

**EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT
SELECTED TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
COLLEGE IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

By

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EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT SELECTED TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

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

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

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



SIGNATURE

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DATE

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my late father, Kukie Patrick Sibambo, who imparted the importance of education in me at a very young age and supported me as I commenced the journey of academics. He always believed in me and was with me when I started the journey towards my masters. As he was not there to see the end the journey with me, this Doctoral degree is dedicated to him.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore stakeholders' experiences in student support at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The interpretive paradigm was chosen for this research as it provides the interpretation that reality is manifold and procedures are tailored for each case to strengthen the credibility of the research information. This approach also assisted the researcher in exploring stakeholders' experiences in student support from their subjective perspectives and in natural settings within a short period. A qualitative approach was used to make sense of stakeholders' experiences, understandings, theories, perspectives, and behaviour in specific college settings. This qualitative study was shaped within the interpretive research paradigm. For this study, a single-case study research design was employed. The population of the study included campus managers, Heads of Departments (HODs), lecturers and students. Purposive sampling was used to select four campus managers, seven HODs, seven lecturers and seven students, totalling 25 participants. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection, which was then triangulated with observation and documentation. A thematic data analysis process was utilised to categorise themes from the collected data. Findings revealed multiple challenges faced at the college, including dropouts, absenteeism, lack of resources, lack of training, NSFAS issues and academic challenges, as well as strategies for improvement. It was ascertained that student support played a crucial role in the academic performance of students in TVET colleges and that students need adequate support. The outcomes also suggested that TVET colleges should implement various approaches to enhance student support. Additionally, this study served as a source of information for the management of TVET colleges, and recommends that campus managers ensure effective college management by providing clear daily directions for all stakeholders (HODs, lecturers and students). The researcher also recommends that lecturers further their studies to provide new content to students, boost their confidence, and improve students' academic performance. The study will benefit students by reducing the high dropout rate in TVET colleges, ultimately producing students who are well-equipped for the working environment. The goal is to recognise the available support to students at TVET colleges.

Key Words: Student support, Student dropout rate, Student performance, Technical Vocational Education and Training, Resources, Motivation, Academic support.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Theory
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
NATED	National Accredited Technical Education Diploma
NCV	National Certificate: Vocational
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SSS	Student Support Services
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNISA	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Overview of the Study

The TVET sector has seen significant growth in South Africa since 1998 (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2013), whereby training and education were selected as a tool to empower young South Africans. TVET colleges are required to provide education and training to individuals who have left school to enhance their skills for use in industry, commerce and public-sector institutions, as stated in the South African White Paper on post-school education and training (DHET, 2013). By granting access to career opportunities, TVET institutions play a vital role in redressing historical injustices and uplifting formerly marginalised communities. In comparison, the White Paper (DHET, 2013) declares that TVET college graduates are not sufficiently equipped to connect theory with practice and move into the workforce insufficiently prepared.

The TVET college sector in South Africa has solid historical roots dating back as far as the 1800s. A dissertation by Matlala (2021) outlined in detail the chronology of the backgrounds and establishment of the technical college subdivision in South Africa from 1867 to 1994. The early stages of South Africa's economic growth and the 19th-century discoveries of gold and diamonds are closely linked to the country's history of technical and vocational education. Two significant advances resulted from the discovery of gold along the Rand River in the then Transvaal and diamonds in the Kimