enable the implementers to accept these changes and implement them effectively. Employees would be able to perform better if they have embraced the change and this may lead to the institutions achieving high levels of performance (Higgins & Bourne, 2018).

5.4.1 The significance of transformation in the TVET sector in South Africa

Individuals affected by change need to know what they gain or lose if they do not implement a particular change or reform in order to accept and implement the change willingly. Therefore, those who are affected by the transformation, which is taking place in the TVET sector, should have a clear understanding of the significance that such changes will bring to them. The success of any change introduced lies with the implementors of that particular change. Therefore, the implementers of changes need to understand and know the purpose of such changes. The principal of college D is of the view that educational changes are necessary as they are transforming the old system of education in South Africa. This principal summarised it up as follows: *These changes are introduced in order to address the ills of the old order.*

All participants were of the view that transformation, particularly in education, was necessary because of the imbalances of the past. Although all those who participated in this research project acknowledged the need for transformation in the TVET sector, these participants raised

concern not only about the speed of these changes but also about how these changes are introduced in the education system, particularly in the TVET sector. The majority of the participants feel that educational changes are haphazardly introduced, resulting in the poor implementation of a number of changes. One of the participants (deputy principal 1) from college H argued, citing the introduction of the NCV as an example that even if a change is good, it may have negative effects because it has not been well thought out. Likewise, one of the participants (deputy principal 2) from college G concurred, arguing that the outcomes of NCV start with one purpose and end with another purpose, and this has not been addressed by the department. One of the participants (deputy principal 1) from college B agreed that there is a problem with NCV and stated:

The type of curriculum given to NCV students is not at the level of the students who have passed grade nine. You can imagine a learner who has just passed grade and is not used to self-study being expected to be in the classroom where the lecturers are expecting him to do the work for himself/herself. If you look at the results of NCV over the period of a very long time and the money that is pumped into the programme – it shows that there is a problem here.

One of the participants (deputy principal 2) from college A also cited the NCV as an example that once a change has been introduced, DHET does not assess whether the goal of introducing a particular change has been achieved or not. As this participant said, *I doubt if there has been any assessment on whether NCV is still required or not.* Another participant (deputy principal 1) from college A concurred, arguing that once a change has been introduced, there is no monitoring to check if the change is being effectively implemented. According to this participant, public colleges do not get adequate support from the department when implementing the new change, especially during the initial stages. This participant (deputy principal 1 from college A) summed this up as follows: *Once a change has been introduced, you are just on your own.* A participant (one of the deputy principals) from college C agreed, maintaining that there is a need for the DHET to find a better way of coordinating the changes. The participant (a deputy principal from college A) claimed that it is usual for colleges to get conflicting information regarding the same change coming from different directorates of the same department. One of the participants from college C confirmed this and explained it as follows: *The officials from the department have a tendency of contradicting themselves.* This has a negative bearing on the significance of that particular change to all relevant stakeholders.

One of the changes that has been introduced by the DHET in the public TVET sector is the post-provision norm (PPN). Most participants have hailed this change. The participants are of the view that this change addresses the issue of parity in the sector. One of the participants (deputy principals) in college C regards the introduction of PPN in the TVET sector as positive. According to these participants, this change should be welcomed because it is going to balance the imbalances that have been witnessed in the sector. *It is the right thing that we have an organisational structure in the sector*, the deputy principal from college C said. Likewise, deputy principal 1 from college A applauded the introduction of PPN into the sector. According to this participant, there has never been parity in terms of salaries at certain levels in the TVET sector. This participant maintained that, in some instances, people occupying the same position would be placed at different salary levels by colleges. The participant from college A explained it as follows:

I regard the introduction of PPN in this sector as a remarkable change. My feeling is that it is a good change because it brings about organisation in all TVET colleges in the country. Secondly, it is a good move because it brings about parity in terms of salaries. What used to happen was that if a person is appointed, the college would just decide how much to pay the newly appointed person. Only to find that another college would decide to pay the person occupying the same position a different salary. Previously, colleges would decide at what salary level a person would be placed.

One of the deputy principals from college H maintained that most educational changes are taken politically— without proper planning. The principal of college G confirmed this viewpoint and asserted that one needs to understand politics in order to survive at TVET, as a principal. He said: *Without proper understanding of politics, you may not succeed as a college principal.*

Discussion

In South Africa, changes made in the education system like in all other sectors are necessary, as they aim at addressing the imbalances of the old order. It is clear that implementers of these educational changes have some reservations about the manner in which these changes are introduced and implemented at the college level. Therefore, the roles of not only the DHET but also of the college principal, are extremely important for any change to be successful. It is

crucial for the department to make all stakeholders aware why it is necessary to have educational changes. The department should also assist people who implement the changes not only in dealing with the challenges brought by the changes but also in finding better ways of making such changes more effective. The importance of the department officials and the college principals in ensuring that the change implementers fully understand the reasons for and/or aims of the change, cannot be over-emphasised. Furthermore, working conditions should not hinder the implementation efforts. The pillar of success for any change is the support, guidance and leadership of those who are leading and managing the implementers of change.

5.4.2 The role of the college principal in the communication of changes to the stakeholders

College principals or leaders as accounting officers have a vital role in communicating changes to all relevant stakeholders. The college principals must not only ensure that stakeholders know and understand the changes, but they must also ensure that the stakeholders cope with the new changes so that they can implement these changes successfully. However, deputy principal from college B was of the view that before the college principal cascades the information on the new changes, the department must ensure that principals understand the changes and are comfortable with such changes. Surely, it would not be easy for the principal who struggles and/or is not comfortable with new developments to cascade them to the stakeholders at all levels meticulously.

One of the deputy principals from college C concurred, asserting that college principals need to understand the changes first before cascading these changes to the stakeholders. One of the participants (deputy principals) from college F was of the view that the information from the department is not enough for the college principals to understand the new changes fully. This participant, therefore, suggested that principals should do research, read papers or articles related to the type of change to be introduced, consult and network with leaders from other institutions before cascading the information on the new changes to the stakeholders. The deputy principal from college I maintained that after the college principal has gathered all the information about a particular change, the principal must have a meeting with his/her deputies, as the senior management team. According to this deputy principal from college I, the principal should inform the deputies what transpired at the meeting with the department officials regarding the change and the team will then discuss the new change. A deputy principal from college F supported the idea that the principal should first brainstorm before taking the

information to the lower levels. *Brainstorm with deputy principals, as the senior management team and find out what are their views on the new changes being introduced before cascading the information*, said the deputy principal from college F.

One of the deputy principals from college B maintained that principals with their deputies need to analyse the resources available at their respective college after coming from the briefing by the department officials. According to this participant, the senior management teams should ensure that their respective colleges have enough resources to deal with whatever challenges brought by new changes. For example, senior management teams should ascertain if their colleges have people with the required skills to deal with such changes. Likewise, physical resources need to be assessed before new changes are implemented. Another deputy principal from college B agreed and said: *The college principal together with the deputy principals should have an implementation strategy before cascading the information to the stakeholders at other level*. One of the deputy principals from college E concurred, stating that the college principal always provides an opportunity for the senior management team to discuss the changes before cascading the information to the stakeholders at the lower levels. The principal of college G agreed: *I always make sure that I discuss the new developments with deputy principals before taking these changes to the people at lower levels*. The deputy principal from college E maintained that people affected by the new changes, especially those who are to be directly affected, should be briefed about them and afforded opportunity to raise concerns and express their fears. According to this participant, the college principal should do everything possible to alleviate these fears, as this could minimise the stress and anxiety among the employees.

A deputy principal from college I maintained that the manner in which the college principal communicates the new changes to the stakeholders is influenced by the leadership style of that particular principal. According to this participant, it is easy for the college principal who embraces a more participative (democratic) approach than the college principal who uses *laissez faire* or an authoritarian style: *I think it starts with the management style of the individual principal*. The deputy principal from college E who participated in this study, asserted that the principal should listen to the people and provide the necessary support during the times of changes. Listening and providing support to the people would be possible if the college principal is democratic (albeit authoritative) than if the college principal who is following a *laissez faire* or authoritarian approach. Another deputy principal who participated in this study from college E agreed and explained this as follows:

It is all about the leadership quality and skills of the institution because changes come through the college principal. However, it depends how the principal liaises with the subordinates to ensure that changes filter through to the people at the lower level. Remember, these people are the ones that will implement these changes as a foot soldier. Therefore, the leadership styles and qualities of the principal are critical for the successful implementation of changes being introduced in the country. It is also important that the principal work with the management team collaboratively so that these changes would be understood and implemented accordingly. The senior management team should also be flexible and listen to the views of the employees, instead of imposing things to the people all the time. This means the changes will be communicated to the people and the people must also provide feedback, for example, they would be able to indicate whether the changes are implementable or not.

One of the deputy principals from college A stressed the importance of regular meetings, workshops and other communication channels prior and during the new change. This participant further stated that records, such as signed attendance registers and minutes of the meeting and workshops, should be kept as evidence because some people have a tendency of denying that they were given the information. This deputy principal explained it as follows: *We do not expect the principal to have meetings with all these people but those who supervise these units must hold meetings and keep records of these meetings.*

Discussion

Although the college principal would not be always directly involved in cascading the information to the stakeholders at all levels, the principal should take the leading role and ensure that the information is cascaded to the people at all levels. The point of departure, though, is for the college principal to discuss the change or changes with the senior managers (deputy principals) extensively. The senior management team (the principal with the deputy principals) should agree on the approach to take when cascading the information to the lower levels. However, it is important that proper channels of communication be followed. For example, the senior management team should meet with the middle managers and discuss the changes before taking the information to the other levels.

The importance of keeping records of the briefing meetings and workshops where people are informed about the new changes cannot be over-emphasised. Equally important is not only providing the necessary resources but also ensuring that the concerns of those to be affected by the new changes are addressed properly. Although people who implement reforms and leadership of the organisation determine the success of such reforms, the key to success depends on the proper management of the change process (Grabara, Cehlar & Dabylova, 2019). Therefore, the management of the human factor aspect is also crucial, especially during the initial stages of the new change.

5.4.3 Coping with reforms in the TVET sector

For any change (reform) to be implemented successfully, those who are directly affected by it need not only to understand it, but they should also be able to cope with it. Therefore, those who are in charge of the changes at the public college should ensure that they prepare all stakeholders so that they can cope with such changes. Without proper preparation and training, people can be overwhelmed by the new changes, which may result in them becoming stressed because reforms normally induce uncertainty and fatigue among the employees who are affected and should deal with the new changes. Participants (principals & deputy principals) maintained that not much is being done at their respective colleges to ensure that the implementers of reforms are adequately prepared in order for them to handle the new reforms successfully. One of the deputy principals from college I said their college does not have a plan in place to assist the people cope with changes at the college. This participant regarded this as a major challenge: *The college has not made any provision to ensure that people cope with new changes. Hence, people get frustrated with these changes.*

The two participants from the department asserted that DHET is not doing much to assist colleges to cope with the new changes. According to one of the officials, financial constraints are a major challenge that hinder the department from providing adequate support to the colleges. *The support that the department provides to colleges is not as effective as it should be because of financial constraints*, said one of the department officials. This confirms what was articulated by one of the deputy principals from college A, who found that the department introduces changes but fails to provide the necessary support to the colleges. The principal of college E claimed that lack of support from the department sometimes made it difficult for him to explain the new changes to the council members, employees and students echoed the

sentiment. Supporting the stakeholders, especially implementers of new changes and ensuring that these individuals do not only understand the new changes, but they also cope with these changes might not be possible. One of the deputy principals from college A explained as follows: *The principal does not ensure that people are informed properly about the changes and no assistance is provided to ensure that they cope with such changes.*

The principal of college B maintained that they prepared people to cope with the new changes by using a change management programme. According to this principal, meetings are held with different units to explain the new developments and people are afforded the opportunity to raise their concerns. This principal explained this as follows:

People need to be told about the new changes, so that they can be prepared for the changes and they need to understand how a particular change is going to affect them. The college has a team that goes to people to explain the new developments. In addition, people need to be prepared for the new things. These people need to be trained so that they will know and understanding the change and also how the change will affect them. I am sure if people understand how change can affect them, they can cope with it.

Likewise, the deputy principal from college I stressed the importance of having a proper plan for the implementation of the new changes. This deputy principal maintained that the senior management team (the principal and deputy principals) must strategise how the college will unfold the change. Moreover, they must have a plan of addressing the concerns of the people, like those who are concerned about the future of the jobs and/or other effects of the new changes in their lives. This deputy principal is of the view that proper communication channels should be made available to the people and people should be made aware of how to communicate their questions. *I think people on the ground must see that our leader is with them in this change*, said the deputy principal from college I.

Discussion

There is a likelihood that people can support the new change, if they see that their leaders are supportive. Support prior to, during and after change, helps individual employees to cope with the stress of work, which develops because of the new changes. Therefore, leaders of the

organisations should know and understand the impact that new changes would have on the people directly affected by such changes and then design strategies that would help these people (employees) to cope with such changes. The introduction of new changes may require some employees to acquire new skills (retraining), transfer to other sections and perform new tasks and this may be stressful to the employees. As a result, these individuals must be assisted for them to cope and adapt to the new changes or uncertainties that come with new reforms. Walmsley (2019) argues that since situations are unique, the onus is on the managers and leaders to look for better ways of dealing with change in their situations and/or organisations.

Since leaders also need to adapt to the new changes and cope with such new changes, they also require support and assistance from the department that has initiated the new changes. As coping with the process of changes is demanding, everyone involved with the new changes should be supported in order for the new changes to be successful. However, Odor (2018) opines that quite often, most leaders try to drive the new changes and related processes without communicating and winning over those who will implement such changes. Odor (2018) cautions that planning the process of change singlehandedly without involving those who are to be affected by such changes or to be implementing such changes is a recipe for disaster. Odor further states that no individual has all the answers, skills and abilities necessary to bring about successful change in an organisation. Therefore, others should be involved at the initial stages because these individuals may have ideas that could result in the successful implementation of such changes. Furthermore, the realities of others could identify some challenges that would need to be addressed so that the new changes could be effectively and successfully implemented.

Conclusions of educational changes taking place in South Africa

According to Burner (2018), educational changes are not only complex but they also involve a number of stakeholders. Therefore, college principals as drivers of new changes at their respective colleges should be committed to the implementation of these changes and skilled in the change processes. For public colleges to succeed in implementing the educational reforms, colleges need to have change agents. Ojogiwa (2021) argues that strategic leaders as change agents are needed in the transformation of the public sector because it is thought that management cannot transform organisations like change agents who are also strategic leaders. Tiongco and Benedicto (2020) stress the importance of developmental training for change agents so that they handle the implementation of organisational change. Furthermore, they

(2020) argue that change agents need to know what to do, why to do that and how to address the challenges of managing change.

Likewise, Zainol et al. (2021) opine that if leaders want to be successful change agents, they should acquire the necessary skills and be highly skilled in change management process. As change agents, they should have skills and authority to guide and facilitate the change efforts in their organisations. Irrespective of who is driving the change in the organisation, the effects of any change initiative rest on the effectiveness of the leader of that organisation. In addition, the manner in which change is introduced and/or handled can affect the performance of the organisation positively or negatively (Akinbode & Al Shuhumi, 2018). For example, the inability of the organisation to supply the staff with enough appropriate resources may jeopardise the implementation of a new change. Without any doubt, leaders as change agents need the support of other individuals to implement changes successfully. Therefore, it is crucial that the leaders and change agents listen to these individuals or these employees and other relevant stakeholders because they can promote or block the proposed change in an organisation.

The following section (cf. 5.5) focuses on strategic leadership roles.

5.5 THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN CONTEXT

The public TVET colleges' perspective of the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance is the focus of this research. As has been pointed out, research on strategic leadership is lacking (cf. 2.1). This research project was undertaken with the aim of addressing the gap identified in the literature, as well as to demonstrate that strategic leadership is important for both profit and non-profit organisations. The role of strategic leadership is crucial for the success of any organisation, including non-profit organisations. According to Özdemir et al. (2020), recent studies suggest that educational leaders, like leaders of other sectors, must display strategic leadership behaviours for the future success of their organisations.

Considering the important contribution of the TVET sector in national economies, the role of strategic leadership in providing guidance and direction to ensure that the set goals are achieved,

is vital. The role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of the non-profit organisations requires extensive study, since the role of strategic leadership determines the fate or future of the organisation, irrespective whether the organisation is public or private. The failure of an organisation to achieve its set goals is always linked to poor leadership. Therefore, understanding and knowing the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges will enable the college principals to initiate changes as proactive leaders and hone their leadership skills.

5.5.1 The main duties of the college principal as a strategic leader

The college principal as an accounting officer oversees everything that happens in the institution. The college principal is tasked to ensure that the management and administration of the college are properly done (cf. 1.2.3). He/she should ensure that policies and departmental prescripts are implemented correctly. The principal needs to oversee that teaching and learning take place effectively. The principal must also ensure that the resources that are required are not only available, but they are also adequate and appropriate to enable teaching and learning to take place effectively. College principals must provide support, guidance and strategic direction to the subordinates. The principal of college D emphasised the importance of ensuring that there is not only cohesion among the deputy principals but also that the deputy principals always work together. The principal of college E concurred, arguing that if the deputy principals do not work as a team, the college cannot achieve its objectives. This was supported by the principal of college H, who put it as follows: *For me, the interpersonal relationship has a huge component in the office of the principal.*

All those who participated in the project maintained that the college principal should not only be abreast of everything happening at the college but should also ensure that he/she works closely with other stakeholders. The principal of college H asserted that leadership is not a one-man show. Department official 1 posited that the college principal should get support from deputy principals and council members so that the college can perform successfully. The principal of college D concurred, maintaining that as a college principal, as an ex officio member of the college council should advise and provide guidance to both the council members and the senior management. However, the department official 1 raised a concern about the manner in which some council members behave. The official (department official 1) asserted that, in some instances, some council members have a tendency of involving themselves in operational

activities, instead dealing only with governance issues. Department official 1 said: *I feel that some council members try to involve themselves too much on operational issues, instead of focusing on governance matters.*

One of the deputy principals from college C stated that the principal has to ensure that all the work at the college is in unison. According to this deputy principal, the college principal must ensure that different aspects of the college work cohesively. Therefore, the principal should give strategic direction. One of the deputy principals from college B agreed, adding that the deputy principals need to support the principal in providing the strategic direction of the college. One of the deputy principals from college A concurred and maintained that the college principal also needs to be visible as a person who gives instructions and directions regarding what should happen at the college. This deputy principal from college A puts it as follows: *For me, I would like to see the principal being visible. The principal should visit campuses and see what is happening at campuses.* One of the deputy principals from college I shared the same sentiments. This deputy principal said that she does not believe in having a principal who does not go to staff members. According to this deputy principal, the college principal must not only create an enabling environment for everyone at the college so that the college can achieve its objectives but the college principal must also interact with all stakeholders. This deputy principal from college I put it as follows:

I do not believe in a situation where the staff would say, we have not seen the principal of a very long time. This is not right. For me, this said the principal does not care about his/her staff. On the other hand, you cannot have the deputies saying that the last time we had a meeting with the principal was six months or so ago. This suggests that the principal is invisible and he/she keeps himself or herself away from the people. I do not believe that the principal must always say, if you want to say something to me, send an email and if you phone, the principal does not answer the phone. As much as you are a principal, part of your diary should be for your meeting not only with the management but also with the staff and with the student representative council (SRC) members.

According to one of the deputy principals from college E, meeting and interacting with stakeholders can create an environment where staff raise issues affecting them before things are blown out of proportion. This deputy principal is of the view that this can help the principal in

addressing issues timeously so that the college can function without any hindrances. *That is why the principal must have regular meetings with deputy principals, so that they will brief him/her on what is happening at their respective units*, said one of the deputy principals from college E. However, the deputy principal from college G argued that the college principal has an executive right to overturn any decision made on any matter at the college. *The deputy principal has a right to make a recommendation to the matter but the principal can overturn a recommendation made by the deputy principal*, one of the deputy principals from college G explained.

Discussion

The essential role of the leader of any institution of learning is to support teaching and learning and the leader must see to it that this essential role is performed effectively. Moreover, the educational leader should always strive to ensure that there is good quality education at the college. Undoubtedly, good quality education is determined largely by the leader or group of people who perform supervisory responsibilities (Dlamini & Mafumbate, 2019). In the case of a TVET college, the leader (college principal) needs to comply with the directives of the department to ensure that the college carries its tasks, as prescribed by the department. It is incumbent upon the college principals to ensure that all staff members work together in order to achieve the goals set by the department and those which the college has set for itself (Mothapo, 2019).

Participants in this study indicated that college principals must direct the activities taking place at the college strategically. Therefore, the college principal should not only ensure that there is an alignment of the strategy with the goals of the college, but also that everyone at the college understands the strategy of the college. Likewise, the principal should provide good leadership by motivating, guiding, encouraging and supporting those who are under his/her leadership to work hard towards achieving the college objectives. Dlamini and Mafumbate (2019) assert that how the leader of a particular organisation operates, contributes immensely to the success of an organisation. Apart from meeting the employer (department officials), the college council members and the staff members, including the students at the college, the college principal must also meet with other external members. For example, the college principal needs to have meetings with the business community and other stakeholders that have interest in education and this includes the community in which the college operates. These stakeholders also exert too much pressure on the college leaders, particularly the college principal.

5.5.2 The role of leadership in the success of the public college

Literature on leadership has identified it a major factor in the success of any organisation. Literature suggests that extensive study on leadership and its effects on the success of failure of organisations has been done. Literature on leadership has identified it as a major factor in the success of any organisation. Although leadership in education is well documented, leadership in TVET colleges has not been given much attention (cf. 1.3). College principals and other leaders or managers who perform the leadership role should not only understand what is expected of them to perform this role but also how to perform that leadership role competently. All participants in this study regard leadership as crucial in an organisation, including the public college. Department official 2 stated that leadership is very important, since without strong leadership the future of an institution would remain on a knife-edge. *Leadership can make or break the organisation*, said this official.

Department official 1 concurred and said if the college does not have a good leadership leader people will lose a direction and this will result in the college failing to achieve its objectives. One of the deputy principals from college B agreed and added that poor leadership leads to poor decisions and these poor decisions may compromise quality teaching and learning at the college. According to this deputy principal, people always take advantage of poor leadership and do as they like and the result is poor performance. This deputy principal said, *For the college to survive, the leadership of the college needs to take firm decisions*. Likewise, one of the deputy principals from college I felt that strong leadership unites the people's efforts towards a shared goal. This deputy principal maintained that leadership communicate to staff and students what are the priorities and what is to be done in order to achieve those priorities. The principal of college C was of the view that public colleges need strong leadership in order to succeed. This principal put it as follows:

I think leadership is very important in any organisation, including the public college. Surely, without strong leadership, no college can survive, especially that there are too many changes that public colleges need to deal with. How can a college achieve its goals, if leadership is providing proper guidance and direction? For me, it is necessary that leaders, I mean college principals, deputy principals and other leaders at the college acquire the necessary leadership skills in order to lead these institutions effectively.

The principal of college F also felt that leadership is very important because it is through leadership that one is able to channel the energy and skills available at the college in the right direction. Where gaps are identified, leadership is able not only to address those gaps but also to identify people with skills and expertise to close such gaps in order for college to achieve its goals. This principal is of the view that good leadership is essential in the TVET sector because these colleges are required to produce skilled people who would assist by developing the economy of the nation. Thus, leadership must be able to solve all the problems that might hinder the progress of the institution or problems that might prevent the institution from achieving its set goals. The deputy principal from college C when emphasising the importance of the leadership role in the success of the college had this to say:

College leaders need to understand all the risks involved or that might hamper the institution. If the leader is failing to assess the risks involved properly, it means that the organisation will fail because it will not achieve its objectives. For me, the success of the institution is intertwined to the leadership of that organisation. The leadership must give a clear direction and the leader must ensure that he/she does the mentoring and leads by example.

Understanding the role of leadership helps the leaders to grasp the expectations of the people being led and work towards those expectations in order to win the hearts of these individuals. The principal of college G maintained that everyone at the college should understand the role of leadership in order to minimise and prevent confusion and some misconceptions. Similarly, the principal of college D also asserted that the college principal's leadership role is vital in the public college. This principal explained this as follows:

For me, the success of the college is determined by the role that leadership performs at the college. Leadership is everything at the college. A college that is lacking leadership is bound to fail. That is why it is important for the college principal to be at the helm of the leadership at the college. The college principal needs to provide leadership. The principal cannot run away from this responsibility. The college will rise or fall because of leadership. Failure to provide leadership as the principal is the recipe for the college to fail. You know if as a principal, you find that you do not have expertise in some areas you need to consult in order for you to have the relevant solution. However, you cannot shift the responsibility.

Likewise, the college principal of college F maintained that leadership ensures that the college is directed in the right direction. It means that the leader should manage to resolve challenges that the institution encounters. Through strong leadership, the college principal is able to ensure that employees understand the *milieu* (environment) surrounding the institution.

Discussion

The success of the college or any institution does not only depend on the skills and quality of the leadership, but it also depends on the support from the department (employer) or department officials. It should be reiterated that it is not only the college principal and his/her deputies who need to possess leadership skills; other leaders at all levels need these skills to be able to provide support at their respective units or sections. The college can achieve its goals if these individuals work as a united team. However, little has been done in the country to ensure that public college leaders are adequately equipped with the necessary skills in order to carry their tasks effectively.

Badenhorst and Radile (2018) blame poor leadership as the cause of many challenges facing public TVET colleges in the country. As a result, college management in most colleges is unable to manage the colleges. Therefore, for public colleges to cope with the ever-changing circumstances, they need to invest heavily in leadership training or development. College principals, deputy principals and other leaders at public colleges should acquire the necessary leadership skills so that they can be capable of leading their institutions successfully.

Therefore, the DHET should provide college leaders with the necessary training (leadership training), so that these leaders can perform their tasks (roles) conscientiously. Newly appointed college principals and deputy principals should be offered mentorship in order for them to be acquainted with their new roles.

5.5.3 Aspects of leadership that contribute to the success of the institution

According to Al Khajeh (2018), the impact of leadership on performance cannot be over-emphasised. Thus, the failure of any organisation to adapt to internal or external challenges can be attributed to the lack of effective leadership. Those who participated in this research are of the view that visionary leadership is one of the most important aspects of leadership that contributes to the success of any organisation. The participants maintain that if leaders in the

organisation have no vision of where the organisation is going and what direction the organisation is going to take, that organisation will not succeed. The principal of college D said any leader of any organisation should have a vision where he/she is taking the institution and should ensure that everyone at the college understands the vision of the college. The principal of college C agreed: *The principal must keep on checking if people are still working towards the objectives of the college.*

Participants in this study also regard effective communication as one of the important aspects leading to the accomplishment of the goals set by the institution. The principal of college B regarded an effective leader as someone who can communicate unambiguously with people at all levels. According to this principal, clear communication ensures that everyone understands what is required from him/her and eliminates some vagueness. One of the department officials (department official 2) also concurred that communication is important in the success of the institution. The official stressed that communication should not only be a top-down approach but that bottom-up approach is also crucial and should be observed. Likewise, one of the deputy principals from college A stated that the role of the employees in the success of the college is vital. This deputy principal maintained that a number of colleges fail to achieve their objectives not only because of poor communication but also because people are not afforded the opportunity to air their views. The deputy principal said: *As a leader, you must allow people to voice out their opinions.* The principal of college D asserted that communication with all stakeholders should be continuous:

I think one of the aspects that contribute to the success of the institution is continuous engagement. The college principal must have regular meetings with the management and other stakeholders. It is important the principal participate, where possible in activities taking place at the college.

The principal of college E regarded delegation as an aspect that is important in ensuring that the institution succeeds in achieving its objectives. This principal added that the college principal cannot be everywhere all the time and he/she should delegate certain activities. It is difficult for any person to complete all the tasks assigned to him or her. As a result, he or she can take help from others by asking them to do some of the work in a formal way. The principal of college B was of the view that delegation improves the managerial effectiveness because the leader who has delegated some parts of his/her tasks gets time to focus on other important matters, which require his/her personal attention. Thus, the workload is reduced as part of the work is delegated

to the subordinates. Although delegation can yield good results if it is successfully coordinated, the principal of college E cautioned about delegating arbitrarily. *When delegating you must remember that you cannot delegate accountability*, the principal of college E warns. The principal of college D concurred: *Obviously, there are things that you can delegate but there are things that you cannot delegate*. The principal of college G confirmed that no college principal or leader of any organisation has all the skills and expertise required to do all the tasks assigned to him/her. Therefore, the principal should delegate some of the tasks appropriately. For example, the leader should identify people with skills and expertise to do the work and delegate accordingly. *For the organisation to be successful, the principal must have the ability to delegate the tasks*, said the principal of college G.

Discussion

Although the role of leadership is highly ranked and praised in the success of the organisation, leaders do not actually perform the tasks themselves; they achieve the results or outcomes through the work or efforts of subordinates. As a result, leaders of organisations should encourage their subordinates (employees) to sharpen their skills for the benefit of the organisation. This can be achieved through proper communication.

Stacho, Stachová, Papula, Papulová and Kohnová (2019) point out that effective communication is essential in any organisation because it helps to create enabling conditions that increase the competitiveness of an organisation. Through communication, people begin to know and understand each other better and develop trust among themselves (employees) and the willingness to work together in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organisation (Wiatr, 2022). Likewise, proper delegation assists the organisation to accomplish its goals not only because assignments (tasks) are delegated to the individuals with the necessary skills and expertise, but also because the head of the institution gets more time to focus on the more crucial issues while other activities are performed by the delegated individuals. Apart from that, delegation is developmental because it affords potential individuals (subordinates) the opportunity to sharpen their leadership skills when performing delegated duties. In essence, delegation prepares these individuals for taking up higher responsibilities or duties in future.

5.5.4 Understanding of strategic leadership

Strategic leadership should be understood in the context in which it is being practised (cf. 2.2.1). Participants in this study maintained that strategic leadership is crucial in providing a vision to the people being led (followers). This is in accordance with Jabbar and Hussein (2017) who suggest that a vision should not only be understood by the employees but should also have a buy-in of the employees because it captures their hopes, dreams and desires. Jabbar and Hussein (2017) are of the view that this could push the employees to work hard towards the fulfilment of such a vision. According to the principal of college B, strategic leadership means that a leader must not only be visionary but must also be able to identify talents with the followers (employees) and must be able to use the identified talents to the advantage of the institution. The principal of college G agreed and pointed out that the leader must have a vision, which should be sold to the followers. The college principal of college C concurred and stated that strategic leadership is about having a long-term vision and envisioning where the institution should be in future. As a result, a strategic leader is not concerned about the present but is more concerned about the future. *Strategic leaders look to the present in preparation for the future, as they are future-oriented*, said the deputy principal from college D.

Likewise, one of the deputy principals from college B perceives strategic leadership not only as a means of thinking about the objectives of the organisation in future, but as also about how such objectives be achieved in future. According to this deputy principal, the college principal and the deputy principals as the strategic leaders of the college should ensure that all employees understand the vision and mission of the college. The deputy principal from college D regarded strategic leadership as a means providing the vision to the people and driving the strategy, which will assist the college to achieve its future objectives. The principal of college H argued that having a vision and being able to sell the vision is not good enough if the strategic leader is unable to win the hearts of the people who are expected to put that vision into practice. *As a strategic leader, you need to ensure that you have a buy-in from the people who you are leading*, said the principal of college H. If people support your ideas or vision, they are more likely to cooperate with you for the realisation of the dream of the organisation. One of the deputy principals from college E saw strategic leadership as leadership provided by the top management where people at the lower levels are guided and motivated to work towards the desired future goals of the institution.

The principal of college E regarded strategic leaderships as leadership which gives a helicopter view whereby the strategic leader views the institution from above, assesses everything and decides how the institution will move forward. One of the deputy principals from college B concurred and asserted that strategic leadership means that the leaders go to the people on the ground and inform them where they want the institution to be. In addition, the leaders are expected to explain to the people what is expected of them, what the institution wants to achieve, and how these things will be achieved. Further to that, leaders must come up with strategies of what to be done and how to move the institution to the higher level. This deputy principal explained it as follows:

Leaders or college principals must come up with ideas as to how to get there. For me, strategic leadership means using thinking rather than doing the work. As a strategic leader, you need to drive the strategy to assist the organisation to acquire the necessary resources that will assist in moving the organisation towards achieving those set goals.

The principal of college D concurred, maintaining that strategic leadership is a means by which the college principal provides strategic direction. *It does not mean that the principal does things with his/her hands but it means the principal provides directions strategically*, the principal of college D said. The deputy of college I put it as follows:

For me, strategic leadership is the leader that said, look, this is who we are and this where we are. However, this is where we are going and these are the reasons why we need to move to where we need to go. Moreover, this is what we need to have in place to undertake this journey and to get there, I mean where we want to be. The leader ensures that all staff members and other relevant stakeholders understand why the institution should take this direction. The leader should allow staff members to contribute to the plan of how the journey should be undertaken so that the journey belongs to everybody.

Discussion

Since strategic leadership transforms the organisation; it means that the leader must be able to predict the future and guide employers to work towards the goals of the institution. Future-oriented, strategic leaders decide not only what goals to achieve but their most concern is how

achieve the set goals (Mjaku, 2020). Therefore, it is important that all employees should be clear on how to achieve the set goals. The set goals should be achievable, otherwise, employees will get frustrated and demotivated. For the college principal to perform their leadership role not only strategically but also successfully, they should understand the concept '*strategic leadership*'. However, the majority of the college principals that took part in this research project did not fully grasp the meaning of the concept. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the DHET as the employer of these principals to ensure that they as well as deputy principals acquire an understanding of this concept by providing them with extensive training on strategic leadership.

Similarly, most deputy principals struggled with the concept '*strategic leadership*'. Some deputy principals and college principals focused on strategic planning, instead strategic leadership when they were asked to share their understanding of strategic leadership. The majority of the participants, including department officials, struggled to define strategic leadership, in spite of them being in the position of strategic leaders. Undoubtedly, both deputy principals and principals need training on leadership, especially strategic leadership in order for them to understand why it is important in an organisation. The productivity of organisations is mostly dependent on the quality of their leadership, especially strategic leadership (cf. 1.1). Thus, deputy principals and principals should acquaint themselves with the concept of strategic leadership for the benefit of their institutions.

5.5.5 Effective strategic leadership

Leadership is about motivating and guiding people towards the achievement of the set goals or targets. Literature suggests that effective leadership maximises the performance of an organisation and produces high performing organisations (cf. 2.2.6). Effective college principals should create an environment, which is conducive for effective teaching and learning, so that the academic performance of the students can improve. One of the deputy principals from college E thought that the effectiveness of the strategic leader in the public college could be determined by what the college has achieved within a certain period. According to this deputy principal, the effectiveness of the college principal could be measured by student access and student retention, as well as the throughput and certification rates. This deputy explained:

Because we are in the education sector, you cannot say you are effective, as a principal when the students are not performing well. For example, if students are not passing, we cannot say you are an effective strategic leader or principal.

The other deputy principal from college E regarded an effective strategic leader as the college principal who ensures that there are necessary systems in place so that the vision of the college is accomplished. This deputy principal felt that it was not enough to have a vision but also systems to realise the vision of the college needs to be place. *The control systems will help to minimise the challenges that can prevent the college from achieving its goals*, said one of the deputy principals from college E. The principal from the college C felt that an effective strategic leader or college principal is a person who does not only ensure that he/she does more than what is expected of him/her, but who also ensures that everyone at the college does his/her best in the interests of the college. This principal stated that an effective strategic leader inspires and motivates the staff to do the work, so that goals of the institution can be attained: *You do not have to reprimand the staff all the times, but you must also encourage them to do the work, instead of looking for faults*. The principal from college H argued that to be effective does not necessarily mean that the leader must be *the know-it-all person*, but that he/she must know his/her strengths and weaknesses and be able to identify people with expertise who would assist in moving the institution forward. The principal of college H said: *For me, an effective leader is the person who can identify talents and capitalise on those talents for the benefit of the institution*. The principal of college G concurred and stated that an effective strategic leader is the person who is able to match the activities with the right people successfully.

According to one of the deputies from college E, the effectiveness of the strategic leader or college principal must not only be measured by the performance of the students. Instead, he/she must be judged by the success of everything that is taking place at the college. For example, the number of functional memoranda of understandings signed in order to form partnerships with companies, the manner in which he/she handles labour issues and deals with unions, increasing enrolments and more students finding employment after graduating, as well as the number of students getting work experiential training from different companies. *Well, if the college can be successful in these things, it would mean that the college principal is effective*, said this deputy principal. This was supported by one of the deputy principals from college F, who maintained that an effective leader is the person who leads the people in such a way that they excel in producing the set objectives. This deputy principal was of the view that to be effective the strategic leader needs to sell his/her vision, mission and objectives of the college to the others

successfully. However, the principal of college E asserted that effective strategic leaders ensure that the ultimate goals that the institution has set for itself are achieved through the effort of everyone: *Effective leaders ensure that things are done correctly, timeously, effectively and yield the expected results.*

One of the deputy principals from college F emphasised the importance of communication, saying that an effective strategic leader is a person that communicates effectively. This person is able to put his/her ideas and thoughts across clearly and unambiguously in all forms of communication. According to this deputy principal, communication assists not only in putting your ideas across but also in gathering ideas and information from other people. While the college principal wants the staff and students to know the vision and goals of the college, the principal should also know how they feel about the vision, mission and objectives of the college. Apart from this, the principal should also know both the strengths and limitations of his/her staff. Therefore, he/she should know when to push and when to pull for the benefit of the institution. Pulling means drawing the employees into what interests them, instead of pushing them (Burner, 2018). Deputy principal 1 from college I posited that an effective strategic leader is knowledgeable and knows what is expected of him/her. This deputy principal, blaming political appointments, asserted that some people are appointed to leadership positions because of their political connections. According to this deputy principal, most political appointees accept these leadership positions not knowing the demands of the position. Deputy principal 1 from college I said: *These people (political appointees) become ineffective when they have taken over the leadership positions.*

On the other hand, the other deputy principal from college I was of the view that the power of a leader is mainly found in planning and the ability to inspire people to follow. This deputy principal believed that even if the leader is good, if he/she cannot inspire the team to follow him/her, things will not be done. This deputy principal also stressed the importance of constantly motivating the staff, saying that effective strategic leadership keeps on motivating the people to ensure that they support and work towards the vision of the institution. Moreover, an effective leader always ensures not only that there is a positive atmosphere but also that there are adequate resources. One of the deputy principals from college C regarded an effective strategic leader as someone who has emotional intelligence. According to this deputy principal, people (staff) expect the college principal to support them when they have personal problems. The deputy principal from college I supports this and said: *Everyone must feel the comfort of*

being protected and supported by the college principal, including moral support. One of deputy principals from college C concurred, adding that for the subordinates to support the college principal, the principal needs to show them respect so that they can reciprocate. This deputy principal felt that if the leader is transparent and honest, the staff will trust him or her and they can work conscientiously to achieve the goals of the institution. This deputy principal put it as follows:

I believe that the leader must be trustworthy to the staff. For me, transparent, honesty and trust are important core values that define an effective strategic leader because under this leader will work hard to produce the intended results. People are always willing to support the person that they trust and they know that he/she respect and trust them, as well.

This view was supported by one of the deputy principals from college H, who also stressed the importance of respect and trust: effective strategic leadership does not demand respect but earns it. This deputy principal further stated that an effective strategic leader is a person that understands that he/she does not have all the answers. In addition, the leader understands that the position he/she holds is meaningless without the support and cooperation of the people whom he/she is leading. One of the deputy principals from college B regarded an effective strategic leader as a person who is capable of taking proper decisions so that the organisation can accomplish its intended goals. This is in line with what Jabbar and Hussein (2017) postulate, that the strategic leader makes decisions which do not only assist in proper functioning of the organisation but which also assist in achieving the vision anticipated. This person is able to drive the strategy of the organisation and ensure that the strategies taken or agreed upon are implemented effectively. The principal of college D also believed that an effective strategic leader or college principal is determined by the achievement of the set goals. This principal explained it as follows:

You know, during the strategic planning you must set, yourself targets and you have to monitor if you are in the right direction towards the achievement of those targets. Monitoring should be done on a regular basis. If you are able to active your objectives as planned, I think you are an effective strategic leader.

Discussion

An effective leader is the one who works well with the stakeholders, both internal and external stakeholders. Strategic leaders need to be honest and ethical. Effective strategic leaders know exactly where they want the organisation to be and provide direction to all the employees so that everyone knows what needs to be done. These leaders understand that everyone in the organisation is important and fulfils a critical role for the benefit of the organisation. These leaders are not paranoid leaders who always think that people are there to take their jobs. Instead, they trust the people whom they work with and/or are given positions to support him/her. This is in accordance with what Mubarak and Yusof (2019) postulate, that strategic leaders should build trust and respect among employees to develop organisations faster.

Effective strategic leaders are good communicators and have good listening skills as well. Hitt and Ireland (1999) argue that chances are slim that an organisation can achieve the maximum performance without effective strategic leadership. Likewise, Gupta (2018) argues that without effective strategic leadership, it would be difficult for any organisation to adapt to the changing environment because strategic leaders can develop suitable strategies which can be used not only to deal with challenges faced the organisation, but also to revive or assist organisations that are struggling to bounce back.

5.5.6 The role of strong leadership in the survival of a struggling public college

A number of public colleges in the country are struggling to survive and some colleges have even been put under administration. Principals of colleges B and D asserted that some of these colleges were good colleges led by good or strong leaders before they faded but collapsed when those strong leaders with good quality leadership skills left. Undoubtedly, these colleges need principals with strong leadership skills for them to bounce back. According to one of the deputy principals from college B, the survival of a struggling college depends on the quality of the person leading the college. This deputy principal explained his experience as follows: *I have seen institutions both private and public being on the verge of collapsing but surviving because of strong leadership.* One of the deputy principals from college F stated that it is difficult for the institution to bounce back after collapsing, unless that institution amasses a strong leadership team.

The principal of college C was of the opinion that strong leadership is crucial in the survival of the struggling institution because a strong leader has the ability not only of motivating the people towards the common goal but also to ensure that implementation of decisions takes place. Likewise, the department official 1 argued that no institution, including public colleges can bounce back easily without the support or presence of a strong leadership. According to this official, most colleges struggle to go back to their initial position after collapsing, and a college or any institution that has collapsed or deteriorated needs collective leadership. Department official 1 explained this as follows:

I think the department needs to relook at how it deals with the issue of struggling colleges. I think relying on one person is not a wise decision. For me, the department needs to appoint a committee that will try to put things right. My worry is that sending one person to go and administer the institution might not help in solving the problems experienced at that institution. However, if there is a committee that will meet regularly and reports to the department, challenges facing the college might be resolved quicker.

According to the principal of college D, strong leadership is crucial, especially during the times of crisis. This principal maintained that a strong leader would not only be able to identify the causes of the college to collapse or deteriorate but would amass assistance from outside and also have systems to assist the institution bounce back. This principal regarded poor leadership as the source of failure to put systems in place. For example, the leader may lack financial management skills and/or may lack in managing resources. The principal of college D argued that a strong leader would check what led to the collapse of the institution and not only put systems in place, but would also monitor if everything was implemented accordingly. The principal of college E agreed, endorsing the strong leadership when the organisation is collapsing or has already collapsed. This principal maintained that a strong leader with the necessary skills is capable of identifying stakeholders who can assist not only in identifying reasons that led to the collapse of the institution but in identifying strategies that can help reviving the organisation or in assisting the organisation to bounce back. This principal stated that the leader must take a lead and guide the employees in identifying the strategies to be used in trying to revive or preventing the institution from further demise. The principal of college F agreed, adding that the no leader can assist the college or any institution to survive if he/she does not know the causes of the downfall of that particular institution or college. *For me, no*

person can solve the problem of the institution without knowing the reason that led to the fall of that particular institution, said the principal of college F.

Discussion

Most institution collapse or deteriorate because they do not have strong leaders and their leaders neglect to listen to the suggestions and ideas of the people who they lead. Therefore, good and effective leaders are needed to assist the struggling institutions as these leaders are able to motivate and influence the employees to work willingly towards achieving the desired outcomes. Jabbar and Hussein (2017) posit that strategic leaders are able to transform struggling organisations to bounce back and become successful through better use of plans and resources that are available to them.

For any organisation to succeed in bouncing back, leaders must have strong leadership skills that would able them to remove obstacles that may prevent them from performing optimally. According Rahman et al. (2018), good leaders who have strong leadership skills are able to identify weak points and obstacles in the organisation, overcome them, and turn them into strong points. Good leaders are able to turn weaknesses into strengths for the betterment of the organisation. Therefore, college principals, as strategic leaders should have strategic thinking skills to overcome the obstacles. Strong leaders are able not only to influence employees to work willingly towards achieving the organisational goals; they are also able to remove obstacles that could prevent the employees from achieving the organisational goals, as well as those obstacles that could prevent leaders from doing their best as leaders (Gadirajurrett et al., 2018).

5.5.7 The role of strategic leadership in the performance of the college

Since the existence of any educational institution is to provide is to provide teaching (instruction) and learning, the college principal, as a strategic leadership should put systems in place to ensure the college fulfils this important function. Whether the college principal likes it or not he/she influences (positively or negatively) teaching and learning by virtue of being the head of the institution. Although principals of public colleges perform different and demanding tasks, the primary tasks that these principals need to perform is to make sure that effective teaching and learning always take place at the college. Therefore, college principals as

instructional leaders should always provide instructional leadership to influence effective teaching and learning processes (Chabalala & Naidoo, 2021). Strategic leadership role means that the strategic leader must provide the necessary means in order to make sure that the public college performs effectively and efficiently. The deputy principal from college D regarded the role of strategic leadership in the performance of the college as influencing employees to work hard towards the objectives of the college. Thus, the strategic leader must have the ability to influence others to perform optimally (cf. 2.2.2).

One of the deputy principals from college A maintained that the college principal must ensure that everyone at the college always provides support to teaching and learning. Likewise, the other deputy principal at college A agreed that the role of strategic leadership is crucial in the performance of the college. This deputy principal, however, claimed that the sad part is that people who get senior positions in the sector (TVET) are politicians. According to this deputy principal, people are getting senior positions because they are connected politically. The deputy principals said:

These people, I am talking about people who are politically appoint to senior positions, come to colleges just to enrich themselves. Most of these people are not even interested in teaching and learning and worse part they do not a background of the TVET of the sector. I mean that without having worked at the college, they would come hold senior positions and that is why most public colleges are struggling.

Undoubtedly, if political interference, especially political deployment is not addressed, public colleges would struggle to survive because quite often people who are appointed to higher positions lack not only the necessary skills to lead these colleges but also lack the background of how these institutions (public colleges) operate. People occupying senior positions in the TVET sector, like at all other sectors, should understand the sector well so that they can provide guidance and support to the subordinates. Understanding the TVET sector assists them in providing the necessary resources so that the achievement of the goals of the college can be realised. Apart from that, strategic leaders will know what is expected of each individual and would then provide support accordingly. In return, they will not only earn the respect of subordinates but the subordinates will work hard and cooperatively to accomplish the goals set by these public colleges, including the department as an employer.

The principal of college E was of the view that the role of strategic leadership is pivotal in setting goals, targets, plans, strategies and monitoring mechanisms for achieving these goals and targets. If the institution wants to achieve these objectives and targets, they should be closely monitored. Closely monitoring assists in noticing and addressing shortcomings timeously. The principal of college I said that the college principal should not stand on the side-lines but the principal should take a lead and keep on reminding the people about the vision of the college. *For me, the principal must keep on reflecting on what he/she is doing is in the right direction,* said the principal of college I. According to one of the deputy principals from college F, the college principal should ensure that everything at the college is functioning smoothly. This deputy principal stated that this requires the college principal to move around now and then. Instead of spending most of the time in the office, the principal should move around the campuses so that he/she is visible to the stakeholders, especially the employees and students. This deputy principal explained this as follows:

You need to be on the ground and you need to be aware of what is happening. You must talk to the people. Our principal is very sharp on that. He would arrive at the campus unexpectedly and talk to the staff members at the corridors and students on the veranda. I think to be effective you need to be aware of your surroundings.

The principal of college D concurred, arguing that the college principal should not be seen as a visiting leader, but that employees must feel his presence. Although college principals have many commitments, they must also be seen to be leading their colleges. College principals must be seen to be motivating, directing and guiding their subordinates (employees) towards achieving the goals of the colleges. The role of strategic leadership is crucial in ensuring the employees work towards the common goals and improve the performance of the institution. The principal of college G agreed, saying that the employees always need to see that their leaders are part of them. This principal stated that people need to be motivated and guided now and again and that is where strategic leadership role comes in. According to the principal of college G, people must not feel that they are left alone, especially during the times of changes. This principal put it as follows: *Being present at the college enables me to attend to issues timeously. As a principal, I must be seen present and visible all the time.*

According to the principal of college B, the success of strategic leadership role is witnessed through the outcomes of what employees and students achieve at the college, for example, the

performance of the students, throughput, retention and certificate rates. According to this principal, if the college principal is performing his/her strategic leadership role correctly and effectively, the throughput rate will improve significantly and the number of students who dropout will decrease drastically. One of the deputy principals from college B agreed that the performance of the organisation (college) is seen through the results of all that has been accomplished by the role-players. This deputy principal was of the opinion that if the leadership is not playing its strategic role, the performance of the institution will be disastrous. If the leadership ensures that those things are properly done, chances are great that the institution will perform well. Strategic leadership role assists in ensuring that people (leaders and followers/employees) do exactly what is expected of them and this assists in achieving good results (goals set by the organisation) in the end. *Leaders must know what they are supposed to do and do exactly what is required of them*, said one of the deputy principals from college B.

Equally, one of the deputy principals from college C regarded the strategic leadership role as one of the most important roles in the performance of the college. This deputy principal maintained that the principal must have a certain way of managing all resources and should ensure that resources are not haphazardly used. For example, when managing finances, the principal must ensure that finances are used in terms of the laws governing the public entities. Although the college principal is not directly involved with the management of funds, as an overseer of everything taking place at the college, the principal must ensure that funds are not overspent. Strategic leadership role means that the principal becomes the all-rounder who ensures that everything at the college is running smoothly. The college principal should keep on motivating and providing direction to the subordinates, so that the college can perform effectively. The deputy principal from college C maintained that the principal as a strategic leader should be an overarching leader: *As a strategic leader, the principal should also understand the socio-economic environment around the college in order to ensure that the college services it.*

Discussion

Although all participants comfortably spoke of strategic planning that public colleges undertake every year before the year ends in preparation for the following year, they appeared unfamiliar with strategic leadership, let alone the strategic leadership role. What compounds the problem is that these participants are not exposed to strategic leadership programmes or trainings.

According to Willis et al. (2022), strategic leaders are forward looking people and they set the direction, purposes and goals of their organisations. For public colleges to perform effectively and efficiently, college principals and deputy principals, as they are all strategic leaders in their own rights, need to have a clear understanding not only of strategic leadership but also of what the role of strategic leadership entails.

5.5.8 Understanding the role of the college principal (strategic leader) by the stakeholders

For all relevant stakeholders to understand the comprehensive role played by the college principal as the strategic leader, the college principal needs to find an effective way of communicating and cascading the information at all levels, including to the external stakeholders. Stakeholders are not only the staff members, students and department of education officials but stakeholders include parents, community members, suppliers, employers who provide students with work experiential training and other people who have interest in education. All these individuals will understand the role of the college principal better if the principal communicates with them effectively. People at all levels should not only know and understand what is happening at the college; the college principal should create an enabling environment so that everyone will develop confidence in the college principal. Undoubtedly, employees and other stakeholders would respect the college principal if they are clear that what he/she is doing, is for the betterment of the college.

One of the deputy principals from college D posited that it is not enough for the college principal to motivate them and/or to talk about the vision of the college. Instead, the college principal must be seen playing an active role so that other stakeholders would join him/her in an effort to move the institution towards the set objectives. *People will not double their efforts if they do not know what is the college principal doing to move the college to where it should be,* said deputy principal 1 from college D. the deputy principal 2 from college C said that for internal stakeholders to understand what is happening at the college, they need to take part in strategic planning of the college. This deputy principal maintained that people need to take part in the formulation of the strategic plan of the college at their respective campuses and units. According to deputy principal 2 from college C, internal stakeholders will not only better understand the vision and mission of the college, they will also understand the role of the college principal better. After being involved in developing the plan, everyone may own the

plan and be committed to it: *If is developed at the higher level, it remains a document for the central office.*

Deputy principal 1 from college F maintained that stakeholders at their college know that the college principal drives the strategic plan for the college. As a result, all stakeholders understand the role of the college principal, as the strategic leader in the strategic planning of the college. According to this deputy principal, at their college the college principal ensures that everyone takes part when the college develops its strategic plan. The campus managers not only oversee the process but also submit the resolutions taken at the campuses to the central office. This deputy principal maintained that working closely with all stakeholders enables everyone at the college to understand the role of the college principal. Deputy principal 1 from college F explained this as follows:

After deliberations, campus managers will bring the suggestions to the central office. The central office put together what campuses have raised and then we have a strategic planning session where all internal stakeholders are represented, including the students and the college council members who are external stakeholders. Together with the college council, we spend two to three days working on the college strategic planning. In most cases, the whole college council members attend the strategic planning and we have robust discussions. In these meetings, all units make their presentations. The college principal directs the discussions. After that, respective managers will go back and give feedback or report to people on the ground. For example, campus managers have to report to their campuses and portfolio managers have to report to their units.

The principal of college B concurred, asserting that for the stakeholders to understand what the principal is doing at the college, the principal must work closely with all stakeholders, particularly the staff and students. The college principal must involve stakeholders in the stakeholders' engagement meetings. According to this principal, stakeholder engagement meetings start from the strategic planning stage where all internal stakeholders are represented. The principal further stated that the college principal facilitates the strategic planning meetings where internal stakeholders discuss, debate issues and come up with resolutions, which they believe can assist the college to grow. As indicated above by the deputy principal 1 from college F, this principal expected that respective managers should give feedback to their constituencies after the strategic planning meeting. *The college principal must also meet with the student*

representative council (SRC) members and discuss issues that affect the students at large, said the principal of college B. In addition, this principal stressed the importance of the college principal's regular bilateral meetings with the unions. Moreover, the college principal needs to meet with the community members, political and traditional leaders in areas where the college operates. This principal was of the view that these interactions will not only strengthen the relationship between the college principal and the stakeholders, they will also assist in ensuring that the stakeholders understand the role of the college principal as a strategic leader better.

However, deputy principal 1 from college B argued that the college principal could not interact with the stakeholders so often. As a result, the college principal needs to ensure that deputy principals understand all the tasks performed by the college principal, as well as the direction that the principal wants the college to take. This deputy principal posited that the college principal must make sure that deputy principals cascade the information to their subordinates in order for the subordinates and other stakeholders to understand the college better. To ensure that deputy principals hold meetings with their subordinates, the principal must demand minutes of those meetings: *In doing so, the principal will be able to see if these meetings to take place or not.* Although this deputy supports the regular meetings between the college principal and deputy principals, deputy principal 1 from college B felt that it was not possible for the college principal to have regular meetings with all stakeholders. This deputy principal was of the view that the college principal needs to meet the entire staff not less than twice a year and the most important meeting should be held at the beginning of the year: *Staff opening meetings are vital whereby the senior management would give directive to the staff.*

Discussion

The importance of stakeholders to the success of the educational institution cannot be over-emphasised. For the effective functioning of any institution of learning, all stakeholders should be clear about the role or duties of the leader (principal) of the institution. This will enable these stakeholders to support the college principal for the achievement of the institution's goals. The leader of the institution must ensure that all relevant stakeholders understand what is happening in the institution, including his/her role, as the leader or head of the institution.

Participants in this study maintained that stakeholders are more likely to support the college principal if they feel recognised and know and understand the college principal's role in the functioning and success of the college. Obiekwe, Ikedimma, Thompson and Ogbo (2020)

suggest that success of teaching and learning relies on the involvement of all stakeholders. Thus, the college principal should maintain a good relationship with all stakeholders because a bad relationship could be detrimental to the performance of the college.

5.5.9 The effects of educational reforms on the role of the strategic leader

Mazibuko (2003) reveals that educational leaders are not always capable of providing the necessary support, especially during the time of reform. For example, they sometimes struggle to provide support like guiding, directing, leading their subordinates because of a number of factors, including information overload. Mazibuko (2003) maintains that during time of change educational leaders (principals) are busy attending meetings, briefings, workshops on new changes and fail to concentrate on their core tasks.

With regard to educational changes introduced in the TVET sector, deputy principal 1 from college I felt that these changes are being imposed on the sector and the sector is not actively involved in determining these changes. According to this deputy principal, the college principal ends up neglecting his/her duties while trying to focus on these changes and this affects the performance of the college principal negatively. *For the TVET sector is a victim of the changes, which are not well thought. Quite often, they have a negative impact on the college,* said deputy principal 1 from college I. The principal of college D maintained that because of changes principals are compelled to change how they lead their colleges. This principal stated that sometimes they struggle to implement what they have learnt in the workshops, and complained about not being given enough time to adapt to the changes. The principal of college E concurred, saying that it becomes difficult for the principal to train or workshop the subordinates on matters that principals themselves are not clear about. College principals need training and adequate time to familiarise themselves with changes before communicating them to their subordinates.

The principal of college F stated that educational reforms add more burden to colleges, especially those public colleges that are in rural areas. According to this principal, colleges in rural areas struggle financially and rely on the government subsidy to survive. The principal of college D claimed that changes cost the institution heavily, particular during the initial stages, as the senior management needs to visit campuses to explain these changes to the employees. This

was confirmed by the principal of college F who maintained that, in some instances, it takes almost the whole day visiting the campuses. This principal explained their situation as follows:

In our case, we are talking about the college with campuses that cover the distance of about 350 km. This means that driving from one campus to another is a mammoth task. Therefore, to be able to communicate properly is not that easy. It involves sleeping in hotels when trying to reach out to the people. This mines the college economically. In addition, driving these long distances is not only dangerous but it has emotional impact on the college leaders.

Discussion

When changes are unrelenting, it becomes difficult for the educational leaders (principals) to find time to familiarise themselves with new policy and adapt to such changes before communicating them to the subordinates. As a result, principals struggle to communicate such changes to the staff members because they lack understanding of them. This defeats the purpose of introducing that change or changes to the intended recipients. If the leader of the institution is unable to communicate or provide proper training to the subordinates, the latter cannot implement such changes successfully. As Willis et al. (2022) put it, for strategic leaders to perform their strategic leadership role, they should be strategically oriented. Therefore, strategic leaders should have the ability to maintain continuity and flexibility, as well as the need for change (Munga & Gakenia, 2022; Nahak & Ellitan, 2022). These needs place heavy demands on the strategic leader (college principal), who must balance them successfully and this can influence the role that the strategic leader plays in the success of the organisation. Moreover, the agents and implementers of change are often not afforded the opportunity to explain difficulties that they encounter when dealing with change to the detriment of organisational functioning.

Conclusions of the strategic leadership role

Rapid, various and complex changes taking place globally require organisations (both profit & for non-profit organisations) to rely on strategic leadership not only for these organisations to handle the challenges brought about by these changes but also to be able perform competitively. Strategic leadership seeks to form strategic thinking and lead the organisation to achieve its objectives within the constraints of available resources (cf. 1.1). Therefore, it is important to

know and understand roles that strategic leaders play and the situations that strategic leaders face during the process of performing such roles. Without understanding their roles comprehensively, these leaders cannot perform them adequately and this can have a negative effect on the performance of their organisations.

Effective strategic leaders are required because they are creative and innovative. These leaders can assist to improve the performance of the organisation, including the public college. Strategic leadership helps in guiding and utilising the human capacity around the work to ensure the maximum performance of the organisation. Without appropriate strategic leadership, organisational strategies become ineffective (Mahommed, 2017; Mubarak & Yusoff, 2019). The time for South African organisations (both private and public organisations) to implement strategic leadership for their own success and competitive advantage is long overdue. Therefore, college leaders should understand their strategic leadership roles so that their organisations can perform optimally.

The following section (cf. 5.6) focuses on the TVET sector.

5.6 THE TVET SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education, without any doubt is the catalyst for addressing the socio-economic, as well cultural development of the country. As part of the education system, the TVET sector is important in the alleviation of poverty development of economy in different nations. Mesuwini and Bomani (2021) argue that TVET colleges should play a crucial part not only in addressing challenges and ills of the communities that these college serve but also regional and national needs. Globally, the key role of TVET colleges in addressing challenges facing the youth, particularly unemployment, crime and poverty is acknowledged (cf. 1.1). TVET colleges found in both developed and developing countries provide opportunities for acquiring skills that are relevant to the job market, which assists in addressing the challenges facing the youth (cf. 1.1 & 3.4).

In South Africa, an attempt has been made to turn the TVET sector into a centre of first choice through improved funding and marketing strategies. However, this has not yielded positive results (Sithole et al., 2022). As in most other countries, public TVET colleges in South Africa struggle to establish the link or partnership with the industry (Kintu, Kitainge & Ferej, 2019). This results in TVET colleges not meeting their ultimate goal. Caves and Renold (2018) assert

that globally, there are very few countries that have strong TVET systems. Literature suggests that the TVET sector all over the world, including in South Africa, faces numerous challenges, which affect the performance of these colleges (cf. 3.6). With regard to this study, all participants acknowledged that the TVET sector is important in the country. They were of the opinion that TVET colleges can address the country's economic challenges. However, most public colleges in South Africa are still offering programmes that are not responsive to the needs and requirements of the labour market that would enable it to catch up with the ever-changing world economy. Department official 2 had reservations about the responsiveness of public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal in fulfilling their mandate. This official (department official 2) cited two shortcomings of the public colleges in the province, the outdated curriculum and ill-equipped workshops.

These shortcomings (curriculum and workshops) are very important and hold the key to the success of the TVET sector. An outdated curriculum implies that what is taught does not keep pace with the technological changes in industry. Likewise, if the workshops where students are supposed to do practical training are not well equipped, students will not cope with the new equipment and technology at the workplace.

5.6.1 The general purpose of the TVET sector

For the TVET sector to successfully carry its mandate, all those who are stakeholders should understand the necessity to promote and revitalise the sector. This understanding would enable the stakeholders to work towards the general purpose or to ensure that the sector achieves what it was introduced to achieve. Therefore, all stakeholders should not only be made aware of the general purpose of the sector but should be also constantly reminded of this purpose and provide clear guidance towards achieving this purpose. Undoubtedly, this will require strong and effective leadership that will ensure that various stakeholders are united towards achieving the goals of the sector. In terms of understanding why the TVET sector has become so popular nowadays or the general importance of its purpose, participants indicated that the sector has become crucial as the means to address the skills shortage and unemployment bedeviling the country.

For these participants, the TVET has to be restructured so that it can provide vocational training and skills required to assist young people to find employment or to become entrepreneurs and

provide employment to the others. The principal of college H regarded the TVET sector as a means to produce the workforce that the country needs, as the backbone of the economy of any country. The principal summed this up as follows: *I do not think that the country can survive without the existence of the TVET colleges.* The principal of college D concurred, arguing that the country cannot develop without the requisite skills. However, this principal cautioned that the TVET sector should not just produce skills but should focus on the scarce skills. This participant, citing the incidence that happened during the soccer World Cup that South Africa hosted in 2010, maintained that South Africa does not have enough skills; it was impossible for South Africa to erect the number of stadia required in preparation for the 2010 soccer World Cup without getting assistance from outside. *When the country was preparing for the world cup in 2010, the country was forced to look for skills from outside because it was short of skills,* said the principal of college D. Likewise, deputy principal 2 from college B said that the purpose of TVET is to bridge the gap because South Africa has a skills shortage, especially scarce skills. Therefore, the TVET sector was strengthened in order to produce people, especially youth with skills so that they could be employable and/or become self-employed.

The deputy principal 1 from college G believed that TVET colleges are supposed to train people in vocational and technical skills, instead of focusing on the academic side. This deputy principal asserted that the focus should be on skills that the industry needs - skills that have the potential of growing the economy of the country. This sentiment was also echoed by deputy principal 3 of college B who stated that TVET colleges tend to focus on academic content instead of focusing on practicals and skills. *For me, it is important for TEVT colleges to focus on practicals and produce more people with skills,* said deputy principal 3 of college B. The principal of college C concurred and insisted that the TVET sector should concentrate on providing skills, instead of focusing on academic content, since the purpose of introducing these colleges was to provide people with vocational and skills. Deputy principal 1 of college B agreed that TVET colleges were introduced to skill the people with relevant skills for industry. According to this deputy principal, the emphasis should be on vocational skills not on academic content. These skills enable graduates to work in industry. Deputy principal 2 of college A agreed that TVET colleges seem to be focusing on academic content which is not their mandate. This deputy principal explained it as follows:

For me, providing skills is the main core existence of the TVET sector. In addition, TVET has to provide a base for the learners that could not be able to go the university or university of technology. The sector should focus on those young

people who are unemployed and economic inactive, including those who did not even reach grade 12 or who failed grade and could not progress further. Therefore, the sector has to draw those individuals and provide them the opportunity.

Deputy principal 2 from college F was of the view that public TVET colleges are not doing what they are meant to do. According to this deputy principal, the emphasis should be on practical work in the workshops, instead of lecturers and students spending most of the time in the classroom. Deputy principal 3 from college E was of the view that public TVET colleges should not offer programmes that are offered by universities, for example, Human Resource Management and Marketing. This deputy principal felt that employers would prefer a university graduate when an applicant with a Diploma from the TVET college and an applicant with a university qualification compete for the same job that requires the same qualification, for example, Human Resource Management: *I think colleges should focus on practicals. That is why workshops are important for college students.* Deputy principal 1 of college I maintained that TVET colleges should provide quality vocational training that responds to the skills deficit of the country. This deputy principal stated that TVET colleges are regarded as the chief vehicles for addressing the skills deficit. However, this deputy principal is of the view that public TVET colleges are not doing what they are supposed to do, which is providing the necessary skills to the young people.

Discussion

The central focus for TVET sector is or should be vocational training. Therefore, TVET colleges should focus on providing skills, especially scarce skills to the youth of the country. Currently, TVET students spend a lot of time in the classroom, instead of spending time in the workshop. This defeats the whole purpose of the TVET sector, which is to provide the youth with the necessary skills so that they can be employed by the labour market or employ themselves and provide employment to the others as entrepreneurs (RSA, 2013).

This purpose can only be realised if those who are tasked to ensure that TVET colleges work towards this goal clearly understand the reason why the sector was introduced and its importance to the economy and society. For this to happen, public colleges need to have strong leaders, particularly strong strategic leaders who will always provide guidance to all stakeholders.

5.6.1.1 TVET sector and the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa

The TVET sector is considered to be a key solution to the unemployment crisis which affects young people globally, including South Africa (cf. 1.1; 1.2; 3.4; 3.4.1; 3.5.2). However, South African TVET colleges need to be well prepared to address youth unemployment and other challenges in the country. All participants in this study were of the view that public TVET colleges do not address unemployment properly. These participants felt that public colleges are not focusing on vocational training vigorously. Participants blamed the DHET for spending funds on the ministerial programmes, most of which are not vocational in nature. Human Resource Management, Marketing, Public Relations and Public Management are some of the ministerial programmes, which are funded. The mere fact that students doing these subjects qualify for financial assistance (bursaries) at the expense of practical skills, suggests that these subjects are more important than the latter.

Department official 2 felt that funding forces public colleges to enrol students in non-vocational programmes. This official was of the view that focusing on the ministerial programmes like Human Resource Management and Public Management, do not solve the problem of unemployment; instead they increase the number of unemployed graduates. Deputy principal 3 from college E was also of the view that public colleges are not doing justice by offering courses like Human Resource Management and Marketing, not only because they are vocational in nature but also because chances of getting employment after graduating are minimal. This deputy principal believed that the college principals should decide on programme offerings after they have deliberated with their constituencies (stakeholders), instead of the department deciding what colleges should offer. Deputy principal 2 from college D concurred and stated that college principals know their environments better than the department. Therefore, college principals, considering the uniqueness of their environments, should introduce programmes that will assist the students to find employment or become self-employed. *College principals need to tell the department what they want to offer, not the visa versa*, said deputy principal 3 from college E. Deputy principal 3 from college G concurred, stating that the college principals, as the leaders of their respective colleges exert influence on the reviewing of the curriculum. This does not necessarily mean that college principals must drive the review of the curriculum but they should use the services of experts from their colleges to drive the review of the curriculum.

Deputy principal 2 from college A was also of the view that public colleges will not be able to address unemployment if they fail to focus squarely on the skills that are lacking in the country. The principal of college F concurred and suggested that there is a need for the DHET to review its funding model and invest more money in vocational subjects, instead of pumping more funds into the ministerial programmes, most of which are not vocational in nature. In support, deputy principal 2 from college G has the following to say:

When we talk about skills, we mean that a person is able to perform practical work using his or her hands. I do not think that public colleges will manage to address the issue of unemployment because funds are allocated to the ministerial programmes where this too much theory. What I mean here is that the department is spending more money supporting the theoretical part, instead of supporting the practical part, I mean supporting skills.

These sentiments were also shared by deputy principal 1 from college F, who argued that students spend most of the time in the classroom doing academic work when they should spend more time at the workshop doing practical work. Clearly, students are not exposed to the practical work as they should be. With more workshop experience, students would acquire the necessary skills so that they are absorbed by industries and/or establish their own small companies. Likewise, deputy principal 2 from college A doubted whether pumping money into the ministerial programmes ensures that the unemployment problem is addressed in South Africa. This deputy principal explained this as follows:

I doubt if funding the ministerial programmes can address the issue of unemployment. Really, I do not think that the department is on the right direction. We all know that the main reason for the existence of the TVET sector is to provide skills. The TVET sector is all about the skills that are lacking in the country. For me, the department must spend more money on vocational programmes, so that TVET colleges can be responsive to the needs and requirements of the labour market and minimise the high unemployment rate in this country.

Participants maintained that public TVET colleges are required to apply for funding from the SETAs in order to provide vocational training (short courses) to the students. Deputy principal 1 from college F proposed that funding for skills should come from the department, instead of

applying from the SETAs. This deputy principal was of the view that skills and occupational programmes should be funded like the ministerial programmes. Deputy principal 3 from college B also felt that TVET colleges are not doing justice in terms of producing the required skills because of the funding model, which focuses on the ministerial programmes, instead of pumping funds to occupational and vocational programmes. This deputy principal also questioned the rationale behind putting more funds into the ministerial programmes, instead of focusing on skills and occupational programmes. According to deputy principal 3 from college B, public colleges depend on the funding from the SETAs, as well from other donors for occupational programmes. This deputy principal maintained that colleges have to apply for funding from the SETAs but that it is difficult to get funding from these organisations. What compounds the problem is that it is not stipulated how much SETAs must give to a particular college every year. Consequently, public colleges are at the mercy of the SETAs. TVET colleges struggle to address the issue of unemployment and this has dire ramifications in the end. Deputy principal 3 from college B put it as follows:

Colleges have to apply for funding from the SETAs and sometimes they are turned down by the SETAs. Unlike the ministerial programmes, where we know that the college is going to get so much based on the enrolment of that particular year. We know that once the college has submitted its strategic plan for the following year, for how much the college qualifies. Personally, I think the model for funding the occupation programmes should be reviewed because it has an impact on ensuring that colleges focus on occupational programmes.

Deputy principal of college B agreed and stated that most students doing the ministerial programmes at public colleges are bursary beneficiaries (recipients). Most of the students doing ministerial programmes are funded by the DHET and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is responsible for administering and managing these funds on behalf of the department. However, students doing skills and occupational programmes do not receive this financial assistance. This deputy principal further stated that because colleges rely on the funding from the SETAs for skills and occupational programmes, there is no guarantee that a particular programme will take place at a particular time.

Discussion

Providing the youth with the necessary skills, especially scarce skills, can make these young people employable and consequently assist in minimising high unemployment in the country. The success of the public colleges in assisting the country turn around its economy depends on the policymakers as well as the college leaders (college principals) as they drive the policies. Thus, strong and effective strategic leaders are needed to deal with the challenges faced by the sector and subsequently those faced by the labour market and the country as a whole.

5.6.2 The role of the industry in the TVET sector

Certainly, industries (companies/employers) are also major stakeholders in the TVET sector. The role industry plays or should play cannot be over-emphasised because without partnership between the college and industry, colleges alone cannot be successful. Therefore, public colleges should identify and approach industries or companies for partnerships. However, studies show that the majority of industries prefer to work with private colleges compared to the public colleges (cf. 1.2.2). All participants were of the opinion that industry has a crucial role if the TVET sector has to succeed. The principal of college D stated that, as a college, they have established a number of partnerships with industries or companies not only in the local area but also far afield. According to this principal, these industries do not only inform the college what skills they (industries) require but they also caution the college about the gaps that students have when they are hired. Deputy principal 1 from college B also maintained that colleges need to communicate with companies, especially those which are nearby to find out what skills they require and align their curriculum to the needs of those companies.

Although deputy principal 1 from college I agreed with this viewpoint, this deputy principal felt that it was not easy to align the curriculum with the needs of the industries because public colleges have limited control over their curricula. As a result, the majority of public colleges in the country are severely restricted, in terms of making their programmes responsive to what industries around them require. Therefore, under such circumstances, the public colleges can inform the companies what programmes colleges offer and ask the companies to identify and fill the gaps so that the programmes can add value to them (companies). The principal of college G concurred, adding that it would only be possible for public college to address the needs of industry if industries in the surrounding areas are involved in the development of the curricula.

This principal felt that industries in the local areas should adopt colleges and provide the necessary support to the adopted colleges. For example, industry may assist public colleges, especially those who are in dire need of resources by providing these colleges with updated equipment for their dilapidated workshops. In other words, companies can help in ensuring that public colleges are well-equipped so that they are enabled to provide relevant skills to the students. The principal of college explained: *When a college has been adopted by an industry, it becomes easy for the college to place students for experiential training, as well as the lecturers for work exposure.* The challenge with the industries adopting colleges, however, is that the struggling public colleges are located in remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal where there are no or few industries to forge these partnerships with. As a result, forming partnership with industries, let alone industries adopting colleges is a mammoth task.

It is, however, important for public colleges to form a close relationship with companies. For example, colleges need to invite industries to come and talk to the students about the new developments and new changes taking place, as well as the new skills that companies require. Deputy principal 3 from college D was of the view that colleges should always keep in touch with the industry in order to know what is required by the market at a particular time because technology is ever changing. Therefore, working closely with industries will enable colleges to adjust their programmes according to the needs of the industries and assist with the uptake of students for internship. Thus, deputy principal 3 of college G stressed the importance of partnership between colleges and industries. This deputy principal put it as follows:

For me, the importance of partnership cannot be over-emphasised. I am saying this because students need industries to do their internships before getting their diplomas. Remember, students doing Report 191 or NATED programmes should do eighteen months theory and another eighteen months practical in order to qualify for a diploma. Therefore, to have partnerships with industries, colleges are assisting the students to get in-service training at these companies in order for these students to qualify or obtain their diplomas after they have completed their eighteen months training.

Discussion

Undoubtedly, industry is important to the TVET sector not only because it provides employment to TVET graduates but also because it provides students with experiential training and

internship before students graduate. It is, therefore, important for public colleges to form partnerships with the industries, especially in the surrounding areas.

Public colleges should ensure that they respond to the expectations of industries by providing what the labour market requires. Therefore, they must find out from industries which skills are required in order for the colleges to provide relevant skills. Without regular interaction between colleges and industries, as well as other relevant organisations, colleges may end up training students who will not be absorbed after they have graduated. Regular interactions may also assist whereby industries can update colleges on the new developments, for example, new machines or technology used by these industries so that colleges keep pace with such changes.

5.6.2.1 Involvement of the industry in curricula development of the public colleges

All participants were of the view that involving the industry in the development of the curricula of the public college can assist the college to customise the programmes according to the actual needs of the industry and ensure that the students find employment after completing their studies. Deputy principal 1 from college A believed that if industry could be involved in curriculum development, colleges can benefit as industries could bring their experts in specific fields to work with public colleges. The labour market's involvement can benefit curricula immensely and this in the long-run can assist graduates to complete globally after acquiring the relevant skills. Deputy principal 3 from college B also believes that industry involvement in curriculum development in the TVET sector is very important. Involving experts from industries in curriculum development will facilitate in the placement of students and lecturers so that they both get exposed to what is happening in the industry. Deputy principal 3 from college said:

For me, lecturers should know what industry is doing, so that when they teach, they teach what the industry requires. Therefore, lecturers need to visit companies periodically to learn what is happening in the industry. I mean lecturers should understand the new changes that are brought by technology in the workplace so that what they teach is relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Deputy principal A from college C believed that involving industry in curriculum development can ensure that industries assist college in keeping up with the technological changes. As a

result, colleges will not lag behind the new technology. Deputy principal from college F felt that the industry should be actively involved in designing the curriculum, so that industry can inform colleges what they require from the students. This deputy principal is of the view that industry involvement in the development of curricula can assist in ensuring that the curriculum is job-specific, instead of being academic driven. This deputy principal said:

I think industries can only know what TVET is about if they are actively involved in the development of the curriculum. So far, very few are involved and there is not synergy between what is the TVET sector is doing and what the labour market actually wants.

The principals of college C and D maintained that there is a need for the industry to be part of curriculum design at public colleges and this would imply that experts from industries become part or members of the academic board, which deals with curriculum matters. The principal of college D asserted that if the experts from industries are part of the academic board, they will assist colleges to identify and close the gaps in the curriculum. The principal of college C agreed that involving experts from industries in the academic boards would be beneficial to colleges because these experts could advise colleges which programmes should be offered and which programmes should be phased out.

Deputy principal 2 from college D asserted that the college principal as a strategic leader should ensure that industries or experts from industries are involved in the curriculum development of the college. According to this deputy, the college should not only interact and convince the experts from industries to be part of the academic board but should also convince the internal members of the academic board about the importance of having industries involved in the curriculum development. According to deputy principal 1 from college E, college E has already started involving industries in curriculum development. This deputy principal maintained that the college management has formed a team consisting of college staff members, college council members and some members from the local businesses (companies). Together, they look at the programmes offered by the college against what the local businesses want in order to align the two. Therefore, the two parties, the college and industry, work collaboratively in deciding which programmes to keep or phase out and which programmes are to be introduced based on the needs of the industry. Deputy principal 2 from college A felt that involving industry in curriculum development is the path that all public colleges should follow. This deputy principal explained it as follows:

We always claim that our colleges respond to what the labour market needs, but I do not think we are. The question then, is how do we develop the curriculum in the absence of the industry? How do we not what exactly do industries need? Personally, I think industries must be actively involved in the curriculum development. Involving industries or companies in the curriculum development will ensure that the industry advises on how we should structure our curriculum in order to meet their needs. If industries are part of the academic board where curriculum issues are discussed, colleges will know on which skills they should focus most, instead of teaching programmes that colleges assume the industry requires. I think we also need to use the expertise of the people from industries. I mean, people from industries should teach our students at certain intervals. They can also workshop our lecturers and our lecturers can also go to the labour market to get acquainted with the new technological developments.

Discussion

TVET colleges prepare students for industry. It is, therefore, important for industry to inform TVET colleges of what type of students they require and to constantly ascertain if colleges are abreast with the new developments in order to ensure that they produce the right students all the time. In other words, industry should influence what colleges should teach and produce instead of the colleges deciding what to produce for industry. Therefore, industries should be actively involved in designing the curriculum. This will be made possible if public colleges have visionary leaders.

Undoubtedly, if colleges work collaboratively with industry, chances of producing redundant students will be minimised. Terblanche and Bitzer (2018) reveal in their findings that the involvement of industry in developing the TVET curriculum can improve the relationship between the TVET sector and companies because this relationship can address the expectations and requirements of the labour market.

5.6.3 Challenges faced by the TVET colleges in South Africa

Although the TVET sector is regarded as the solution to socio-economic problems faced by the country, the TVET sector itself is faced by numerous challenges globally (cf. 3.4.3). These

challenges are more pronounced in developing countries. The TVET sector can only address the national economy of developing countries, including South Africa if challenges facing TVET colleges, especially public colleges, are adequately addressed. For public colleges to address current challenges, they should be led by strategic leaders.

However, all participants in this study regard funding, shortage of resources and accommodation for students as the main challenges facing their respective colleges. Although there are many challenges facing public colleges in the country, this study focused on the mismatch between what these colleges offer and what industry requires, funding for these public colleges, poor resources and lack of accommodation for students studying at the public TVET colleges. This does not necessarily mean that other challenges were trivialised but discussions focused on the highlighted challenges. The researcher was persuaded that these are main challenges, since their impact has a bearing on the performance of the student in the classroom. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the college principals, as the strategic leaders to ensure that challenges facing public colleges are not only addressed early and immediately, but also to ensure that these challenges are addressed meticulously. However, this does not mean that college principals would be able to address these challenges, but they should approach and engage relevant people to assist in addressing these challenges. Sithole (2019) points to the weak management structures in public TVET colleges as one of the contributory factors to the challenges that these colleges face in most countries, especially in South Africa.

5.6.3.1 Funding for public TVET colleges in South Africa

Ayuk and Koma (2019) regard funding as the provision of the financial resources that are required to pay for the input of effective learning delivery in higher education institutions. The funding model for the TVET sector is prescribed in terms of the National Norms and Standards for Funding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NNSF–TVET). The NNSF–TVET uses a formula to calculate funding, which considers a number of service delivery issues (RSA, 2019). Lack of sufficient funding is a major challenge facing higher education institutions globally, including South Africa (cf. 3.3.2.4; 3.5.3.2). According to the participants in this study, funding is among the challenges faced by public colleges countrywide. According to the participants, lack of sufficient funding affects the performance of the public colleges negatively. The principal of college F maintained that the problem with funding is that funding is controlled by the DHET at a national level. Thus, public colleges in country are at the mercy of the

department. The principal of college G concurred, saying that every year the college struggles to meet its obligations because of limited funds. The principal of college G explained: *We rely on funding from the department and this drives our activities. We struggle to make the ends meet.*

The principal of college B maintained that funding has been a contentious issue since public colleges were merged. The principal of college E agreed and asserted that colleges that are situated in urban areas are better off because advantaged institutions were among them before they were merged. Public colleges that are situated in the rural areas struggle because most were previously disadvantaged. As a result, when the merger took place, some public colleges were relatively better financially, and this reduced dependence on the department. Those colleges in remote areas are dominated by the previously disadvantaged institutions, which were financially poor. Colleges in rural areas depend solely on the grant from the department. According to deputy principal 3 from college E, what compounds the problem is that the department is not consistent when giving funds to public colleges. Likewise, deputy principal 2 from college D was of the view that the DHET does not always give enough funds to the public colleges, and this affects their performance.

The department always speaks of post-provisioning norms but colleges do not get enough funds from the department all the times. For me, colleges need enough funds from the department in order for them to be able to cover all programmes that they offer. What happens sometimes is that when colleges submit their enrolment numbers to the department for a particular period, the department does not fund the colleges as per student numbers submitted to them.

The principal of college B was of the view that the funding model for TVET colleges in South Africa hinders public colleges from introducing new and more innovative programmes. Deputy principal 3 from college F concurred, arguing that ministerial programmes, most of which are not occupational, are receiving funds at the expense of skills and occupational programmes suggests that the funding model is skewed. All participants felt that the department must pour money into occupational programmes, instead of relying on the SETAs for funding the occupational programmes. *I do not understand why occupational programmes have to be funded by the SETAs, instead of being funded by the department,* said deputy principal 1 from college I. Deputy principal C of college E blamed the funding model not only for the poor performance of many colleges, but also for student dropout. Deputy principal C from college E argued that public colleges are unable to perform optimally because of financial constraints, since they rely

on the funding from the department and most do not have another source of income. On the other hand, students who have failed do not qualify for financial assistance when repeating. As a result, the majority of the students who fail during their first attempt are unable to repeat because of financial challenges and end up dropping out.

According to the principal of college D, funding of TVET colleges is administered in four ways: a department subsidy that goes directly to the colleges; the Department of Higher Education and Training/National Student Financial Aid Scheme (DHET/NSFAS) funds, which cover tuition and allowances (both accommodation & transport) for bursary beneficiaries; the SETAs, and the National Skills Fund (NSF). The principal of college B concurred, adding that for public colleges to access the funds from the SETAs and NSF, colleges have to undergo a long strenuous process. For example, colleges have to provide evidence that they have entered into an agreement with companies, which will provide experiential training to the students as well as the terms of agreement (memorandum of understanding). Generally, most students enrolled at TVET colleges come from underprivileged homes with no or low income and poor level of education. As a result, these students depend entirely on the financial assistance from DHET/NSFAS bursaries. NSFAS is the government agency responsible for disbursing bursaries to the students who have been approved for financial assistance. The principal of college G warns that DHET sometimes felt offended when people refer to NSFAS bursaries because these are offered by the department; NSFAS only does the administration for the department. The principal of college E concurred, adding that the department does not feel happy if these bursaries are called NSFAS bursaries. The principal of college E explained this as follows:

The department does not take it nicely if people call these bursaries NSFAS bursaries because it feels that people are giving credit to NSFAS, not them (department). You must remember that NSFAS is just responsible for giving out monies to the colleges and students, on behalf of the department. NSFAS does not have money, but NSFAS gets the money from the department so that NSFAS can distribute the money to the colleges and students. DHET relies on NSFAS for disbursing the money because NSFAS has expertise, which the department does not have.

Although all participants acknowledge the importance of the role of DHET/NSFAS bursaries in assisting students coming from disadvantaged families, they were all of the view that this funding is insufficient. Apart from that, participants complained that it takes time for NSFAS to

distribute allowances (accommodation and transport) to the bursary beneficiaries. Deputy principal 3 of college E maintained that by the time allowances are disbursed some students have already left the college (dropped out) because they could not pay property owners for rental and/or afford the transport fares. Deputy principal 1 from the college A confirmed this, adding that every year a number of students drop out because NSFAS delays paying allowances on time to the bursary beneficiaries. The principal of college B concurred, adding that the problem is that NSFAS deals with the students directly when it comes to the payment of allowances. The principal of college F agreed that the manner in which allowances are paid to the students is problematic. This principal put it as follows:

We always become aware that there is a problem with the payment of allowances when students have started protesting, saying that they have not received their allowances and they are being evicted by their property owners. What I mean is that students only come to us when they are experiencing some challenges with their allowances. What is disturbing is that NSFAS always blames colleges when approached by the students.

Deputy principal 1 from college G complained about the manner in which bursary rules and guidelines for the administration and management of the DHET/TVET college bursary scheme is handled. According to the deputy principal 1 from college G, since the inception of bursaries for the public TVET colleges, rules and guidelines are reviewed annually. This deputy principal was of the view that reviewing bursary rules and guidelines annually is not only time consuming, as the department always asks input from the colleges, but it also becomes difficult for colleges to understand and master these rules and guidelines. Deputy principal 1 from college F maintained that it would have been better if the department reviews the rules and guidelines after two or three years, as this would enable colleges to know and understand what is expected of them.

I think the department should give colleges enough time not only to understand these rules and guidelines, but also to identify gaps so that colleges could be able to process bursaries without any hiccups. Really, I do not understand why the department is doing this. It is not fair to the colleges because they are expected to understand these rules and guidelines well. The following year, there are new things added.

Discussion

The funding of TVET colleges in the country has been one of the main challenges over the years. Funding has a major effect on the performance of the college. For example, insufficient funds can lead into shortage of resources, as colleges cannot purchase the necessary resources because they do not have enough funds. This can affect the provision of teaching and learning, resulting in students failing and dropping out in the end. This further reduces funding, since students who fail to progress to the next level do not qualify for financial assistance (bursary).

Insufficient funding at the public colleges suggests that college principals, together with other senior managers should look to other avenues for funding public TVET college students. Since most students enrolled at public colleges come from disadvantaged communities, public colleges can only rely on private donors, especially private sector, to survive because these students are unable to pay their tuition if they do not qualify for DHET/NSFAS financial assistance. It is obvious from the responses of the participants that funding for public colleges in South Africa is inadequate. Therefore, a need exists for the department to review the funding model and improve the funding of public colleges.

5.6.3.2 Shortage of resources at public TVET colleges

Educational changes like any other activities taking place at the college can only be implemented successfully where there are sufficient and appropriate resources to address requirements and special needs of the institution. Unfortunately, previously disadvantaged public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal do not have enough resources and this does not only hinder the implementation of educational changes but also hampers the general performance of these colleges. Participants viewed resource shortages as a major challenge for all public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, in particular.

Participants stated that in most public colleges, resources are scarce and this makes it difficult for colleges to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place as required. Undoubtedly, without sufficient resources, public colleges struggle to achieve their visions and aims. Deputy principal 1 from college H maintained that a shortage of resources compromises all activities taking place at the college, especially teaching and learning. All those who participated in this

project agreed that public colleges can only perform successfully if these organisations have adequate and, mostly importantly, appropriate resources.

One of the department officials, however, maintained that public colleges situated in the rural areas are worse off than their counterparts in the urban areas when it comes to the shortage of resources. The department official explained the issue of resources as follows:

I have been to all public colleges in this province (KwaZulu-Natal) and I know which colleges are really struggling when it comes to the availability of resources. Believe me, in most cases, colleges in rural areas do not have the necessary resources. Here, I am talking about basic things, like simulation rooms, well-equipped classrooms to enable effective teaching and learning to take place at the college. However, I am not suggesting that public colleges that are in urban areas are not struggling; they are also struggling but they are better than colleges that are in rural areas.

The principal of college F maintained that public colleges in rural areas struggle to implement educational changes because they do not have the necessary resources. Deputy principal 1 from college I shared the same view. According to the principal of college D, the shortage of resources cannot be divorced from the issue of funding. This principal argued that limited or insufficient funds result in the shortage of resources. Deputy principal 2 from college C concurred, adding that public colleges that have financial muscle are able to buy the required resources. On the other hand, those colleges that have financial challenges struggle to purchase the necessary resources and this results in these colleges struggling to meet their obligations. Deputy principal 1 from college E confirmed, stating some campuses at their college have dilapidated workshops and the college is unable to buy new equipment because of financial constraints. Likewise, deputy principal 1 from college G shared the same sentiments. This deputy principal maintained that there are workshops that have not been used for years because the college cannot afford the required facilities. This deputy principal explained:

We (college G) have workshops and salons that the college has been unable to use for years because of financial constraints. Really, I do not see the college using it in the near future, unless we get assistance from somewhere or someone. The question is where we can get this assistance because the private sector does

not want to come to the party. The department is also unwilling to listen to our plea.

Discussion

Public colleges can meet their set goals and objectives if they have adequate and appropriate resources that match those goals. Surely no activity can be successfully implemented without adequate resources. Therefore, public colleges should not be expected to deliver more with the limited resources. Instead, ways and means should be created to ensure that colleges have enough resources to perform optimally.

The shortage of resources raised by the participants needs to be addressed sooner than later. As a result, college principals as strategic leaders must make sure that there are not only sufficient resources at their respective colleges but also that these resources are appropriate for effective and efficient service delivery. The staff always rely on their leaders to provide them with the necessary and appropriate resources, so that they can execute tasks effectively.

5.6.3.3 Accommodation for students at public TVET colleges

Accommodation for students studying at institutions of higher learning is also a major challenge facing almost all institutions of higher learning, including public TVET colleges in South Africa (cf. 3.3.2.5). Undoubtedly, as the number of students who want to enter the higher learning institutions increases, the demand of students' accommodation also increases. What compounds the problem is that most students studying at higher education institutions, including public colleges, come from far to further their studies and require accommodation. However, the problem of accommodation is not unique to higher education institutions in South Africa; it is experienced by students studying at tertiary institutions globally, especially in developing countries.

All participants in this study regarded accommodation for students at the public TVET colleges as among the major challenges facing public colleges. According to these participants, all 50 public colleges in the country are struggling to accommodate their students. The principal of college E asserted that college principals have raised the issue of students' accommodation with their professional organisation, the South African College Principals' Organisation (SACPO),

on numerous occasions. The principal of college D added that even the Ministry of the DHET is aware of the problem that public colleges face when it comes to student accommodation. Department official 1 also agreed that public colleges do not have residences where students could be accommodated. According to this official, the department acknowledges these challenges, but there is very little that the department can do to assist colleges address this problem. Department official 1 explained the issue of accommodation as follows:

I do not think that there is anything that the department can do because we are not talking about a few colleges. In my understanding, all public colleges in South Africa are experiencing the same problem. Really, I do not know any college in the country that does not have a problem when it comes the students' residences. Here, I am talking about all fifty public colleges in the country. There is no way that the department can be able to assist these colleges. Building hostels for TVET college students can cost billions of rands and the department does not have that money. Remember, universities are also having the same problem. They also do not have enough residences to accommodate their students but they are better compared to TVET colleges.

Likewise, the principal of college G was of the view that there is not much that the department can do to assist colleges in addressing the issue of students' accommodation. Students coming far from these colleges are forced to look for private accommodation because most public colleges do not have enough residences for the students. Generally, private accommodation, which is suitable for students is expensive and for students to stay in private accommodation, they would require another source of income. Deputy principal 2 of college I stated that students who are renting private accommodation struggle. This deputy principal stated this as follows: *Private accommodations are expensive and students residing in these accommodations struggle to make ends meet.* The principal of college C also agreed, saying that although the department has increased the allowances for accommodation paid through NSFAS, the money allocated for the students is still not enough. Deputy principal 3 from college D agreed that the money allocated for accommodation for TVET college students is not enough. According to this deputy principal, once the student has paid the rent, the student does not have enough money to buy grocery and any other necessities before the next allowance. Deputy principal 3 from college D explained the situation of the students in private accommodation as follows:

You must remember these students are getting financial assistance from the department through NSFAS because their parents cannot afford to pay for their studies. As a result, their parents cannot even afford to top-up on what NSFAS has paid as allowances. Really, life is difficult for students who are staying at these private accommodations.

The principal of college G stated that what compounds the problem is that the majority of the students do not want to study at public colleges that are closer to their respective homes. Instead, students prefer to study at institutions that are far from their homes. According to this principal, students, especially those who come from rural areas want to further their studies in cities. Deputy principal 1 from college H confirmed this and stated that the number of the local students at their college is far less than the number of students coming from other places. Deputy principal 2 from college G maintained that the majority of the students at their college hail from other provinces. Deputy principal 2 from college G put it as follows: *Unfortunately, we cannot chase these students away because there is no guarantee that local students will come to the college to register. So, we have no option.* Deputy principal 1 from college A stated that the challenge for the college starts when the students in private accommodation do not get their allowances from NSFAS on time. Consequently, students start protesting, demanding their allowances, especially accommodation allowances. Deputy principal 3 from college B concurred that frequently NSFAS takes too long to pay allowances to the bursary beneficiaries. Deputy principal 1 from college I blamed NSFAS, saying that it was better when colleges were managing and processing the payment of student allowances. The principal of college H contended that there is a great need for the department to change the manner in which bursaries are handled: *Otherwise, colleges will always have the problem of student protests if we continue handling bursaries in this fashion. For me, there was no problem when colleges were paying allowances.*

Although deputy principal 3 from college G acknowledged that accommodation was a major challenge confronting public colleges in South Africa, this deputy principal felt that some students benefit from this state of affairs. According to this deputy principal, what they have observed at their college is that the majority do not want to stay at the college residence because NSFAS pays the accommodation allowance straight to the college account for students in college residence. Conversely, the accommodation allowance is paid directly to the student if the student is in private accommodation. As a result, students opt for cheaper accommodation

that, in most cases, have unfavourable conditions for studying in order to pay little rent and keep the rest of the money for other necessities.

Discussion

The challenge of accommodation for students studying at institutions of higher learning is a common problem, which cannot be resolved by the DHET and colleges alone. Therefore, other role-players, especially the private sector, should work hand in hand with the department, as well as public colleges in finding the solution. Public colleges have dire need of student accommodation and private accommodation seems to be a temporary solution. A lasting solution is required for students to reduce dropout or exploitation by unscrupulous property owners.

While the problem of shortage of accommodation for students studying at institutions of higher learning, especially public colleges, has not been resolved, public colleges should assist students find suitable and reliable private accommodation that would not hinder them from learning. Currently, students who find themselves without accommodation or funds for accommodation struggle to acquire assistance from their institutions (cf. 3.3.2.5).

5.6.3.4 Forging partnerships with organisations

As already argued, public TVET colleges need a solid partnership with industry for the benefit of both parties. A strong partnership can address the problem of mismatch between what colleges offer and what the industry requires, and students produced by these colleges can be absorbed into the workplace quickly after graduating (cf. 3.5.3.3). Therefore, public colleges, under the leadership of their principals who are supposed to demonstrate strategic leadership, should ensure that they forge the linkages or partnerships with organisations or companies that could be prospective employers to their students. Regular interactions between companies and public colleges are important as these interactions will help both parties to understand each other better. Consequently, colleges will be kept informed of the new developments in the industry, since technology is ever-changing. Moreover, colleges will be assured that they are still on the right track with their programmes and/or when to adjust or overhaul the programme/s.

Partnerships between public TVET colleges and companies (employers) are crucial because this can assist public colleges to align programmes that they offer with what labour wants and this can ensure that the transition of the students from the college to the workplace is coordinated smoothly. According to the participants, it is important that public TVET colleges should form strong partnerships with companies or organisations in order to ensure that their students get experiential training and internship through these companies and subsequently find employment after they have completed their studies. However, participants maintained that it was not always easy to forge partnerships with companies. The principal of college G stated that the majority of employers are reluctant to work with public colleges, especially after the introduction of the NCV programme in 2007. Deputy principal 1 of college I concurred, adding that most employers are sceptical about the NCV programme and still prefer the NATED (Report 191) students. As a result, forming partnerships with companies, especially for the work-integrated learning (WIL) for the NCV students, is not that easy, since some employers do not understand the NCV programme. The principal of college H said: *We struggle to convince companies to accept our NCV students. I am sure it will take time for these employers to understand this programme (NCV).*

According to the principal of college B, the gap between TVET colleges and companies still exists and colleges need to persuade and convince companies (employers) to work collaboratively to address unemployment and poor socio-economic development. Deputy principal 2 from college A was of the view that strong partnerships will ensure that public colleges do not produce redundant students (students who are unable to find employment after graduating). Deputy principal 2 from college A said: *In fact, even before the students complete their studies, the industry should assist the students with the work-integrated learning (WIL).* The principal of college D suggested that colleges should not only focus on companies (industries) when thinking of partnerships, but must also approach public entities, as these entities can also accommodate students from public colleges. Deputy principal 2 from college E supported this, saying that public institutions always complain that public colleges do not approach them for the placement of the students. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the college principals or those who are assigned to forge partnerships with organisations to approach the public institutions and formalise partnerships with them, instead of focusing solely on the private sector.

Deputy principal 1 of college A was of the opinion that the reason why public colleges are struggling when it comes to partnerships is that colleges do not do their best when dealing with industries. For example, a number of colleges in KwaZulu-Natal send junior people who lack negotiation skills to talk to the employers. This deputy principal felt that for companies (employers) to respond positively when approached for partnerships, college principals or senior personnel with the necessary negotiation skills need to negotiate on behalf of the colleges. Deputy principal 1 from college A put it as follows:

How do you send someone junior to talk about partnership with the manager of the big companies? Surely, the company will not take that person seriously. For me, college principals must sit around the table with company bosses and talk about these partnerships, if they are serious about these partnerships. Otherwise, colleges will always struggle to get partnerships. Please note that this is my personal view and some people may think differently.

Discussion

Widiastuti et al. (2021) state that establishing, maintaining and strengthening partnerships between TVET institutions and industry and/or other relevant organisations for the sake of assisting students to get employment, can assist in minimising the skills gap. Although many TVET colleges manage to establish such partnerships, colleges struggle to maintain these partnerships, and this is a major challenge that public colleges need to overcome. This confirms what most participants maintained in the study, that their respective colleges, in most cases, struggle to form partnerships with organisations (companies). For any partnership to be successful, that partnership should be based on mutual benefits for both partners. Companies will be willing to form partnerships with public colleges if the latter grasp the benefits of collaboration with these colleges.

The management of the college under the leadership of the college principal, as a strategic leader, should develop strategies for strengthening partnerships with organisations or companies for the benefit of the college, including the students. Companies will more likely be willing to form partnerships with public colleges if they are involved in designing the curriculum or programmes to be taught at the college. In addition, for the college to gain the support of industry, negotiation skills are required on the part of the principal or the person who is appointed to negotiate on behalf of the college.

5.6.4 Assistance offered by the DHET to TVET colleges

The role of the DHET as the employer is to oversee that institutions of higher learning, including public TVET colleges, run smoothly without any hindrances. The department also provides financial and professional support, conducts examination, assessments and issues certifications for the programmes that these colleges offer (Matenda, 2019). Apart from this, the DHET also introduces new changes in the sector and formulates policies, processes and procedures that are implemented by colleges. Therefore, for college leaders to monitor and manage the implementation of new changes and policies in their respective colleges, the department should provide training and support to these college leaders. The department should also support the college principals and senior management during the implementation process, instead of leaving college principals on their own.

Participants in this study maintained that the department barely supports them when new changes or policies have to be implemented. Deputy principal 1 from college E felt that department officials are not approachable and/or accessible. The role which is played or should be played by the department officials during the time of change is crucial, because college leaders rely on these officials when they experience challenges at their respective colleges. Deputy principal 2 from college C also felt that the department officials were not visible, especially when public colleges are experiencing challenges. Deputy principal 1 from college B expressed the same sentiments, that the officials need to be on the ground and interact with colleges to assist in addressing the challenges faced by the college at any particular time. This deputy principal also complained about the manner in which department officials communicated with colleges:

The communication between the national and regional departments is also not good. Sometimes, you find the national department asking for something and a few days down the line the regional office (KwaZulu-Natal regional office) asks for the same information. This suggests that these two departments (national and regional) do not communicate with each other. I think I must also add that they (department officials) take too long to respond when colleges request for information and this makes you look bad to your subordinates because they need this information.

Although deputy principal 1 from college F concurred that the manner in which the department (both the national and regional departments) communicates with colleges is poor, this deputy principal felt that the problem is bigger than that. According to this deputy principal, there is no cohesion even among different units (sections) at the national level: *You cannot have two different units within the same department asking for the same information in different formats. This tells you that there is something wrong.* Deputy principal 1 from college D is of the view that one of the reasons department officials have a problem with communication, especially at the regional office (KwaZulu-Natal), is that they are understaffed. As a result, they are overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to deal with. This deputy principal doubts if there is anything tangible that the regional office can assist public colleges with. Likewise, the principal of college F also doubts that the department, in general, and the regional office, in particular, can assist colleges. According to this principal, department officials have a tendency of not listening to college principals and department officials are without insight into challenges facing public colleges. *Unfortunately, the department does not consult us and does not know our challenges, as college principals. Look at the issue of PPN; they never consulted us, as college principals,* stated the principal of college F.

The principal of college G confirmed this, complaining that the department does not give college principals enough space to make decisions for their colleges. This principal was of the view that public college principals do not have authority to decide what they want to do at their colleges. According to this principal of college G, unlike principals at the universities and universities of technology, college principals are expected to comply with what the department has decided for colleges. *I always say TVET colleges are glorified schools,* said the principal of college G. The principal of college D, whose views were also embraced by the principal of college E, felt that the department should assist colleges by approving requests for the recruitment of staff, especially in the critical positions. The principal of college E stated that it took too long for the department to fill the vacant post, irrespective of the importance of that particular post (position): *This affects the performance of the institution negatively.* On the other hand, deputy principal 1 from college G felt that the department needs to assist colleges by making funds available for replacing lecturers that go to the industries for practical experience. Deputy principal 1 from college A supported this view, arguing that one of the reasons why lecturers are reluctant to go to the industries for practical experience is that they are expected to go during holidays and they are not remunerated.

On the other hand, deputy principal 1 from college E complained about the attitude of some department officials. According to this deputy principal, some officials would come to the college to monitor and evaluate what is happening at the college with a negative attitude and hardly provide support: *Personally, I feel after monitoring and evaluation, they need to support where they identified gaps.* Deputy principal 1 from college H concurred, stating that department officials would visit the college and notice that workshops are not in a good working condition but would not assist to ensure that these workshops are upgraded. This deputy principal was of the opinion that the department must assist in ensuring that colleges have proper workshops and simulations to enable teaching and learning to take place effectively at colleges.

Discussion

Without proper assistance and support from the department, TVET colleges will perform their tasks in a hit and miss fashion. College principals should be provided with clear guidance and proper direction so that they are able to guide, direct and motivate their staff towards the set goals. Staff is always looking to their leaders, especially during the times of change, for direction and guidance, without which there will be chaos in the institution.

It is also important that different sections (units) of the department work collaboratively to avoid confusion. For example, some participants complained that there were times where the same people from colleges would be called by different sections of the same department to two or three different meetings on the same day and at the same time. Clearly, there is no coherence in the department.

5.6.5 The role of SACPO in the TVET sector

By virtue of their appointment, South African TVET college principals acquire the membership of SACPO, the professional organisation for TVET college principals. According to the college principals who participated in this study, SACPO was formed to look after the interests of all 50 public TVET colleges in the country. As a result, from its inception, this organisation has been known as the voice of the public college principals. This organisation represents college principals and speaks to the DHET and other relevant stakeholders on behalf of the college principals. However, of late, not all college principals were happy about the manner in which the organisation does certain things.

According to the principal of college D, the role of SACPO is to support public TVET colleges in various areas. The organisation ensures that there is standardisation at all TVET colleges in the country. This principal maintained that the organisation started as an organisation for college principals, but it has changed and is addressing different issues at the college. For example, the organisation is assisting in the development of staff from different categories to promote effective functioning of all public colleges in the country. The principal of college G concurred: although SACPO was initially the voice of the college principals, it had changed and it addressed various issues affecting the performance of public colleges. This principal put it as follows: *In the past, SACPO was responsible for college principals, but now the organisation tries to accommodate the entire college.* The principal of college I stated that SACPO is not only supporting the colleges, it also supports the DHET in different ways. For example, SACPO assists the department by organising extra-mural activities for colleges.

The principal of college E confirmed this, saying that SACPO was no longer for the principals only, but now offers developmental programmes across the spectrum. According to the principal of college E, SACPO organises training for staff from different public colleges, but on a limited scale, because of financial constraints. The principal added that SACPO does not only focus on academic issues; it also caters for extra-curricular activities. Deputy principal 3 of college G regarded SACPO as part of the major role-players in the TVET sector. The college principal of college B concurred and claimed that SACPO ensures cohesion between the department and the public colleges. This was elucidated by the principal of college B as follows:

The role of SACPO is to ensure that colleges and the department are doing the right thing. If the department is not doing the right thing, SACPO comes in and professionally persuades the department to do things in a manner that is acceptable to the people on the ground. It (SACPO) also tries to ensure that colleges understand departmental policies. In addition, it tries to ensure that there is harmony in all public colleges in the country. Apart from that, it also tries to uplift those colleges that are struggling.

In contrast, however, the principal of college F was of the view that SACPO had abdicated its responsibility. According to this principal, SACPO should be looking at the interests and needs of the college principals and ensuring that they (all college principals in the country) take a collective view to the national DHET. The principal of college F complained that SACPO is not

addressing issues of college principals or colleges, but has become an arm of the department. This principal put it as follows:

SACPO is now sending circulars to colleges that we (colleges) should be receiving from the DHET. SACPO should be representing us (college principals). The organisation is representing college principals, but it has become the department's representative.

One of the department officials also echoed the same views. This official (official 1 from the department – regional office) purported that it seemed as if SACPO had lost its direction. According to this official, SACPO was no longer doing what it was meant to do:

My understanding was that SACPO was for the college principals. My thinking was that it was a forum where principals could share best practices. However, it looks like the organisation is the second DHET. The reason for saying this is that it (SACPO) now organises workshops, which are sometimes parallel to the ones (workshops) organised by the department. Sometimes, they do not even inform the department when they organise these workshops. What I mean is that, sometimes they do things without involving the department.

Discussion

Undoubtedly, SACPO as the college principals' organisation has a critical role to play in the betterment of public colleges in the country. The college principal, as a leader of the college, should see to it that everything at the college takes place accordingly. Therefore, college principals should be well prepared for their roles, especially during times of change. The organisation should be used as a mainstay for networking and sharing best practices among the college principals so that public colleges are managed and administered effectively and efficiently.

SACPO is working hand-in-hand with DHET but the department should ensure that struggling colleges are assisted so that they can improve their performance. Therefore, assisting college principals sharpening their leadership skills is essential. This is only possible if SACPO understands the challenges and needs of its members (college principals) thoroughly.

Conclusion on TVET sector

The importance of TVET sector in the development of any nation, especially developing nations, cannot be over-emphasised (cf. 3.4). TVET colleges are seen as the solution to socio-economic challenges facing many countries, particularly the developing countries. Thus, the DHET in South Africa has placed more emphasis on strengthening and expanding the TVET sector in order to attract the youth who have left the school system. The success of these public TVET colleges is not dependent on government policies and/or reforms but on those who are tasked to lead these colleges and those who should implement such policies and/or reforms.

It is argued that TVET institutions have many challenges, as a result; they struggle to achieve their goals. Therefore, college principals, as the custodians of these public colleges, should find a way of monitoring that all employees perform their duties effectively and efficiently, so that public colleges can achieve their objectives. Any challenges facing these colleges should be addressed swiftly for their benefit. Evidence suggests that companies (employers) are the major beneficiaries of the TVET colleges, but this research shows that public colleges in the country are still struggling to obtain their full participation or contribution to ensure that public colleges succeed in their efforts to address the skills shortages. Sebihi (2019) asserts that the delivery of skills by TVET colleges would be easier if technology is used to ensure the production of more skilled workers in a country that is evolving in advanced technological development. Kanwar et al. (2019) argue that technology is transforming the traditional occupational jobs; performing these jobs, therefore, requires new relevant skills. However, many models of TVET do not keep pace with the advancing technology (Kanwar et al., 2019). Denhere and Moloji (2021) concur, arguing that some colleges may resist the technological changes not only because of their locality but also because their leadership might be technologically naïve and may hinder progressive changes.

5.7 THE PERFORMANCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL PUBLIC TVET COLLEGES

According to Sithole (2019), the performance of the public TVET colleges has become a contentious issue in South Africa. RSA (2013) states that the performance of most public colleges in the country leaves much to be desired and the majority of these colleges perform below expectation (cf. 1.1). Sithole (2019) maintained that about sixty percent public TVET colleges in the country perform below acceptable standards. Some public colleges, however, are

doing exceptionally well. Although the performance of public TVET colleges is determined by the effectiveness of their leaders, there are other factors, which vary from country to country and from institution to institution. These factors can affect the performance of public colleges positively or negatively, depending on the nature of such factors.

According to Sithole (2019), South African public TVET colleges are not doing well in all areas, namely throughput, retention and certification rates. The blame for the public colleges that are not doing well and/or under-performing is placed solely at the door of the leadership and management of the public colleges. As Mazibuko (2007) puts it, the performance of any organisation rests on the role played by the leadership and management of that particular organisation. Certainly, TVET colleges, in general, and in KwaZulu-Natal province in particular, will not be able to perform effectively if their leaders, college principals, including the senior management, are not effective in the performance of their respective roles. Benmira and Agboola (2021) argue that effective leadership is a cornerstone of the performance and success of any organisation, regardless of the goals and objectives that the organisation strives to achieve.

Sithole (2019) states that the disappointing performance of the South African public TVET colleges affects the development of the country. This poor performance can be ascribed to various factors. For example, unqualified lecturers, lack of resources (human, physical and financial), calibre of students, poor leadership, and lack of management skills. All these factors lead to a poor performance of public colleges in the whole country. One of the main reasons why public colleges fail to achieve their objectives, is that people who do not have required technical knowledge, background and understanding of the TVET sector are often appointed to high positions (Sithole, 2019). This research project also revealed that most lecturers appointed to teach at these colleges do not have a technical background and are sometimes unqualified or under-qualified. Hence, the academic performance of the majority students in these colleges is poor.

5.7.1 The situation of public TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal

Although public TVET colleges in South Africa have been marketed and embraced as institutions of first choice with an aim of improving their image, the performance of the majority of these public institutions still leaves much to be desired (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). This is

in accordance with Halilu, Lawal and Nafiu (in Ojogiwa, 2021), who blame the leadership practices and argue that public service performance has not matched expectations. Participants in this study confirmed that the performance of their colleges is not what it should be. Principals and deputy principals, in particular, raised concerns about the performance of their institutions. Both the principals and deputy principals cited a number of reasons for the poor performance of their colleges. Departmental official 1 also confirmed that the performance of the majority of public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal is not good. This official, however, pointed out that some colleges in the province are doing their best to ensure that they carry out the mandate of the DHET. The official put it as follows:

I do not want to paint all colleges with the same brush. Really, some colleges are trying and you can see that work is being done in these colleges. Even their workshops are managed properly and there are consumables to do practical work. On the other hand, there are those colleges where not much is being done. Some of these colleges do have good workshops, but what is important is what is happening in the workshop. You can see that the work of the students is not monitored and this affects the performance of the students.

Deputy principal 1 from college B posited that the performance of college B is not bad, arguing that they always do their best to ensure that the shortfalls are addressed. This was confirmed by deputy principals 2 and 3 who asserted that, in spite of challenges facing the college, the college is trying. Both deputy principals 2 and 3 cited audit reports as proof that college B is doing relatively well. According to these two deputy principals, college B has received clean audit reports in two successive years and they regarded that as a sign that the college is managing its finances properly. Deputy principal 3 from college B said: *These clean audits reports mean that control measures at the college are good. You know, very few colleges get clean audit in succession.* In addition, deputy principal 3 stated that the management of the college is working well with the unions. This deputy principal explained it as follows:

Since I arrived here four years ago, I do not remember seeing employees going on strike because they are not satisfied with the management or they are not happy with what is happening at the college. If there are challenges, the management sits down with the unions and address the issues. Well, when it comes to the students, students do sometimes boycott classes because of their

allowances. Students protest because NSFAS delays in paying their allowances.

The issue here is with NSFAS and this is beyond the college's control.

However, deputy principal 2 college B was quick to say that academic performance of their students is not good. According to this deputy principal, the issue of poor results is a universal problem facing the public colleges in the country. The principal of college E concurred, claiming that one of the major reasons why public TVET colleges get poor results is because of the type of student that the sector (TVET) is getting. This principal maintained that most students end up enrolling at the TVET colleges after being rejected by universities and/or universities of technology because of their previous academic performance. Deputy principal 3 from college D also agreed, saying that most of the time, students come to TVET colleges when they have failed to get a space to study at other higher education institutions. Students who are enrolled for the NCV programmes would have passed Grade Nine but struggle at higher grades. Deputy principal 3 from college G argued that when these students come to the TVET college, they find the programme (NCV) difficult and fail or drop out and this impacts negatively on the performance of the college, in general. Deputy principal 2 from college D also complained about the academic performance of NCV students. According to this deputy principal, the performance of NCV students has been poor since the NCV programme was introduced in 2007. This confirms what Badenhorst and Radile (2018) postulated, that the national certificate rate for the NCV programme has been poor since its inception. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) argue that, although there has been some improvement over the years, the performance of NCV students is still poor with the certificate rates between 29 and 41 percent. The principal of college H confirmed this: *The certificate rate for NCV is very low countrywide. This means that the performance of NCV in TVET colleges is poor nationally.*

Discussion

Organisational performance is one of the most important issues for every organisation, irrespective of whether it is a profit or non-profit. The performance of the institution does not rest only on the shoulders of those who are occupying leadership positions, but everyone associated with the institution must work conscientiously to improve the performance of the institution.

Therefore, the leadership of the public college should ensure that objectives and goals of the institution are aligned to the strategic plan of the college. All stakeholders should not only

understand the strategic plan of the college but should also ensure that the activities of the college are aligned to the goals of the institution. It is important that the college principal and his/her senior management grasp the factors that may hinder the performance of the institution, and that other stakeholders deal with hindrances for the betterment of the college.

5.7.2 Understanding of organisational performance in its context

For any institution, including the public colleges, to function effectively and efficiently, all employees, students should work together so that goals and objectives of the organisation can be accomplished. In addition, stakeholders should know why some institutions, including public colleges, are succeeding while others are failing dismally. Put differently, stakeholders should not only know their role in the performance of the institution but should also perform their tasks effectively so that the institution can achieve its performance goals. For these individuals to understand and perform their tasks effectively, employees and other role-players need guidance, direction, encouragement and motivation from their leaders; this confirms that the role of strategic leadership is important in the performance of an organisation.

The individuals that participated in this study had different understandings of organisational performance. Demeke and Tao (2020) indicate that organisations may have different standards to measure performance and this may lead to different interpretations of successful performance. The principal of college C was of the view that the performance of the organisation did not depend on the principal but on the performance of all stakeholders. Therefore, all stakeholders, including the college principal, should work towards the common objectives or goals. Deputy principal 2 from college E stated that organisational performance is about what the organisation does and how it meets the targets it has set for itself. Likewise, the principal of college D regarded the performance of an organisation as its ability to not only work towards its targets, which are outlined in the strategic plan, but also to meet those targets as planned. Thus, if the organisation or the college does not meet the set targets, the organisational performance of the college or institution is poor. The deputy principal from college E put it as follows:

For organisational performance it's about asking this question, is the organisation achieving the targets that the organisation has set for itself successfully? If the answer is "yes", it means that the performance of the

organisation is good but if the answer is “no”, it means that the performance of the organisation is poor.

This viewpoint was also supported by deputy principal 1 from college C, who was of the opinion that the performance of an organisation should be judged by how it performed in all identified areas, meaning areas identified during the strategic planning phase. According to this deputy principal, a good performing institution is the one that performs well in all identified areas. Deputy principal 1 from college F felt that organisational performance is not only about the academic performance. For example, organisational performance looks at how the college handles the finances and how it handles all relevant stakeholders, like staff, students, parents, suppliers and any other people who have an interest in the college. Deputy principal 1 from college I was of the view that the most emphasis should be on the certification and throughput rates because public colleges are about teaching and learning. Therefore, to determine whether the college is performing effectively or not, focus must be placed on the core business, which is teaching and learning. This deputy principal (deputy principal 1 from college I) stated:

I am not saying that getting a clean audit is not important. For me, not only effective but also quality teaching and learning should determine whether the college is performing well or not. In other words, for me, determining the performance of the institution should be guided by why that particular organisation. In our case, the core business is teaching and learning. Therefore, we need to look at the certification and throughput rates and see if we are on the right track or not.

Likewise, the principal of college G felt that organisational performance depends on the goals of the organisation. Therefore, to determine whether the organisation is performing well, the college needs to benchmark its performance based on those goals. Colleges should look at the number of students who enter the programme and exit at the record time (throughput) and the number of graduates that find internship, graduate and find employment after graduating thereof. One has to look at the pass rate, throughput and certification rates when one is gauging the college's performance. According to the principal of college G, these are the indicators that tell whether the college is achieving its goals or not. This principal also emphasised the importance of ensuring that there is financial sustainability at the college: *You cannot say the organisation is performing well and yet the organisation is receiving qualified audits yearly.*

Discussion

Ideally, performing well in all areas is what almost all organisations aim for, but it is extremely difficult for any organisation to perform well in all areas. Van Der Berg and Hofmeyr (2018) allege that in South Africa, the legacies of apartheid still affect the education system, including the performance of students in the TVET sector. As a result, public colleges, especially those who were previously marginalised, struggle to perform well because they are beset by a number of challenges. According to Der Berg and Hofmeyr (2018), South African educational policymakers are struggling to escape the legacies of the past. These challenges require strong leadership, especially strategic leadership, so that these colleges can overcome these challenges and perform accordingly.

5.7.3 The impact of educational reforms on the performance of TVET colleges

College principals are the individuals that all stakeholders inside and outside the college expect to provide leadership, support and guidance, especially during uncertainty for the success of their organisations. However, those college principals who participated in this study asserted that they are unable to provide proper direction, guidance and support sometimes because they have to contend with too many changes and challenges. These principals claimed that they also struggle to come to terms with some changes because they are too overloaded. These college principals claimed that, more often than not, they do not get enough time to familiarise themselves with the policy changes and they also struggle to interpret some policy changes. According to these principals, what compounds the problem is that they do not get enough training from the department officials and sometimes people providing training have limited information. As a result, college principals communicate policy changes to the staff and other stakeholders, of which they (college principals) have only a poor grasp.

Both college principals and deputy principals who participated in this research project maintained that changes taking place affect the performance of their colleges in different ways, depending not only on the type of a reform or change introduced but also on how that reform or change was communicated to the implementers on the ground. Participants (college principals and deputy principals) also complained about the time college principals spend away from their respective colleges. Because of these new changes, college principals spend most of the time attending workshops, meetings and briefings at the expense of their normal activities. Instead of

the college principal focusing on the normal duties and ensuring that the college runs smoothly, the college principal attends meetings and briefings and this affects not only the performance of the principal negatively, as some of his/her duties will be neglected, but also the performance of the college as a whole. The principal of college D maintained that educational reforms are necessary to address the imbalances of the past and to ensure that public colleges keep up with changes taking place globally. Likewise, the principal of college B indicated that educational changes are required but the principal complained about the time that college principals spend attending briefings on these educational reforms. The principal of college B stated:

I support the idea of introducing educational changes. My problem, however, is that these changes are too overloaded. For me, these changes should be evolutionary. Let the people understand a change well and then make another change. Too many changes within a small space of time is not good at all because they end up confusing the people. This results in changes being badly or poorly implemented.

Deputy principal 2 from college D complained about the alignment of the educational changes to the goals that the college had already set for itself. According to deputy principal 2 from college D, changes are quick but training of the people to implement these changes is too slow. As a result, some reforms introduced do not achieve their intended goals because implementers often struggle to implement such changes effectively. Undoubtedly, this affects the performance of public colleges undesirably. On the other hand, deputy principal 1 from college G complained about how the members of the college council are appointed. This deputy principal was of the view that members of the college council should be familiar with the TVET sector. According to deputy principal 1 from college G, some people appointed as college council members were not familiar with the sector (TVET) and unable to distinguish between the oversight role and administrative or operational issues. As a result, colleges have to spend time inducting these college council members into the public college system, what they do and what is expected of them. The principal of college E concurred, saying that some council members interfered with the operational matters, instead of attending to governance. The principal of college E put it as follows:

Such interference impacts negatively on the performance of the college, since people would be pulling to different directions. I mean that most of the time, the

management of the college and the college council do not see eye-to-eye and this has undesired consequences, in the end.

However, deputy principal 1 from college 1 was of the view that the impact of educational reforms on the performance of public colleges depended on how the changes or reforms are managed. This deputy principal felt that if changes are badly managed, the performance of the institution is going to be negative. On the other hand, if the changes are managed well from the beginning, from the strategic leadership point of view, with proper communication channels, educational reforms would impact positively on the performance of public colleges. Therefore, it is imperative that college principals make sure that all stakeholders are involved at the initial stages so that they understand what is expected of them. Deputy principal 1 from college I put it as follows: *If there is proper planning for the change and people are involved from the start, the change introduced will yield positive results.*

The principal of college G agreed, saying that the college principal must ensure that there are proper communication channels. According to this principal, the college should use both top down and bottom-up approaches when communicating. This principal, however, pointed out that it is not always easy to train academic and support staff if there are some uncertainties on the new changes.

Discussion

If college principals, as strategic leaders are uncertain about the new changes or educational reforms, it would be difficult for them to provide the necessary leadership and this will result in the poor performance of their respective colleges. For college principals to master the new policies and changes, changes should not be rushed and/or imposed on the colleges. College principals should be thoroughly trained to understand the reforms that should be communicated to the subordinates and other relevant stakeholders.

Educational reforms that are not well understood and properly communicated to the stakeholders by the college principals could have unintended outcomes. The success of any reform depends not only on how these reforms are implemented but also on how reforms are communicated to the implementers, in the first place.

5.7.4 The role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of TVET colleges

Strategic leadership is about leading, guiding, and influencing the group members to think strategically about their own competencies (cf. 2.3.1). Organisations, including TVET colleges, can manage to achieve their agreed-upon goals if their leaders can influence their subordinates to perform optimally (cf. 2.2.2). Therefore, the action or series of actions that the college principal, as a strategic leader takes in guiding the performance of public colleges may influence the public college positively or negatively. As a leader of the college, the college principal has a pivotal role to play to ensure that the college delivers its mandate, which is effective teaching and learning. By taking on a strategic leadership stance or position, the college principal should ensure that he/she carries out strategic functions effectively and efficiently to achieve excellent performance of the college. As Alayoubi et al. (2020) put it, institutions of higher learning led by strategic leaders who have clear strategic visions, are future-oriented, keep pace with changes and understand the complexity and dynamics of the organisation, both internal and external, can develop and progress successfully during testing times.

The focus here is on the means employed and the impact college principals as strategic leaders have on the performance of public colleges through their leadership (cf. 2.1). The majority of the participants did not understand the influence that the strategic leadership role has in guiding the performance of TVET colleges well. As indicated earlier, most participants thought of the role of strategic leadership only as what the college principal does when coordinating and facilitating strategic planning (cf. 5.5.4). However, deputy principal 1 from college F regarded the role of strategic leadership as a major factor in guiding the performance of the public college. According to this deputy principal, without strategic leadership public colleges will have not direction. This deputy principal feel that must be a clear direction so that the college can perform effectively and that direction is provided by the strategic leader. Deputy principal 2 from college C concurred, saying that the strategic leader must remind the people constantly about the objectives that the institution wants to achieve: *We all know where we want the college to be, but we need to be reminded, so that we can work industriously*. Likewise, deputy principal 3 from college E felt that the college principal must keep the people on track by providing strategic leadership. This deputy principal also found that it is important for the college principal to keep on networking with his/her colleagues from other colleges and counterparts from other sectors.

The principal of college D was of the view that the role of strategic leadership is crucial in guiding the performance of the public college because the college principal does not only lead in the provision of the college vision and mission but also ensures that the staff are motivated and guided towards the achievement of the intended goals. According to this principal, the performance of the institution is measured against the successful attainment of the priorities set by the institution for itself. The principal of college G agreed, arguing that it is important that the college principal does not only understand the policies and processes but that these policies and processes are followed, so that the college is always performing according to the policies and processes stipulated by the employer, which is the DHET. Deputy principal 1 from college G added that the college principal should create a conducive environment for all stakeholders in the organisation, without which chances are minimal that people will be committed. This deputy principal said: *If the people at the college are not happy, they will not perform their tasks optimally. Thus, the principal should create a conducive environment for everyone to work effectively.*

Likewise, deputy principal 1 from college I felt that the college cannot succeed without having won the support of the people on the ground. Therefore, the college principal in guiding the public college's performance to the set and intended goals must ensure that he/she wins the support of all the individuals associated with the college. According to deputy principal 1 from college I, the college principal as a strategic leader must be visible and interact with the people at all levels in order to earn their support. Lack of support from the stakeholders would hinder the strategic role of the college principal and this will affect the manner in which the public college performs. Deputy principal 3 from college D concurred and maintained that it is important that the leadership of the college constantly communicate with the people on the ground. *The leadership that is aloof will find wildness at the bottom*, said deputy principal 3 from college D. Deputy principal 2 from college B felt that the college principal should ensure that all resources, namely human, physical and financial resources, are properly managed for the success of the college. These resources are essential for the college to perform successfully for the attainment of its intended goals. The principal of college E complained that new roles that are brought by new changes always disrupt college principals from performing their usual roles because they need to adjust and adapt to the new roles. *What compounds the problem is that college principals have limited time to adapt to these new roles*, said the principal of college E.

According to the principal of college E, the college principal cannot achieve the set goals without a strong team. Therefore, the principal should build and maintain a strong winning team. However, lack of training and required skills on the part of the principals make it difficult for them to deal with most challenges facing the public colleges. The principal of college D was of the view that the college principal as a strategic leader cannot guide the college successfully without outside support. According to this college principal, the college principal must have a good relationship not only with the companies but also with the surrounding communities. *For me, the principal must have connections with industries, high profile people around the college and the general community members*, said the principal of college D. Equally, Deputy principal 1 from college A agreed, saying that it was important that the college principal understands clearly the environment in which the college operates because the environment influences the performance of the principals, as well as that of the college. The principal of college H concurred, arguing the principal should do his/her best to ensure that he/she wins the hearts of the community members. The principal of college D summed this up as follows:

If you (the college principal) have a college whose leadership is not wanted or liked by the community, you are running the risk of that college being burnt down one day. I am not saying that everyone in the community must like or love you, but I mean you must, as a college principal, be able to understand the community surrounding the college.

Although the principal of college F asserted that the role of strategic leadership is crucial in guiding the performance of the public college, this principal maintained that there is very little that the college principal does except to comply with what the DHET has designed and formulated for the public colleges. According to the principal of college F, colleges or college principals do not develop strategic plans for their respective colleges; they just fill in the template created by the DHET. This principal asserted that colleges just fill in the template from the department just to agree with the department's strategic plan. This was explained by the principal of college F as follows:

This means that the strategic plan is [the] department's strategic plan not the college's strategic plan. It does not talk to the community one works in, as a principal. You (the principal or the college) are just complying with what the department is saying not that you come up with your ideas as a strategic leader.

It is not individualistic and it is not unique. All public colleges in the country just fill in the same template.

Discussion

Undoubtedly, strategic leadership has a major influence of the performance of any organisation (cf. 2.8 & 5.6.5). College principals as strategic leaders should not only be able to inspire, influence, provide stimulation to the employees and all other stakeholders but should also understand the internal and external dynamics, which may hinder the performance of the institution (cf. 2.2.5). Various organisations are concerned about factors that affect their performance (Mabai & Hove, 2020). It is important for managers and leaders not only to know which factors influence the performance of their organisations but also to take appropriate steps to address or deal with these factors for the benefit of their organisations.

For the college principal to be able to guide the performance of the college, he/she should have a strategic plan where desired outcomes are defined, steps to achieve these desired outcomes are spelt out and the outcomes are made known to all relevant stakeholders (Alayoubi et al., 2020). Therefore, the principal's role is to guide the public college to achieve its goals by providing direction, motivation and guidance to all stakeholders based on the strategic plan. As Ojogiwa (2021) puts it, strategic leaders convert the organisation's purpose, vision and goals into the organisation's performance outcomes. Ojogiwa (2021) advises that it is important to outline the strategic processes, detailing how desired outcome would be achieved. This ensures that everyone knows and understands his/her role in the organisation.

5.7.4.1 Increased access to public TVET colleges

The TVET sector is regarded as a foundation for developing skills in any country. Therefore, attempts should be made to increase access of students to the TVET sector for the benefit of the country, as this would assist in fighting unemployment, poverty and inequality (RSA, 2013). College principals who participated in this study maintained that increasing access to public TVET colleges is one of their key performance areas. Thus, students enrolled in a particular year is also used to measure the performance of the college principal. The principal of college B stated that public colleges are expected to enrol a certain number of students each year. Deputy

principal 1 of college G concurred and added that if a college has failed to meet the set target, the college needs to give reasons to the department why the target was not met.

All college principals and deputy principals who participated in this study stated that their colleges always met or exceeded their enrolment targets. The principal of college G indicated that although colleges are expected to increase access to the sector, it becomes a problem when colleges exceed the enrolment targets. The principal of college E agreed and stated that the department does not provide funding for the extra number of students. As a result, colleges are expected to stick to their targets. This was also confirmed by deputy principal 1 from college H, who said that their college turns away many students every year because they cannot take more than the number that they have targeted. According to deputy principal 1 from college G, there are too many people who want to enrol at TVET colleges but colleges are unable to accommodate them because of limited space and restrictions from the department. This deputy principal explained the scenario that their college experiences during the enrolment period as follows:

We always have a score of applicants that we turn away because the college is full. Before, we used to have prospective students queuing during early mornings at the gate at all our campuses. Some of these people even sleep there for nights. Guess what, most of those people ended up not getting spaces. Now we pre-enrol and we use online registration, but we still have a challenge of getting scores of applicants.

Deputy principal 2 from college A stated that the registration period is a nightmare. According to this deputy principal, the college always struggles to deal with the influx of applicants. Deputy principal 1 from college A confirmed this and stated that compounding the problem is that the college ends up taking a limited number of students and the rest turned away. *The DHET speaks of increasing access but colleges turn students away because they are unable to accommodate them. I think we need more TVET colleges,* said deputy principal 1 from college A.

Discussion

The issue of increasing access to TVET college seems to be a more elusive one because the DHET is pushing colleges to increase access, but colleges are restricted to certain numbers.

Colleges cannot enrol as many students as they like even if they have enough space because of the limited funding from the department. Increasing access implies that more public TVET colleges must be built, especially in the rural areas, and more funds may be required not only to build such colleges but also to maintain those colleges.

Although the department expects public colleges or college principals to increase access in the existing public college, they are restricted by limited funds and the department is unable to make additional funds available to these colleges.

5.7.4.2 Student performance

Student performance is one of the indicators used to assess the success of colleges (RSA, 2013). The main task of the college principal is to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place. However, evidence suggests that the principal can work better if he/she shares the leadership role (Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Principals and deputy principals indicated that college leaders are judged successful in their role of guiding the performance of their colleges if the academic performance of their students is exceptionally good. These individuals (college principals and deputy principals) maintained that the overall performance of the students at their respective colleges is not acceptable. According to deputy principal 1 from college H, the performance of NCV students is still poor. The principal of college G said:

Since the inception of NCV in 2007, the performance of the students doing this programme has never been good. Yes, there has been some improvement, but I do not think we (colleges) can be happy about our NCV students' results.

The principal of college E concurred and added that the poor performance of NCV students has a negative bearing on the image of the public college sector. Likewise, deputy principal from college B agreed and said what TVET colleges are fortunate that they have not been given the attention that the public gives to Grade 12 results. Although deputy principal 1 from college I indicated that their college is ranked number fifteen (15) out of 50 colleges in the country when it comes to NCV results, such results are still not acceptable. On the other hand, participants (all college principals and deputy principals) maintained that the results for the Report 191 (NATED programme) are relatively better. According to these participants, students doing Report 191 perform better and at times, and they perform well when compared to the NVC students. *I think*

the reason why Report 191 students perform well is that these students are matured compared to the NVC students, said deputy principal 3 from college G. The principal of college E alluded to the poor results, especially for NCV and said they are concerned about the performance of the students in the TVET sector as college principals. According to this principal, poor results suggest that public colleges are failing to achieve the mandate of the department, namely, to deal with the skills shortage in the country. The principal of college D concurred:

Public TVET colleges are not doing well when it comes to the performance of students. The reason for saying this is that over the years our certificate rate has not been good. Remember, I said our clients are the students, so they should be satisfied with our service, but they (students) are not happy because our results are not good.

Deputy principal 1 from college G ascribed the high failure rate of NCV students to the type of students that public colleges get from the normal schools, as well as the quality of lecturers at public colleges. According to this deputy principal, the majority of the students that end up joining the TVET sector struggle at school; they join the TVET sector and the scope of the subjects done at TVET colleges is sometimes beyond their capacity. On the other hand, the majority of the lecturers at public colleges are under-qualified. This also contributes immensely to the poor performance of the students. The principal of college H stated that poor performance of the students affects their performance as college principals. Deputy principal 1 from college F, agreeing that poor performance of the students affects the performance of public colleges, indicated that a number of colleges in KwaZulu-Natal have introduced extra classes to support those students who struggle in certain subjects. Deputy principal 2 from college A stated that since their college started with this academic support, there has been some improvement in the performance of the majority of the students. However, deputy principal 1 college C complained that students do not attend these extra classes regularly. Deputy principal 1 from college D agreed: *The problem is that some students do not take these academic support programmes seriously. We are trying to assist them, but they do not come to classes.*

Discussion

The narrative of poor performance at public TVET colleges put forward by the college principals and deputy principals who participated in this study confirmed what is raised by scholars, that students at public TVET colleges, especially NCV students, perform poorly

(Badenhorst & Radile, 2018). Badenhorst and Radile (2018) propose that leadership should be shared (distributed) in order to improve the poor performance of public TVET college students, especially NCV students.

In spite of this leadership role already being shared by the principal, deputy principal (academic services) and campus manager, the performance of the students is still poor. Although the college principal is ultimately responsible for the improvement of student performance, it is the deputy principal from academic services, together with the campus manager, who are tasked to ensure that the campus runs smoothly and effectively.

5.7.4.3 Student placement in the workplace

Placing students in workplaces for work-based exposure or experiential learning is one of the critical areas in the performance of public TVET colleges, but such placement opportunities are very few in South Africa (Ziegler, Chipanga & Magoda, 2020). This does not only minimise employability, it also prevents the students from graduating because students need eighteen months of practical experience before graduating from the TVET college. Thus, a need exists for TVET colleges to have productive partnerships not only with industry but also with other prospective employers. Such partnerships can help to provide students and lecturers access to workplace opportunities.

Although all participants agreed that the need exists not only to ensure that public TVET colleges have strong partnerships with industry and employers, especially those who are within the locality, college principals and deputy principals maintained that they struggle to form such partnerships. All college principals who participated in this study elucidated that the number of partnerships that the college had formed or forged with employers, is one of the criteria used to determine the performance of the public college. However, these college principals said winning the hearts of the employers is not always easy. According to the principals of colleges situated in the rural areas, compounding the problem is that, in most cases, rural areas do not have industries. As a result, forming partnerships is a gargantuan task. The principal of college F explained the situation faced by colleges in rural areas as follows: *You know, it is easier for colleges in urban areas to form partnerships with industries than colleges in rural areas.*

Although department official 2 concurred that it is not easy for public colleges that are in rural areas to get partnerships because of their localities, this official was of the view that generally colleges are not doing enough to influence the employers so that these employers would see the need of working with colleges. The researcher is tempted to agree with this viewpoint because it was picked up during the interviews that some if not most of the participants expect the employers to approach colleges, instead of these public colleges approaching the employers for partnerships. Department official 1 confirmed this and stated that sometimes, colleges do not always respond positively when the department organises meetings between employers and public colleges: *For me, colleges should not sit back and expect the industry or any other employer to come to them.*

The principal of college B argued that the issue of partnership between the employers and public colleges would remain a problem until both parties are involved in designing the curriculum. According to this principal, prospective employers, especially industries and public colleges must agree not only on the programmes to be offered by colleges but also on the structure of such programmes. The principal of college D supported this idea, maintaining that the department needs to allow colleges and employers in the surrounding areas to sit down and structure programmes to suit the needs of the employers. Deputy principal 2 from college I concurred that there is a need for public colleges to work with employers collaboratively:

You cannot say you producing skills for the employers without having these employers, especially industries sitting with you (public colleges) and align your programmes with what these people (employers) actual want. Technology changes all the time but we (public colleges) are still doing the same thing and expect companies to absorb our graduates. I do not think that we are being honest here.

The principal of college G was of the opinion that public TVET colleges would always be accused of failing to address the requirements of the labour market and/or the employers, if the latter are excluded from designing and developing the curricula, which would be structured according to the needs of the local companies, as well as new technology. According to this principal, the college and local companies should work towards the same goals to produce graduates with relevant skills required by the local companies.

Discussion

The study suggests that there is a strong need for strong partnerships between the TVET sector and the labour market if public colleges are serious about providing the labour market with graduates with relevant skills. Certainly, partnerships can address the existing mismatch because public colleges will know exactly what the labour market wants. Besides, industry will have confidence in the graduates produced by these public colleges because it assisted in developing the curricula.

5.7.4.4 Management of public college funds

For any organisation including education institutions to survive, proper management of financial resources is critical (Okeze & Ngwakwe, 2018). Without properly managed funds, organisations struggle to render effective services, irrespective of whether the organisation is a profit or non-profit organisation. According to Alnaqabi and Nobanee (2021), proper financial management is essential in an organisation because it helps to create sustainability in an organisation. College management should ensure that there is effective management of college finances so that the public colleges perform effectively and efficiently.

According to all participants, one of the critical areas of effectiveness of public college leadership is the manner in which finances are handled and managed at the college. The college principals claimed that their colleges received large sums of money that they manage without any financial management skills. As a result, they rely on the deputy principals of finance who have skills in financial management. Mothapo (2019) posits that the finance department at TVET colleges is responsible for reporting on financial matters, asset management, payments and financial systems. Thus, the deputy principal responsible for finance at the colleges assists the college principal in ensuring that the college complies with the financial related matters and regulations as prescribed by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999. The principal of college B raised a concern about relying on someone else (deputy principal: finance) with regard to large amounts of money as a big risk. *People take advantage if they know that you are ignorant about something*, said the principal of college B.

These participants maintained that a number of public colleges end up under administration because of the misappropriation and mismanagement of college funds. The principal of college

F asserted that most college principals lack financial management skills and this results in college funds not being properly managed. The principal of college D concurred and stated that, in some instances, people with financial knowledge end up capitalising on the ignorance of the college principal. The principal of college G, confirming what was said by the other principal, said:

I am very careful when signing documents. I do not sign documents when I am in a rush. People have a tendency of bringing documents to be signed when you (college principal) are about to leave and you end up authorising wrong things. Sometimes, you sign the document innocently and you end up in trouble. I have seen people (college principals) losing their jobs because of signing documents without reading them (documents) thoroughly.

Discussion

Although colleges have deputy principals: finance who are responsible for finances at the college, principals need to acquire skills in financial management, including procurement practices. College principals should be knowledgeable of management of finances in order for them to be able to use college funds properly and fruitfully. Misappropriation of college funds hinders service delivery and more often than not, teaching and learning is adversely affected.

However, college principals and other college leaders require proper training on financial management for them to manage college finances and other procurement practices correctly. This can assist these leaders to succeed in their efforts to guide the performance of their respective colleges. Since DHET is the provider of funds to the public colleges, the department should ensure that college principals are given proper training in financial management.

5.7.5 Measuring the performance of public colleges

The performance of public colleges should be evaluated based on the performance indicators in order to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding such performance. Thus, academic performance of the students can be used as a yardstick to gauge the success of the role of strategic leadership of public colleges. The success of the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges can be judged by the achievement of the strategic objectives and

the set targets and the effectiveness of the intervention strategies used to deal with the challenges that could result in colleges' underperformance.

All participants agreed that the performance of the college is measured based on the strategic outcomes formulated by the DHET. According to the participants, colleges are expected to report on their achievements and non-achievements to the department. Further, colleges are required to report on what intervention strategies they devise to deal with the activities that they were unable to achieve. The principal of college F maintained that college performance is guided by the template from the DHET since the department sets strategic outcomes and colleges are expected to ensure that they achieve them. The principal of college H concurred, saying that colleges just set their targets based on the outcomes decided by the department and public colleges have to ensure that such targets are met. This principal put it as follows:

I can say our duty is just to comply with what the department has decided is going to happen at colleges. In fact, our hands (principals' hands) are tied because the department decides what we should do, forgetting that colleges are unique. If we fail to comply, we (college principals) are expected to write long reports providing reasons that resulted in the college failing to achieve the targets. Really, it is not easy to work because most of us (colleges) do not have enough resources and the department does not consider these challenges.

The principal of college B agreed, saying that the department does not give public college principals a free rein to decide what is good or not for their colleges. This principal complained that the department does not consider that public colleges operate in different environments with different circumstances. Deputy principal 3 from college G concurred, saying that the environment in which the institution operates has a major bearing on the performance of that particular institution. *Some colleges are in deep rural areas and do not have the means, but the department expects to do miracles*, said deputy principal 3 from college G. Apart from that, public college principals come from different backgrounds and this should be considered when dealing with public colleges. As a result, the department should consider the uniqueness of different colleges when dealing with them. According to the principal of college D, some colleges are struggling to increase access to the TVET public colleges, to ensure that students' academic performance is improved and to improve partnerships with the employers and these

are the measurements or indicators that the college is performing as required. This literally suggests that public colleges are failing to fulfil their mandate.

Discussion

According to Demeke and Tao (2020), an organisation measures its performance by measuring and establishing if the goals, objectives and targets that the organisation has set for itself have been achieved and/or if the existing conditions have changed for better. Thus, finding out if the conditions have been changed by the undertaken activities. Thus, organisational performance depends on whether or not the goals and objectives that have been set are achieved.

To determine how well public TVET colleges are achieving their goals and/or complying with its mandate, the DHET monitoring and evaluation systems have been developed. These systems are used to measure the performance of all public colleges in the country. The process of monitoring and evaluation is used as a means of assuring and enhancing quality in higher education (Niyivuga, Otara & Tuyishime, 2019). Institutions of higher learning, including TVET colleges, like most of other organisations, use monitoring and evaluation not only to ascertain whether these institutions execute their plans effectively but also to establish if their plans yield the desired outcomes.

5.7.6 Support required for improving the performance of public colleges

The success of public colleges depends on the support of various stakeholders, including the private sector. Therefore, providing the necessary resources, especially financial resources should not only be the responsibility of the department, but other providers as well, like private companies, non-governmental organisations, business people and community leaders. According to principals and deputy principals who participated, their colleges are struggling and require support in order to perform effectively. Principals of colleges in rural areas maintained that their colleges suffer most because there are no companies close to these colleges, which college principals can approach for sponsorships. In addition, communities in the surrounding areas are also struggling and cannot assist these colleges. One of the principals of a college situated in the rural areas said:

I am not suggesting that colleges that are in urban areas are better off, but they are in a better position because they can approach companies in their areas for sponsorships, which is not the case with us. Really, we are struggling here. The only businesses we have are the retail stores and these people cannot help much.

The principal of college E stated that workshops at their college are crumbling and require urgent attention. However, the college is unable to refurbish these workshops because of financial constraints. This principal maintained that the college has approached some companies for financial assistance without any success. As a result, students suffer because they barely do practicals, because workshops are dysfunctional. Deputy principal 2 from college A was of the opinion that the South African government should have some means to ensure that private companies assist education institutions, especially TVET colleges, because these institutions are preparing the students to be future employees. Deputy principal 2 from college G concurred, saying that companies seem to be unwilling to work with public colleges to ensure that colleges provide quality education. *I do not think that private colleges have the same problem like public colleges. I am sure the private sector supports private colleges*, said deputy principal 2 from college G. According to this participant, private companies pump funds into these private colleges and assist them to build well-equipped workshops in order to ensure that they produce good students for the companies' benefit.

The principal of college G mentioned three things which can assist the public colleges to improve their performance. Firstly, the DHET should not only to listen to the colleges but also provide help where colleges require support. This principal also complained about the manner in which the department communicates with colleges and suggested that there should proper and well-structured communication lines between the department and public colleges. Secondly, the college council can provide support to assist in the improvement of the performance of public colleges. *In most cases, college council members do not care about colleges, but they have their own interests*, said the principal of college G. Finally, if all staff members (both academic and support staff) work conscientiously, public colleges can improve their performances tremendously. The principal of college D shared the same sentiments and explained this as follows:

The DHET should be quick to respond if the college has submitted a request for whatever assistance. Secondly, I require support from the college council, especially when it comes to issues affecting the performance of the college. You

see, sometimes, you find that college council members will fight their own political battles, instead of assisting the college to achieve its objectives. This affects the performance of the college badly.

Deputy principal from college G felt that the lack of support from the society affected the performance of public colleges adversely. According to this deputy principal, for public colleges to perform well there should be support from the surrounding communities. This deputy principal maintained that instead of community members supporting colleges, some members of the community want to influence decisions concerning public colleges in a negative way. This was confirmed by deputy principal 2 from college H, who stated that some community members see public colleges as source of income. According to deputy principal 2 from college H, these community members want to do business with public colleges without following the proper procedures, for example, the Supply Chain Management and Public Financial Management Act. Instead, they arrive at the college and demand work, threatening the principal and/or the management of the college. *These things are not assisting the college to grow but have an adverse effect on the performance of the college,* said deputy principal 2 from college H.

Discussion

The DHET should understand the challenges faced by each public college and channel the funds and other support required based on the needs of each college, instead of adopting a blanket approach. It is also important that the industry or private sector be drawn closer to the colleges because whatever the college is doing prepares students to be employed by these industries. Therefore, public colleges must persuade industry to work closer with them because colleges train students for these industries.

Conclusion of organisational performance

For any change or reform to be implemented successfully, the context of each public college and its unique needs should be considered. Although all public TVET colleges are under one department, DHET, these colleges are diverse and in unique environments. Undoubtedly, the performance of each public college is not only guided by the policies or prescripts of the department, but it is also guided by the circumstances in the environment within which the public college operates. Any reform introduced should be adequately contextualised to the

environment within which it should be implemented. The department should refrain from adopting the one-size fits all approach because colleges are not only unique; their circumstances are also unique.

5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter described the public TVET colleges which participated in this study, characteristics of participants and the reasons thereof (cf. 4.4.6.1), along with the findings from data analysis. As indicated in 5.1, the information of participants is not given in detail.

Data that the researcher gathered during the individual interviews are presented under the following key themes, as well as sub-themes: educational changes taking place in South Africa; strategic leadership in context; understanding of strategic leadership; TVET sector in South Africa and the performance of KwaZulu-Natal TVET colleges. The key themes and sub-themes identified were used as a means to provide solutions to the research question and sub-questions.

The final chapter, chapter six, consists of a synthesis of the significant themes and the implications for the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance, looking at it from a public vocational college's point of view. Lastly, the researcher made recommendations that can assist in delving into the subject further.

CHAPTER 6

OVERVIEW OF INVESTIGATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focal point of this research was to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of higher education institutions looking at it from the perspective of public vocational colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (cf. 1.4). The aim and objectives of this research can be achieved by examining findings from the undertaken individual interviews done through qualitative research before drawing any conclusions and making any recommendations. The previous chapter (chapter 5) presented and described data collected during the individual interviews.

This chapter (chapter 6) presents an overview of the investigation, recommendations and deductions, which are drawn from the findings. Findings, recommendations, as well conclusions based on this research are also expounded in this chapter. The chapter gives an outline of the investigation to show that the aim and objectives of the research articulated in chapter 1 (cf. 1.4 & 1.4.1) have been addressed and achieved. The chapter concludes by presenting the areas that were regarded as areas requiring further study, as well as what were considered as the limitations of this study. Overall, the chapter has four sections, which are delineated as follows: 6.2 outline of the investigation; 6.3 synthesis of findings and recommendations; 6.4 recommendations for further research, and 6.5 limitations of the study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Determining the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of South African public colleges is difficult because the DHET decides and designs the strategic plan for all TVET colleges. As a result, college principals have to comply with the strategic plan that has been drawn up by the department (cf. 5.6.4 & 5.7.4). Compounding the problem is that literature suggests that in South Africa, colleges leaders or principals have not been given enough support and training or development to prepare them to carry out their duties competently (cf. 1.3 & 3.6). In addition, research on leadership in the TVET sector and issues related to it have not

been given the centre stage in a number of countries, including South Africa (cf. 1.3; 2.4.4; 4.3 & 5.5.2).

Although the college principal's role in the performance of the public college is widely acknowledged, research on the roles of the college principal has failed to keep pace with these changing settings. In addition, literature has not given much attention to how changes affect the college principals, as they are expected to be in the forefront in ensuring that new changes or reforms are implemented effectively. However, changes taking place in the TVET sector in South Africa suggest that college principals should perform their leadership role, especially strategic leadership role, in such a way that they win the hearts and support of all stakeholders so that they all work towards a common goal for the success of the new changes. Surely, college leaders or principals can only perform their roles successfully if they have garnered the support of all stakeholders.

6.2.1 The role of strategic leadership in an organisation

To be able to determine what influence strategic leadership has on the performance of public higher education institution, in general, and public TVET colleges, in particular, the researcher undertook a literature study. Although the focus was on leadership, the emphasis throughout was on strategic leadership because of its leadership role in guiding and directing the implementation of reforms, especially during turbulent and uncertain times. Different scholars regard lack of strategic leadership as the core factor that contributes to the failure of the majority of organisations to implement their strategies effectively (cf. 2.2.1). Literally, research argues that the majority of organisations fail to perform optimally because of lack of strategic leadership (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

This research indicates that, irrespective of the sector, strategic leadership plays a key in the performance of any organisation, particularly during these times of technological changes (cf. 1.1). Research notes that for any organisation to perform optimally, strategic leadership should be a prerequisite (Zakaria, Nor, Binti & Alias, 2021). Therefore, college principals as strategic leaders need to acquire new leadership skills, especially strategic leadership skills. Without these new leadership skills, college principals may struggle to deal with the new challenges and demands placed upon them successfully. For college principals to perform their roles effectively, they should understand these roles as well as the challenges and demands

accompanying these roles. However, the study suggests that leadership, particularly strategic leadership, has received little attention at the TVET sector level, particularly in developing countries like South Africa. This should not have been the case if one considers the importance of the role of strategic leadership in the performance of any organisation, both profit and non-profit ones (Simsek et al., 2018; Ragul, 2021).

The following are some of the significant characteristics of strategic leaders: strategic leaders have a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present; strategic leaders prioritise their strategic thinking and learning; strategic leaders create mental models to frame their understanding and practice, and strategic leaders have robust personal and professional networks (cf. 2.2.5). However, it should be noted that these characteristics are not all inclusive; other characteristics can also be identified. The literature also reveals that a strategic leader can be either effective or ineffective and the danger is that ineffective strategic leaders struggle to assist the organisation to achieve its goals. Hitt et al. (2010) claim that many leaders fail to deal effectively with environmental turbulence in a number of organisations due to lack of strategic leadership. Kabetu and Iravo (2018) regard the inability of the leaders to sell their visions to their subordinates or employees as the main reason why most organisations fail or collapse. Thus, leaders, especially strategic leaders should acquire skills that would enable them to motivate and inspire their subordinates. Undoubtedly, practising effective strategic leadership could help in improving organisational performance (Kabetu & Iravo, 2018). It is against this backdrop that college principals should understand their strategic leadership role in the performance of public colleges, if they want their colleges to achieve their desired outcomes.

6.2.2 The TVET sector: A theoretical basis

The literature reveals that the TVET sector is an essential and vital component of education because of the role it plays in the course of transforming the socio-economic make-up of the country (cf. 1.1 & 5.6). TVET colleges worldwide provide opportunities for acquiring skills that are relevant to the job market, which assists in addressing the challenges facing the youth (cf. 1.1; 3.4 & 5.6). Allen (2021) states that the TVET sector has proved to be critical in social equity and economic growth of the country. Therefore, countries regard the TVET sector as a key to the advancement of the country in different spheres.

The literature also reveals that the majority of TVET institutions globally, especially those in developing countries, face many challenges; as a result, in most cases, TVET colleges struggle to achieve their goals (cf. 1.1; 3.3.2 & 5.6.2). Dambudzo (2018) asserts that to address some of the challenges, for example, the mismatch between what the employers want, and the skills possessed by the TVET graduates. Some countries had modified the mode of teaching at the TVET sector and introduced the Competency Based Training (CBT) concept. Siddique, Lodhi, Anwer and Zubair (2020) concur, maintaining that results have shown that TVET graduates who have undergone thorough competency-based training programmes are more competent compared to those who underwent traditional training programmes. As a result, in most cases, employers are more satisfied with graduates of CBT programmes (Siddique et al. 2020). Boahin (2018) maintains that CBT programmes developed in partnership with leading employers focus on mastering of specific knowledge and skills. Moreover, the programmes not only focus on providing skills required to find employment but also prepare individuals for self-employment. Dambudzo (2018) opines that the CBT emphasises what a person can do in the workplace, instead of what a person knows, that is, theoretical knowledge. In South Africa, employers are seen as the major beneficiaries of the TVET colleges, and their contribution is, therefore, required for the success of the TVET sector. In spite of partnerships between the TVET sector and companies as a cornerstone for the success of the sector, public colleges have not tackled the issue of partnerships vigorously (cf. 5.6.3.4).

Evidence suggests that TVET colleges could overcome barriers and challenges through strong and effective leadership, especially strategic leadership (cf. 1.1; 1.2; 3.6 & 5.7.2). This confirms what Jabor, Minghat, Maigari and Buntat (2012) claim, that leadership in the TVET sector cannot be overemphasised because of the role it plays in preparing the individuals for the labour market and also for entrepreneurship. Therefore, college leaders, especially public TVET colleges' leaders need to be developed and provided proper skills on strategic leadership in order for them to rescue public colleges that are struggling to deal with the ever-changing challenges. Similarly, the literature reveals that strategic leadership is crucial in the performance of TVET colleges because it can enhance the performance of the college, even during difficult times (cf. 1.1).

The need for good and robust leadership, especially strategic leadership, has become imperative in TVET development. The literature reveals that strategic leadership is crucial in the performance of TVET colleges because effective strategic leadership practices could help to enhance the performance of TVET colleges, even during difficult times (cf. 1.1). For college

principals to perform their roles successfully, they require adequate training on leadership, especially strategic leadership. The study, however, reveals that most principals at the public colleges lack the necessary training on strategic leadership and do not have the required skills to perform their strategic leadership roles effectively.

6.2.3 Organisational performance

Scholars and practitioners have dealt with the issue of organisational performance extensively and the interest of leaders, managers, experts and researchers in assessing the performance of organisations has increased over the years (Demeke & Tao, 2020). Akpa et al. (2021) confirm that the world has seen a wide recognition of organisation performance from both the profit and non-profit organisations. As a result, Akpa et al. (2021) are of the view that it is vital that those who are in leadership and management positions should ensure that they do not only know factors that influence the performance of an organisation but should also take full advantage of such factors. However, the performance of public TVET colleges has been neglected in South Africa. According to Gachugu, Awino, Iraki and Machuki (2019), organisational performance describes the extent to which the goals and objectives of the organisation have been achieved. Gachugu et al. (2019) state that organisational performance encompasses the actual outputs or results realised by an organisation, measured against the intended outputs, mainly considered as objectives and goals or the previous period performance.

Vyas Yagneshnath and Junare Shankarrao (2018), basing their argument on the role of employee capabilities to achieve organisational success, regard human resources as the most important factor that can influence organisational performance. This does not imply that other two factors (finance & physical resources) are not important; the three factors (human, finance & physical resources) are related and act together to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. Against this background, Maria (n.d.) stresses that if organisations want to achieve competitive advantage and/or outperform their competitors, they should invest in people. However, it is imperative for the college leaders that they understand how to organise and manage people for the betterment of the colleges. As Maria (n.d.) puts it, the manner in which people are organised and managed depends on a number of factors, including basic organisational aspects, organisational goals, size and structure.

In South Africa, public TVET colleges are scattered all over the country and these colleges operate under different and unique conditions (cf. 1.2.2; 1.7.2; 5.2.1; 5.2.2 & 5.2.2.1). These conditions determine the success or failure of these public colleges in their attempts to implement the new educational changes or reforms. The conditions under which public colleges in South Africa operate also influence the manner in which these colleges perform. For example, some public colleges are situated in deep rural areas, peri-rural areas and in urban areas, as well as affluent and poverty-stricken areas and these differences have an impact on the performance of these colleges. However, policy formulators do not take the uniqueness of these colleges into consideration when formulating new policies or introducing new changes.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section integrates prior research and theory reviewed in chapters two and three with the significant themes uncovered in the qualitative investigation. The findings relate to the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance: a case of public vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Findings indicate that the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges cannot be over-emphasised (cf. 2.8; 5.6.5 & 5.7.4). However, findings suggest that most participants have a limited understanding of strategic leadership and the strategic leadership role, in particular (cf. 5.5.4). What compounds the problem is that these participants have not been trained on strategic leadership and do not have the necessary leadership skills. The literature studied and those who participated in this research regarded the following as some of the issues and challenges that require attention.

6.3.1 The role of the college principal in the communication of changes to the stakeholders

The success of any change is determined by how that particular change has been cascaded to those who are expected to implement such a change. This includes knowing what will be gained by implementing it, or lost if not implementing such a change. Undoubtedly, principals of public colleges have a vital role not only in the communication of changes to the stakeholders but also in ensuring that all stakeholders cope with the new changes or reforms (cf. 5.4.2 & 5.4.3). Findings, however, reveal that frequently educational changes or reforms are communicated to the relevant stakeholders in an uncoordinated manner. The study reveals that sometimes college principals communicate changes that they do not know and/or understand well because they do not have enough time to master these changes.

The study also reveals that changes taking place in public colleges are not implemented successfully because they are not communicated well to the people on the ground. As a result, those who are required to implement these reforms struggle not only to implement such changes but also to handle the new changes. What makes things worse, is that sometimes college principals also struggle to assist the change implementers, due to their own shortcomings. It is difficult for any person to provide guidance and support if that person does not have a clear understanding of that particular change.

Recommendations

Changes always imply learning to do things differently and that requires new skills. Therefore, college principals, as heads of institutions, need to be always on the forefront of communicating new changes and ensuring that people cope with these new changes. For college principals to be able to communicate new changes to the people on the ground and ensure that these people cope with such changes, the DHET must provide adequate training to the college principals. The department needs to ensure that college leaders clearly understand the changes introduced and also support such changes because they see the need of introducing these changes. Proper training would enable the college principals to communicate educational changes to the stakeholders and implementers successfully.

Participants complained that educational reforms are not implemented successfully at the majority of public colleges because the DHET does not provide adequate support. Therefore, the necessary support must be provided to public colleges, especially during the initial stages of the new changes. Providing the necessary support implies that the department should find out from these college principals what support colleges require, instead of deciding what support to offer. College principals would require different kind of supports because they operate in different and unique conditions and the department (DHET) should always consider this when introducing new changes. This can assist in strengthening the role of strategic leadership in providing proper direction, so that public college can be able to meet their obligations.

6.3.2 Effects of educational reforms on the leadership roles of the college principal

Findings reveal that educational reforms witnessed in the public TVET colleges bring new challenges on how different people perform their different roles in public colleges to meet the

new demands. These new changes, thus, mean that people have to change the way of doing things that they have been accustomed to. Thus, the roles and duties of the individuals have to be aligned to the new tasks that need to be performed, because of the changes introduced. The college principal, therefore, needs to ensure that he/she does not only understand his/her new roles but also that other individuals at the college understand their new roles for the college to perform optimally. Changing roles means acquiring new skills (cf. 6.3.1).

It also transpired from this research that the volume of changes being witnessed in the TVET sector requires college principals to attend meetings and workshops on a regular basis. Consequently, college principals end up having little time to attend to their normal duties. Undoubtedly, this is a challenge because college principals as strategic leaders are required most at their institutions during the times of changes in order to provide guidance and directions to the employees. It transpired in this study that the college principal leadership role is affected negatively during the time of implementing changes, as the principal is not always available to assist the employees with changes brought about by reform. Findings also reveal that lack of clear understanding of the changes has a negative impact on the college principal's leadership role, as the principal begins to lose confidence in him/herself. This affects the manner in which the college principal performs his/her duties. Apart from that, his/her subordinates may also lose confidence and trust in such a principal.

Recommendations

Without acquiring new skills, everyone expected to implement the new changes would be unable to perform his/her duties or tasks in accordance with the requirements demanded by the new changes. Therefore, all role-players should be equipped with new skills that would assist them to deal with the changes and perform their tasks effectively and efficiently. Therefore, before changes are introduced, those who are to implement these changes, or all role-players should be trained and prepared for the new developments. People are more likely to accept, deal and cope with the new developments if they have been prepared in advance as they would know exactly what is required of them.

Therefore, the recommendation is that the department should organise workshops and training so that college principals can be equipped with proper leadership and managerial skills. College leaders should understand how to deal with reforms before and when they are implementing

these educational reforms. College principals should be offered appropriate training and development on new responsibilities, so that they can perform their roles fruitfully. Importantly, workshops and training should be structured in such a way that college principals are not always away from their respective colleges because employees need them most during the time of implementing changes. Likewise, college principals should also organise workshops and training for employees and other relevant stakeholders not only to cascade information on new changes but also to ensure that everyone is appraised and developed on new roles emanating from reform. During the times of reform, public colleges should also become centres of developmental programmes whereby all stakeholders should be appraised and developed on how they are going to play their new roles going forward.

6.3.3 The role of leadership in the success or failure of the public college

The findings reveal that strategic leadership is crucial for the success of any organisation. The success or failure of any organisation is dependent, among other things, on its leadership (cf. 2.4; 5.5.2 & 5.5.3). Literature suggests that without strong leadership, particular strategic leadership, organisations can hardly achieve their goals and objectives. According to the findings of this research, a number of organisations fail because they lack leadership. For example, the study reveals that poor leadership is a cause of many challenges facing public TVET colleges in South Africa (cf. 5.5.2). Most participants concur with literature that poor leadership leads to poor decisions which then compromise the functionality of the public college.

However, the study reveals that little has been done in the country to ensure that public TVET college leaders acquire adequate skills that would enable them to lead their institutions competently (cf. 5.5.2). Findings also show that most college principals lack effective communication skills. As a result, they do not communicate effectively with subordinates, and this affects the performance of the institution. The study reveals that, in most cases, college principals rely on a top-down approach when communicating with the subordinates. In such cases, the ideas and opinions of the subordinates are not considered.

Recommendations

One cannot over-emphasise the importance of addressing the issue of leadership, especially for public college principals and other leaders at these colleges. It is recommended that college principals, deputy principals and other leaders at public colleges should acquire the necessary skills in leadership, especially strategic leadership, that would assist them lead these colleges effectively. Likewise, the newly appointed college principals and deputy principals should be mentored to acquaint them with their new roles (cf. 5.5.2).

It is also important that college principals and deputy principals should have extensive training on communication skills, so that they acquire effective communication skills. College principals should know when and how to communicate and to appreciate the ideas and opinions of the subordinates with empathy. College principals should always remember that they are leaders among equals. Therefore, it is important to share leadership for the benefit of the public colleges.

6.3.4 Understanding the role of the college principal by the stakeholders

The college principal plays a crucial role not only for ensuring that reforms are implemented successfully but also for the general and effective functioning and performance of the public college. However, the study reveals that most public colleges do not perform effectively not only because college principals lack the leadership competences and the necessary skills but also because a number of stakeholders do not understand the role of college principals. As a result, some public college principals have lost the confidence of their employees and along the way the performance of these public colleges is crippled. What compounds the problem, is that some principals are struggling to perform their roles effectively.

The study reveals that lack of effective communication from the office of the college principal is one of the major causes that result in the stakeholders' lack of understanding of the college principal's role. Findings suggest that there is a strong need for college principals to have regular meetings with the employees, students (through the SRC), and other relevant stakeholders. For example, labour unions, community leaders and business leaders should be consulted so that all stakeholders are in a position to understand the role of the college principal and work with the college principal towards the success of the college. It also transpired in this

study that the college principal cannot succeed in performing his/her roles without the support of the other role-players. Therefore, these individuals should also know, understand and perform their respective roles effectively and efficiently, so that the college achieves its set goals.

Recommendations

In assisting employees and other relevant role-players in performing their respective duties successfully, college principals need to ensure that all role-players understand not only the roles of the college principal but their own roles as well. This can only happen if college principals have regular meetings and/or interactions with the role-players. All relevant stakeholders should be always kept informed about the new developments taking place at the college. Likewise, college principals should ensure that employees are assisted in addressing the things that may hinder the well-being of the college.

To help the stakeholders or role-players to understand not only the role of the college principal but also their roles, college principals should inculcate the culture of working together. Teamwork should be encouraged at all levels and this can promote the culture of belonging among the employees, resulting in the employees' diligence.

6.3.5 The role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of the public college

The research reveals that public college principals play an important role in the performance of colleges, especially during times of change. Findings reveal that college principals as strategic leaders should perform both visionary and managerial roles for the success of the college. The research also reveals that a number of public colleges fail to achieve their goals and objectives because their leaders (college principals) lack the necessary leadership skills. According to the findings, in spite of leadership being regarded as a catalyst for the success of the organisation, very little is done in the country to ensure that public college leaders acquire adequate proper training and development in order to perform their duties successfully (cf. 5.5.2 & 6.3.3).

The study also reveals that successful organisations are led by strategic leaders. Various studies emphasise the importance of strategic leadership in the performance of any organisation (Gupta, 2018; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018; Mjaku, 2020; Zakaria et al., 2021). The role of strategic leadership is very important in guiding the performance of the public college. However, findings

show that the majority of public college principals do not perform this role adequately. This can be ascribed to the lack of understanding of this crucial role (strategic leadership role). The research reveals that the majority of the principals and deputy principals were not sure of the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public colleges. To them, the role of strategic leadership is only about strategic planning. Compounding the problem, is that public colleges get a template created by the DHET that colleges are required to fill in when doing strategic planning (cf. 5.7.4). This demonstrates that public colleges do not formulate and design their own strategic planning, but they just comply with what has been designed by the department.

It also transpired during the interviews that college principals and deputy principals are not provided with adequate training on leadership, especially strategic leadership. This concurs with the study conducted by OECD (2021), which revealed that college principals lack training on leadership and required relevant skills to be able to perform their respective roles and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Undoubtedly, lack of training on leadership, particularly on strategic leadership, affects the manner in which these leaders perform their strategic leadership role as strategic leaders and the performance of their institutions. Overall, findings reveal that college principals are not involved in formulating and designing strategies for their colleges, expect to fine-tune what the department has designed. In a nutshell, findings demonstrate that public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal face many challenges. As a result, the performance of these colleges is below par because college principals do not fulfil their strategic leadership role effectively. Compounding the problem is the lack of support and training from the Department of Higher Education and Training and the lack of understanding of strategic leadership and its importance by college leaders. This hinders the performance of public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal to the detriment of economic development and societal well-being.

Nevertheless, the research shows that the action or series of actions that college principals, as strategic leaders take in guiding the performance of public colleges can decide the fate of their colleges. Literature suggests that institutions of higher learning need visionary leaders whose eyes are on the future and who ensure that employees keep pace with the reforms taking place inside and outside the organisation (cf. 5.7.4). College leaders should ensure that public colleges focus on providing vocational training and relevant skills, so that graduates are employable or could become entrepreneurs.

Recommendations

For college principals as, strategic leaders to guide the performance of public colleges to achieve the desired outcomes effectively, they must formulate and design strategies according to the needs of their respective colleges. The DHET must refrain from formulating and designing strategic plans for public colleges. The department should only properly guide public colleges in designing the strategic plans.

Lack of understanding of strategic leadership means those college principals, deputy principals and other people occupying leadership positions at public colleges need to be offered more training on leadership, especially strategic leadership. Without understanding what strategic leadership entails, college leaders cannot perform their strategic leadership role adequately. For any organisation, including public TVET colleges, to perform optimally, strategic leadership is a prerequisite. Although the DHET has an important role in ensuring that college leadership are trained on strategic leadership, college leaders especially college principals should also ensure that training programmes are organised so that college leaders acquire the necessary leadership skills and become competent.

6.3.6 TVET and development of the economy of the country

The study reveals that public colleges are crucial to the development of the economy of any country (both developed and developing). It transpired from this study that TVET colleges need to provide skills that every country requires to deal with ever-changing technology, the economy and the social environment (Makibinyane & Khumalo, 2021).

Findings also reveal that most occupations in the world require the application of technical and vocational skills (Makibinyane & Khumalo, 2021). In spite of the importance of TVET colleges in providing skills and the attention that has been given to this sector because of its importance, the study reveals that TVET colleges are not equal to the task and fail to respond to the requirements of industry (cf. 1.1; 3.4 & 3.5.2). Clearly, public TVET colleges are failing to deal with youth unemployment and poverty. This emanates from the interactions between the researcher and the participants who claimed that public colleges are not focusing on technical and vocational programmes. According to the participants, the DHET is subsidising programmes that are called ministerial programmes and most of these programmes are not

technical and vocational in nature. For example, Human Resource Management, Marketing, Public Relations and Public Management are some of the ministerial programmes, which are funded (cf. 5.6.1.1).

The study reveals that the majority of the graduates from public colleges are not easily employed after graduating because of the qualifications that they possess. It transpired from this study that most programmes at public colleges are over-saturated. As a result, most students become redundant after graduating from public colleges, as they are not easily absorbed by industry. It was also discovered that, in most cases, syllabi for these non-technical programmes are not updated and are irrelevant to the current situation. The college principals as strategic leaders are supposed to address any challenges facing their colleges. However, the study reveals that the public college principals do not have the prerogative to introduce or discontinue a programme without the approval from the DHET.

Findings also reveal that for public TVET colleges to offer skills or occupational programmes (short courses); they must apply for funding from the SETAs. In essence, public colleges rely on the SETAs for funding in order to offer the kind of programmes, which should be the backbone of the TVET college as these programmes provide skills required by the labour market.

Recommendations

For public TVET colleges to contribute to the national development in any country, it is important that these colleges focus on technical and vocational programmes solely. Clearly, the programmes that public colleges offer currently should be revisited and those programmes that are not technical and vocational should be discontinued. TVET colleges should focus on practical programmes to address the needs of the industry.

It is recommended that the DHET should give more powers to college principals to decide on programmes that they require for their colleges in order to address their unique challenges. The department must also subsidise the occupational programmes, instead of giving funds to the SETAs to fund the colleges. In fact, the department should put more money into the occupation programmes (short courses), since they address the shortage of skills. This subsequently assists in promoting socio-economic development in the country.

6.3.7 TVET and partnerships with employers

Literature stresses the importance of strong partnership between TVET sector and companies to ensure that the skills shortage is addressed. Findings reveal that partnerships between TVET and industry is crucial in order not only to align it with what the workplace requires but also to establish a good working relationship between the two parties, namely, the TVET sector and industry (cf. 2.4.6). However, the research reveals that partnership between the TVET sector and labour market is lacking and sometimes non-existent in a number of countries, especially developing countries (cf. 3.4.3). It also transpired in this study that because of this gap (lack of partnership), college curricula are not well aligned with the needs of the labour market.

The main purpose of the TVET sector to train students is to prepare them to be easily absorbed by industry. Therefore, colleges and industry should work collaboratively for the benefit of both parties. The study reveals that public colleges should grasp the need for and importance of forging partnerships with employers. However, some participants were unsure who should approach whom (between the college & the employer/industry) in order to forge or form that partnership. This conclusion was drawn when a number of the participants said: *“We want to work with them (employers), but the problem is that they do not come to us (public colleges)”*. The study found that most public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal do not have well-established partnerships with employers, especially industries. It was found that some colleges had signed memoranda of understandings with some employers, which are not functional because colleges struggle to place students at these companies.

The study also reveals that public colleges in rural areas suffer most when it comes to partnerships. In rural areas, there are no or only limited numbers of companies and forming partnerships is, therefore, not easy (cf. 5.6.2). Companies in urban areas prefer to work with public colleges within the surrounding area than those who are situated in the rural areas.

Recommendations

Involving companies, especially industries in the development of the curriculum for public colleges, could help in strengthening the partnership between companies/employers and public colleges. It is, therefore, recommended that public colleges should form strong partnerships with companies whereby companies would be part in the development of the curriculum, as well as

advising public colleges which programmes colleges should offer. Involving companies in the development of the curriculum could assist in ensuring that the curriculum meets the standards required by industry and keeps pace with global technological changes (cf. 5.6.2.1).

Undoubtedly, strong partnerships between public colleges and companies/employers (industries) can be formed and maintained whereby effective leaders, especially strategic leaders, lead public colleges. Such leaders would have a clear vision for their colleges and see the need of ensuring that experts from companies are invited to the respective committees where curriculum related issues are discussed and decided upon. Positive reaction of public colleges to the requirements of companies can only be realised if public colleges and the DHET ensure that companies, especially industries, are part of developing and designing the curriculum for TVET colleges. Therefore, curriculum should be local-based.

6.3.8 The impact of educational reforms on the performance of TVET colleges

Generally, educational reforms are highly complex and, in most cases, they involve various stakeholders. Because of their complexity, as well as the number of stakeholders involved, reforms do not always yield the intended or desired outcomes. Hence, this study found that well-intentioned educational reforms do not yield positive results because of the way that such reforms were introduced, communicated, handled, managed and maintained. The study reveals that for any reform or change to be successful, it should have buy-in of all those to be affected by such reforms.

Findings of this study confirm views that regard strategic leadership is an important element that leads to organisational success, especially during the time of changes or reform because strategic leadership determines the survival or failure of the organisation. However, it transpired in the study that not only leadership influences the performance of the organisation, but also employees play an important role in the success of change and the performance of the organisation. It is the employees who do the actual work, implementing the reforms or changes and, thus, they should be assisted in order to perform their tasks as desired. As Ichsan, Nasution, Sinaga and Marwan (2021) allude, the performance of the employees determines the success or failure of an organisation. Findings indicated that roles played all stakeholders, especially college leaders together with employees, are crucial for the success of the organisation because changes or reforms influence these roles.

The study also reveals that educational reforms may have a negative impact if college principals and other college leaders who communicate these reforms to the employees and other relevant stakeholders have not been given adequate and appropriate training. In addition, college leaders need enough time to familiarise themselves with these reforms or changes before communicating them to the people on the ground.

Recommendations

For educational reforms or changes to be accepted and implemented successfully, it is recommended that changes or reforms should not be imposed but all role-players should be made to understand the reform, its purpose and the implications thereof. Changes that are well understood by the implementers can be implemented effectively, which can impact positively to the performance of the college.

Educational reforms can be implemented successfully if college principals as strategic leaders are able to address appropriately uncertainties, tensions and contradictions brought about by these reforms. Thus, it is recommended that college principals and other college leaders must be given sufficient training on change management to enable them to be effective change agents. This will enable college leaders to make changes more effectively. As Burner (2018) suggests, leaders should be able to use tensions and contradictions as assets rather than hindrances. However, this cannot be possible without adequate training. Therefore, college leaders should be trained on how to lead educational reforms or changes successfully.

Evidently, there is a need for involving the employees in decision making, especially when changes are being introduced because they are not only implementers, but also directly affected by such change. Thus, college leaders should ensure that communication channels are open and maintained at all costs, especially during reform. This is in accordance with what Carlyon and Branson (2018) postulate that implementers of reforms do not appreciate being told what is going to occur but they prefer being involved in discussions and having their voices heard.

6.3.9 Public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal

Educational reforms are being implemented in all public colleges in South Africa, including public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Nevertheless, the investigation shows that these educational

reforms are not always effectively implemented for various reasons. For example, public colleges, especially those in rural areas do not have enough resources to assist them in the implementation of the reform or change initiatives. Consequently, these colleges find it difficult to implement these reforms effectively. This affects the manner in which these reforms are implemented at public colleges.

The study reveals that South African public TVET colleges are not doing well, regarding throughput and retention rates, as well as certification rates (cf. 5.7). Obviously, public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal are no exception and the participants in this study confirmed that their colleges are not doing well. Participants cited various factors that contribute to the failure of public colleges to perform effectively and/or to achieve their set goals and objectives. Findings confirm that the majority of public colleges in South Africa, including those in KwaZulu-Natal have unqualified and/or under-qualified lecturers, shortage or lack of resources (human, physical & financial), poor calibre of students and lack of management skills (cf. 5.7 & 5.7.1). These issues should be addressed to allow any institution to perform effectively and efficiently and achieve its goals successfully.

However, the study also illustrates that it is not all doom and gloom in terms of the situation of KwaZulu-Natal public colleges. In spite of the challenges faced by public colleges countrywide, the undertaken study found some colleges in KwaZulu-Natal are doing their best to achieve their set goals.

Recommendations

The implementation of any change initiative is dependent of the availability of resources. Without the necessary resources, no reform or change initiative can be implemented properly. Therefore, public colleges should be assisted to acquire the necessary resources that will enable them to perform their activities effectively. For example, college leaders should be equipped with fundraising skills so that they can approach the local businesses for funds. Strong partnerships can also help the colleges that are struggling by making funds available so that these colleges can purchase the required resources. Therefore, it is recommended that struggling colleges should approach the local businesses or companies for sponsorships in whatever form for their survival.

However, it will not be easy for public colleges in rural areas because there are limited companies in those vicinities to assist these colleges. Thus, the DHET must make more funds available for them. In terms of unqualified or under-qualified lecturers, the department should provide bursaries with conditions for lecturers to assist them improve their qualifications for the benefit of the sector.

6.3.10 Addressing challenges faced by public TVET colleges

The study reveals that the TVET sector globally has numerous challenges, which make it difficult to perform effectively and efficiently. The major challenges facing public TVET colleges in this country, including those public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal are lack of funding, shortage of resources, lack of accommodation for students and lack of partnerships with companies, especially industry. These challenges are not inclusive; there are other challenges that hinder the performance of public colleges in the country. However, the participants were of the view that these are the main challenges, as they impact negatively on the performance of the student in the classroom (cf. 5.6.3).

It became apparent from the study that college principals alone cannot address some of these challenges but a concerted effort from other stakeholders is required. For example, the DHET as the employer, businesses through corporate social responsibilities and community leaders should work with colleges so that problems facing public colleges are addressed. As long as challenges facing public colleges are not resolved or addressed, public colleges will always struggle to fulfil the mandate of the DHET.

Recommendations

For public TVET colleges to succeed, challenges facing these colleges need to be addressed sooner than later. Undoubtedly, college principals, as leaders of these colleges, should take a lead not only in ensuring that challenges are addressed but also in ensuring that public colleges in South Africa move from strength to strength.

Arguably, some of the challenges are beyond the scope of colleges, for example, the issue of funding and the problem of accommodation. Therefore, the department should give more funds to public colleges, so that these colleges would be able to address these challenges. For example,

if the department could make more funds available, colleges could buy the necessary resources and equipment for their workshops. With regard to student accommodation, the researcher is of the view that the department needs to review the allowances for accommodation for DHET/NSFAS bursary beneficiaries. The immediate solution is to increase accommodation allowances for TVET college students because colleges cannot build residences for their students.

6.3.11 Support required for improving the performance of public colleges

The study reveals that public colleges in the country do not get enough support, especially from the DHET, their employer. This lack of support impedes the performance of these public colleges. For example, the research reveals that the department officials doing monitoring and evaluation identify gaps at the college but do not assist in addressing those gaps (cf. 5.6.4).

The study reveals that college principals are not assisted in mastering the content of educational reforms to ensure that they can cope with the new changes. This lack of adequate support continues to hamper positive reform and negatively affects the performance of public TVET colleges (cf. 5.7.2). It transpired from this study that this lack of adequate support to college principals, especially during the time of changes results in these principals sometimes communicating information to their subordinates that they themselves do not thoroughly grasp. This has dire consequences for the performance of the college, as employees perform their tasks in a hit-and-miss fashion. The study also reveals that college principals are not adequately trained to cope with new changes required to train subordinates confidently and this has a negative bearing on the performance of public colleges.

Findings also reveal that public colleges also require support for companies, in terms of placing their students and lecturers for experiential training, as well as for sponsorships but support is not forthcoming, in most cases. Participants also complained about the lack of support from the local communities. For example, one participant maintained that some community members tend to promote political agendas within the colleges and this affects the performance of the college negatively.

Recommendations

For public colleges to improve their performance, they should be provided with adequate and necessary support. The DHET should ensure that public TVET colleges are supported at all costs, so that they can address the shortage of skills in the country.

Although the college principal, as the head of the college should go out of his/her way to ensure that he/she seeks assistance from outside, the department should always support college principals to get assistance, which can help to improve the performance of the college. It is also advisable that college principals' network not only with principals of other colleges (public & private colleges) but also with leaders of various organisations or companies, both public and private organisations. Networking is an effective way of getting to know people and harnessing assistance from outside. It helps one to know and understand how other people deal and/or cope with different challenges.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research identified areas for future research or study, which could add further value to the TVET sector. The findings of this study, which is on the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance looking at it from the view of public vocational colleges, suggest the need to prioritise the following areas to acquire further knowledge.

Qualitative research methodology is regarded as an appropriate research approach that should be used because it allows those who participate in the study (participants or respondents) the opportunity to discuss issues that they regard as important to them in the manner in which they perceive these issues from their own point of view (cf. 4.3.1.7). Qualitative research methodology is suitable in a situation whereby the researcher interacts one-on-one with the participants when acquiring the information because participants are the main source of information. Qualitative research enables the researcher to understand what is being studied from the perspective of the participants (cf. 4.3). Qualitative research is recommended if the researcher wants to delve deep to obtain relevant information from the participants because the quantitative research approach cannot describe and/or interpret the situation appropriately (cf. 4.3).

Although TVET colleges are considered crucial in the provision of skills, which assist in the development of the economy of the country, research on leadership in the TVET sector and issues related to it are still neglected (cf. 1.3; 2.4.4; 4.3; 5.5.2 & 6.2). Research indicates that not much has been done on strategic leadership when it comes to TVET colleges (cf. 1.3). Evidently, the role of strategic leadership in guiding the performance of the public colleges has never been pursued. The use of qualitative research approach can assist in understanding the phenomenon better because the subject is viewed from the perspective of those who are regarded as having depth knowledge of what is happening at public colleges (cf. 4.3). The purpose of this study was to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance, looking at it from the public vocational college viewpoint.

However, there are many aspects that relate to leadership, particularly strategic leadership that need detailed research in the TVET sector. The following are some, but not limited to these aspects:

- Strategies to address challenges facing the previously disadvantaged public colleges.
- Strategies to assist college principals of public colleges to improve their strategic leadership skills.
- The college principal's role in the implementation of educational reforms.
- Training of college principals to be effective change agents.
- The role of the DHET in the support of public TVET college principals in improving the performance of the public colleges.
- The role of the college principal in forging partnerships with companies

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) argue that no research is without limitations and all studies have flaws, which can influence the outcome of the study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) regard limitations as any factors or potential weaknesses that can have a bearing on the study but the researcher has no control over such factors. Akanle, Ademuson and Shittu (2020) argue that limitations of the study should not be viewed as negative issues or problems that reduce the usefulness and validity of the study but should be viewed as constraints or challenges that may influence the results and interpretations of those results that researchers face during the study.

Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) maintain that it is important that researchers communicate the limitations of the study in a complete and honest manner.

Akanle et al. (2020) claim that there is no perfectly designed study, all studies irrespective of how well they are planned or conducted have limitations. Likewise, this study has some limitations. This research aimed at determining the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of public TVET colleges as perceived by department officials, college principals and college deputy principals. Although the undertaken study demonstrated some strengths, there also some limitations of such an investigation that have been identified. The first limitation is that the data were collected only from nine public TVET colleges that are based in KwaZulu-Natal. As a result, private TVET colleges that are based in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as public TVET colleges in the other eight provinces in South Africa, were excluded from this study. Thus, the findings of this study may be limited to the sample studied. Since only public TVET colleges in one province (KwaZulu-Natal) are involved in this study, it is possible that a different picture would be painted if all public TVET colleges in South Africa were involved in this study (cf. 1.6). The involvement of a small number of participants and/or public colleges was one of the disadvantages of this study (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018).

The other limitation is that this particular study was qualitative in nature, and the small sample size dictated by the type of research problem was used. Although qualitative research approach accepts the use of a small sample size in a qualitative study, the small sample size used in this study is also regarded as a limitation. Therefore, future studies with a bigger sample size on the role of strategic leadership in public TVET colleges should be undertaken in order to confirm the results and/or findings obtained by this study. Although there is no guarantee that a larger sample size would result in more accurate outcome, possibilities exist that participants from public TVET colleges in other provinces and/or private TVET colleges would have disclosed different findings. If more TVET colleges were included in this study, different results might have been obtained. Limited research on leadership, especially strategic leadership in the TVET sector in South Africa, was also a shortcoming of this study. To counterbalance this limitation, the researcher relied heavily on the international literature. As Vargas and Mancina (2019) point out, the lack of previous research on strategic leadership in the TVET sector is considered as a limitation of the study. However, this limitation helped the researcher in identifying new gaps in the literature that need further research (Vargas & Mancina, 2019).

In spite of limitations, the rich data obtained yielded valuable information, which may be used for other studies. In addition, through data gathering, salient points provide a better insight into the role of strategic leadership in the performance of public colleges. As such, these key areas also identified aspects that could be pursued for further research (cf. 6.4).

6.6 SUMMARY

As the case in other countries globally, South Africa has also made attempts not only to revitalise the TVET sector but also to improve the performance of the public TVET colleges countrywide. As a result, a number of educational reforms are being introduced. However, these reforms are not effectively implemented because of the manner in which they are communicated. The research reveals that educational initiatives are not properly implemented, since some stakeholders do not understand their new roles and fail to perform such new roles effectively. What compounds the problem is that college principals in this study seemed to be uncertain of the role of strategic leadership and principals claimed that they had never received any training on strategic leadership. This affects the manner in which public colleges perform.

In addition, college principals and deputy principals alleged that they do not get adequate and appropriate support from the DHET, particularly from the regional office. Yet the majority of the public colleges in the country, including those in KwaZulu-Natal are confronted by challenges, which they struggle to deal with and require assistance to overcome. Certainly, public TVET colleges can only succeed in carrying out their mandate of providing relevant skills to their students that meet the expectations of the labour market, improving lives of the people and developing the economy of the country successfully if all stakeholders work collaboratively and with commitment. Hurdles that prevent public colleges from maximising their performance to achieve their intended goals should be adequately addressed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Request for permission to conduct research at public TVET colleges

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PUBLIC TVET COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

TITLE: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLE IN GUIDING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

14 October 2019

The Regional Manager
KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Office
47 Prince Alfred Street
PIETERMARITZBURG
3200

Dear Dr S. J. Nzimande

I, student researcher, Sipho Patrick Mazibuko am doing research with Noel T. Ngwenya a Professor in the Department of Leadership and Organisational Dynamics towards a Doctor of Business Leadership degree at the University of South Africa's School of Business Leadership. Presently, I have a relationship with public TVET (TVET) colleges, as I am working as a Student Support Manager at one of the public colleges in KwaZulu-Natal province.

I am currently engaged in a research project with the following specific details:

- The aim of the study is to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions looking it from public vocational colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal perspective.
- The study will entail conducting individual interviews not only with the Regional Officials but also with the College Principals as well as with all Deputy Principals of the selected colleges. The researcher will also observe activities as they take place at these institutions and the researcher will take notes during these observations. As a result, KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Officials; College Principals and Deputy Principals will be requested to

participate in these individual interviews. Therefore, the selected participants and I will meet and talk about the issues relevant and affecting colleges in general and their respective colleges in particular. The researcher will use a tape recorder in order to capture everything that will be discussed.

- The benefits of this study are improved organisational performance, since the study involves people at the high rank in the colleges and the discussion will be focusing on things that are directly affecting public colleges in the provinces and the manner in which Senior Management Teams (Principals and Deputy Principals) perform their respective tasks. It is hoped that participants, being in-charge of their respective colleges may review their leadership styles; managerial skills and the manner in which they address challenges after having participated in these individual interviews.
- Potential risks are: There are no foreseen risks that can impact negatively on this study. As indicated, the study involves individual interviews and this means that there will be no other person (s) present during these interviews. Thus, the participants will not feel uncomfortable and/or intimidated about what will be discussed. Therefore, none of the participants, including the researcher will be exposed to any harm or danger during this project. Above that, information obtained from the discussions between the researcher and the participants will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants.
- Feedback procedure will entail participants requesting the researcher to provide the findings or results of the study. Therefore, the researcher will provide the participants his contact details so that the participants could be able to contact him should they require feedback on the findings or results after the study has been completed.
- TVET colleges have been selected to participate in this study because the focus of the study is on the public TVET colleges. Meanwhile, the regional office has been chosen because it is this office that represent the National DHET at a Provincial level. The Regional office is responsible for the smooth running of public colleges at Provincial level.
- The involvement of the data collection at these institutions will entail not only observations what is happening at the chosen sites but also conducting interviews with the individuals at the senior level. For example, conducting individual interviews with the Regional Manager and the other Senior Manager. In terms of public colleges, individual interviews will be conducted with the College Principals as well as the Deputy Principals as they are the ones responsible for the smooth running of their respective colleges.

According to the UNISA Research Ethics Policy, the following should be noted:

- All participation will be on a voluntary basis, with the participant's prior consent and right to exit the process at any time without any recourse,
- All information gathered will remain as the property of the researcher and UNISA and will only be used for this research project,
- The data will be securely maintained by the researcher for a period of 5 years after which it will be destroyed,
- The researcher will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their respective institutions.
- There will be no payment, gifts, rewards or any other incentives to the participants

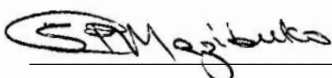
Please note that the researcher would require permission towards his application for Ethical Clearance prior to conducting the research. The researcher would forward you a copy of the certificate when obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

You are also free to engage with the researcher at the following contact details: mobile phone: 082 4479 815 or emails: siphomaz@absamail.co.za or mazibukopat@gmail.com or his supervisor, Professor N.T. Ngwenya at the following contact details: work telephone: 011 652 0366 or e-mail: ngwennt@unisa.ac.za.

Please use "***template granting of institutional permission for research***" which is provided with this request for the granting of the requested permission. This template must be placed onto your company letterhead.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely



S. P. Mazibuko (Dr)

Doctor of Business Leadership student – UNISA

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

14 June 2021

Title: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLE IN GUIDING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Sipho Patrick Mazibuko and I am doing research with Professor Noel Thamsanqa Ngwenya in the Department of Leadership and Organisational Dynamics towards a Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL) Degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA). We are kindly inviting you to participate in a study, “The role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance: a case of public vocational colleges in Kwa–Zulu Natal”.

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of this study is to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding performance of higher education institutions looking it from the public vocational colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal perspective.

I am conducting this research to find out how the role of strategic leadership can assist in guiding the organisational performance of TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The Departmental Officials has been chosen to participate in an individual interview because they are regarded as an information rich person, as the officials who are in-charge or responsible of public TVET college in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher is not only a local person but is also working at one of the TVET colleges in the province. As a result, he is familiar with the locality of the colleges in the province and he knows most of the people, especially those who are occupying senior positions at colleges in this province. Thus, obtaining

their contact details will not be a problem. Although the researcher is familiar with the majority of the participants, he requested an access from the principal of each college and after that; the researcher formally requested the contact details from the prospective participants, in case some of the telephone numbers have changed. The principal and his/her deputies were chosen because they are in-charge of the college and the focus of this study is on the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance. The principal and his /her deputies perform this role at different levels. In total, there will be thirty-one (31) people participating in this study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY/WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

The study involves individual interviews but the researcher will also observe activities as they take place in your organisation (college) and the researcher will take notes during these observations. As a college principal/deputy principal, you are requested to participate in an individual interview. Thus, you and I will meet and talk about the issues relevant and affecting colleges in general and your college in particular. The discussion and questions will focus on three main issues: (i) strategic leadership, (ii) public TVET colleges and (iii) performance of public colleges. The interviews will take one (1) hour or at most an hour and half but not more than that. I also request permission to use a digital recorder during these interviews.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

I wish to assure you that this study is voluntary. Thus, you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. However, I must point out that it will not be possible to withdraw after the study has been done, that is, once the interviews have already been conducted.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

It is hoped that participating in this study will benefit you as a person, your employees as well as the college at large, as we will be discussing things that are directly affecting your college and the manner in which tasks are performed, especially at the upper level. I think these interviews will make you and your colleagues to relook at how the college is run. This may improve the performance of everyone associated with the college.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

I know that participating in this study will somehow inconvenience you as the study may take the time that you might have budgeted for something else. However, I request that you decide and let me know which time will be convenient for you. I do not think that you will have any discomfort, as we will be doing individual interviews and there will be no other persons present.

I do not foresee any risks of harm as the area in which your college is located. Besides that, these interviews will take place in your premises during the day.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

I wish to assure you that any information that you will supply me during this study will be confidential. I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity. Your answers will also be given fictitious code numbers and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Although I will transcribe and code the data myself, my supervisor and members of the Research Ethics Committee may view your answers. These individuals may view your answers to ascertain whether the study is done properly. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

I wish to inform you that, although, your name and information will be confidential, your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, for example, journal articles, conference presentation etcetera. As indicated above, I will use pseudonyms to protect your identity, in any publication of the information. Please also note that a report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of 5 years in a safe place at the researcher house for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Electronic information will be deleted from the discs and the hard copies will be shredded.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Please note that you will receive no payment or reward for participating in this study. Since the study will take place at your place/place of work, you will not incur any costs during this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has not yet received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, UNISA. Should you require a copy of the approval letter; the researcher will forward it you, once received from the Research Ethics Committee.

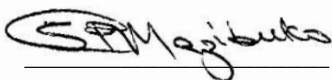
HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, you may contact me at the following contact details: mobile phone: 0824479 815; e-mails: siphomaz@absamail.co.za or mazibukopat@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my promoter (supervisor) at the following contact details: work telephone: 011 652 0366 or e-mails: ngwennt@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thanking you in anticipation.



S. P. Mazibuko (Dr)

Doctor of Business Leadership student – UNISA

Appendix C: Granting of institutional permission for research



KZN REGIONAL OFFICE

Enquiries: Moetsela.L@dhet.gov.za

Tel: 033 342 1964

GRANTING OF INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH


Dear Dr S. P. Mazibuko

I, Siphon J Nzimande (Ph. D), the Regional Manager of Department of Higher Education and Training KwaZulu-Natal grant permission to collect data at KZN TVET Colleges for your research project titled “Strategic leadership role in guiding organisational performance: a case of public vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal” as indicated in your request.

I grant this permission as the authorised person to do so in these colleges and am aware of the following:

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA research and remains the property of UNISA.
2. You cannot use the name of the colleges in your research project.
3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.
4. I will not require feedback of the research.
5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor.

I wish you the best and success in this research.



Siphon J. Nzimande (Ph.D)

DHET: KZN Regional Manager

Email: Nozaba1@gmail.com

Email: Moetsela.l@dhet.gov.za

033 342 1964

Appendix D: Informed consent for participation in an academic research project

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLE IN GUIDING PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN KWA-ZULU NATAL

Dear Sir/Madam

You are herewith invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Siphon Patrick Mazibuko, a student in the Doctor of Business Leadership at UNISA's Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL).

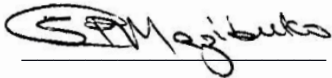
The purpose of the study is to determine the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance of higher education institutions looking at it from a selected number of public vocational colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal perspective. Please note that all your answers will be treated as confidential and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research.

Your participation in this study is very important to us. However, you may choose not to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The study will be in the form of interviews (individual interviews) whereby you and I will meet and talk about the issues relevant and affecting colleges in general and your college in particular. I, therefore, request permission to visit your college in order to conduct individual interviews with you and your deputies regarding your views on the role of strategic leadership in guiding organisational performance in public TVET college.

Your college's participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time with any negative consequences. Please note that the results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please contact my supervisor, Professor N.T. Ngwenya at the following contact details: work telephone: 011 652 0366 or e-mails: ngwennt@unisa.ac.za, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study. Please sign below to indicate your willingness to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely



S. P. Mazibuko (Dr)

Doctor of Business Leadership student – UNISA

.....

I, _____, herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand my rights with regard to participating in the research.

Respondent's signature

Date

Appendix E: Decision – Ethical approval

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa
Cnr Janadri and Alexander Avenues, Midrand, 1685, Tel: +27 11 652 0000, Fax: +27 11 652 0299
E-mail: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.unisa.ac.za/sbl

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

16 August 2021

Ref #: 2021_SBL_DBL_004_FA
Name of applicant: Dr SP
Mazibuko
Student #: 5640113

Dear Dr Mazibuko

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Dr SP Mazibuko, (5640113@mylife.unisa.ac.za , 082 4479 815)

Supervisor: Prof NT Ngwenya, (ngwennt@unisa.ac.za, 011 652 0366)

Project Title: Strategic leadership role in guiding organisational performance: A case of public vocational colleges in Kwazulu-Natal.

Qualification: Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL)

Expiry Date: July 2023

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance, SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee:

Approval is granted for the duration of the Project

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 12/08/2021.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso 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.

- 3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.
- 4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.
- 5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

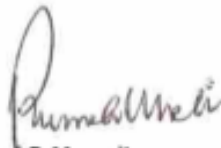
Kind regards,



Prof N Miltwa

Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 - 652 0000/ wiltonb@unisa.ac.za



Prof P Msweli

Executive Dean: Graduate School of Business Leadership

011- 652 0256/mswelp@unisa.ac.za

Appendix F: General information – College Principals

(a) Personal information

- Name
- Pseudonym:
- Age:
- Gender:
- Qualification:
- Years of experience as lecturer at the college:
- Years of experience as college principal:

(b) Information on college

- Name of college:
- Number of students:
- Number of teaching staff:
- Number of non-teaching (support) staff
- Number of campuses (sites)

(c) Training for principals

- General training for principalship:
- Duration of training:
- Who offered training?
- Training course/s on leadership and management
- Any other training or workshop

Appendix G: General information – Deputy Principals

(a) Personal information

- Name:
- Pseudonym:
- Age:
- Gender
- Qualification:
- Years of work experience:

(b) Professional development

- Training course/s attended:
- Training course/s leadership and management
- Who offered these courses?
- How are there courses offered?

Appendix H: General information – Regional DHET Officials

(a) Personal information

- Name:
- Pseudonym:
- Age:
- Gender:
- Qualification:
- Years of experience as provincial official:

(b) Training courses

- Number of training courses for principals per annum:
- Number of training for principals on leadership and management:
- Duration of training:
- Who offered the training?
- Number of training courses for deputy principals:

Appendix I: Interview guide – College Principals

The guide was used only to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide be used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues that were of concern to them.

(a) Educational changes/reforms

- Generally, there are a number of educational changes/reforms taking place in the country, how beneficial do you think these changes are?
- How do these changes/reforms affect you as a college principal?
- How do you communicate these changes to the stakeholders?

(b) Strategic leadership

- Could you please, take me through your leadership journey?
- What do you regard as your main responsibilities/duties as the college principal?
- What role do you think leadership plays in the success of a public TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal?
- Which aspects of leadership do you believe contribute to the success of a public college?
- What role do you believe leadership plays in the ability of a public college in KwaZulu-Natal to bounce back after experiencing difficulties?
- Could you please, share with me your understanding of strategic leadership?
- How do you ensure that all stakeholders understand your role as a strategic leader?
- What do you regard as the leadership role of the deputy principals?
- In your opinion, how has the introduction of educational reforms/changes in the TVET sector affected your role as a strategic leader?
- How do you ensure that people at all levels understand the strategy of the college?
- Please tell me, how do you ensure that the college has the ability to adapt to the changing circumstances?

(c) Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

- In your opinion, what is the general purpose of TVET?
- Could you please, share with me your understanding of TVET?

- In your view, what is your role in the TVET college?
- What do you regard as the role of deputy principals in the TVET college?
- Tell me, what is the college doing to meet the needs of the industry?
- What do you regard as the role of industry (employers) in TVET sector?
- How can the TVET colleges be used to address the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa, but in the province, in particular effectively?
- What areas in the college are considered very strong?
- What areas are considered weak?
- Considering the weaknesses, what are you planning to do to address these?
- What improvement strategies did you put in place to address areas that you felt the college not doing well?
- How are you going to ensure that all stakeholders support you in addressing these areas?
- What assistance do you need from the department?
- What assistance have you been given?
- With high sight, what have you learnt since you became the principal of the college?

(d) Organisational performance

- How would you describe the performance of the college, good or bad? Why?
- What do you understand by organisational performance?
- In your opinion, how do the educational changes/reforms take place impact on the performance of the TVET college?
- What are the main internal and external challenges that you are experiencing at the college, as a principal?
- What steps could the principal take to ensure that the college perform optimally?
- In your own view, how does strategic leadership influence the performance of public TVET colleges?
- How do you ensure that all employees (teaching & non-teaching) know how their efforts contribute to the success of the college?
- What support do you think you need a strategic leader to ensure the success of your college?
- What support do you think a college leader (principal) in KwaZulu-Natal needs to ensure that his/her college can bounce back after experiencing difficulties?

(e) Concluding remarks

- If you were to make suggestions about what is presently taking place in the TVET sector, what suggestions would you make?
- Given the fact that there are many changes or reforms taking place in the education system, how do you see your future as a college principal?

Appendix J: Interview guide – Deputy Principals

The guide was used only to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues that were of concern to them.

(a) Educational changes/reforms

- What is your feeling about the educational changes/reforms that are taking place in the country?
- How does the college principal ensure that you not only understand, but also cope with these changes/reforms?
- How are education policies communicated to you?

(b) Strategic leadership

- Could you please take me through your leadership journey?
- Tell me, what are your responsibilities/duties in your current position?
- What do you regard as the main responsibilities/duties of the college principal?
- What role do you think leadership plays in the success of a public TVET in KwaZulu-Natal?
- Could you please, share with me your understanding of strategic leadership?
- If you were to describe an effective strategic leadership, how would you describe him/her?
- What do you regard as the role of strategic leadership in the performance of TVET college?
- Please tell me, how does the principal ensure that people at all levels understand the strategy of the college?

(c) Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

- In your opinion, what is the general purpose of the TVET?
- Could you please, share with me your understanding of TVET?
- In your view, what is the critical role played by TVET colleges in the national development?
- What role of the college principal in the TVET college?
- Tell me, as a deputy principal, what strategic role do you play at the college?
- What do you regard as the role of industry (employers) in TVET sector?

- How does your college ensure that its programmes are matched with the needs of the labour market?
- What role are you playing in developing public awareness and understanding of the importance of TVET college in the economic development?
- How can TVET colleges be used to address the issues of youth unemployment in South Africa, but in the province, in particular effectively?

(c) Organisational performance

- How would you describe the performance of the college, good or bad? Why?
- What do you understand by organisational performance?
- In your opinion, how do the educational changes/reforms take place impact on the performance of TVET colleges?
- What are the main internal and external challenges experienced by the principal at the college?
- What are main internal and external challenges experienced by the principal at the college?
- Please tell me, how does the principal deal with the internal and external challenges?
- In your own view, how does strategic leadership influence the performance of public technical and vocational training colleges?
- As a deputy principal, how do you help the principal in dealing with challenges facing the college?
- What strategies do you have in place to ensure that your college becomes more competitive?

(e) Concluding remarks

- What comments would you like to share with me?
- Given the fact that there are many changes/reforms taking place in the education system, how do you see your future as a deputy principal?

Appendix K: Interview guide – KwaZulu-Natal DHET Regional Officials

The guide was used only to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues that were of concern to them.

(a) Educational changes/reforms

- Generally, there are a number of educational changes or reforms taking place in the country, how does the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) ensure that college principals are kept abreast with these changes/reforms?
- How do you feel about the changes/reforms that are passed on to the college principals?
- How do you communicate these changes to both college principals and other stakeholders, for example, employers and teaching and non-teaching personnel at different public colleges?
- In your opinion, how do college principals feel about these changes?

(b) Educational policies

- How do you communicate the policies of the DHET to the TVET colleges?
- How you ensure that these policies are effectively implemented at public colleges?
- What problems and/or concerns college principals or colleges regarding the educational policies are raising?
- As a DHET, how do you help college principals and/or public colleges to cope with these problems/concerns?

(c) Strategic leadership

- Could you please take me through your leadership journey?
- What do you regard as the main responsibilities/duties of the public college principal?
- What role do you think leadership plays in the success of a public TVET college in KwaZulu-Natal?
- Which aspects of leadership do you believe contribute to the success of a public college?
- In your view, how important leadership is in ensuring the ability of public TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal to bounce back after experiencing difficulties?

- Could you please share with me your understanding of strategic leadership?
- If you were to describe an effective strategic leadership, how would you describe him/her?
- What do you regard as the role of strategic leadership in the performance of a TVET college?
- In your opinion, how has the introduction of educational reforms/changes in the TVET sector affected the role of the college principal as a strategic leader?
- As a department, what strategies do you have in place to strengthen the role of strategic leadership within the TVET sector?

(d) Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

- In your opinion, what is the general purpose of the TVET?
- What do you understand by the concept TVET?
- In your view, what is the critical role played by TVET colleges in the national development?
- Please tell me, what is the DHET doing to improve the image of the public TVET sector in KwaZulu-Natal?
- In your view, what is the role of the college principal in the TVET college?
- What are the main internal and external challenges experienced by the public college principals in this province?
- Tell me, what support do you offer to the colleges in KwaZulu-Natal to deal with challenges they face?
- As a department, how do you assist public colleges to ensure that their programmes match with the needs of the labour market?
- In your opinion, are public TVET colleges in South Africa succeeding in carrying out the mandate of the government? Please explain.

(e) Organisational performance

- How would you describe the performance of TVET colleges in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, good or bad? Why?
- What do you understand by organisational performance?
- In your opinion, how do the educational reforms or changes that take place impact on the performance of TVET colleges?
- In your own view, what makes some public colleges in the province succeed or survive, while others are struggling to succeed or survive?

- How does the department help struggling colleges to move out of their present situation?
- In your view, how does strategic leadership influence the performance of public TVET colleges?
- How does the department involve the industry and other relevant stakeholders in moving struggling colleges out of their present position?
- What support do you think a college leader (principal) in KwaZulu-Natal needs to ensure that his/her college can bounce back after experiencing difficulties?
- As a regional office, what support do you offer to college principals whose college are struggling to survive to ensure that these colleges bounce back?

(f) Concluding remarks

- What comments would you like to share with me?

Appendix L: Certificate of editing

FROM THE DESK OF

EDITING & CRITICAL READING SERVICES

November 3, 2022

864 Justice Mohamet St
Brooklyn 0181

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have edited the following thesis for language use: *Strategic leadership role in guiding organisational performance: a case of public vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal* by S.P. Mazibuko. The technical layout of the document remains the responsibility of the student.



Eleanor M Lemmer (Professor emeritus, Unisa) D Ed (Comparative Education), University of South Africa

South African ID 510711 0118 088

CONTACT

864 JUSTICE MOHAMET STREET BROOKLYN MOBILE (084) 7004676
LEMMEEM@ICLOUD.COM

Appendix M: Turnitin certificate



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: SIPHO PATRICK MAZIBUKO
Assignment title: OFFICE USE ONLY (Ethics Committee)
Submission title: Submit for 5640113 Mazibuko Final Thesis
File name: Mplete_Thesis_for_Examination_-_Turnitin_09_Novem...
File size: 2.02M
Page count: 366
Word count: 134,688
Character count: 764,786
Submission date: 25-Jan-2023 09:35AM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1999030801

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLE IN IMPROVING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

by

SIPHO PATRICK MAZIBUKO

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP (DBL)

in the subject

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL DYNAMICS

at the

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROFESSOR H. T. MURVENYA

2023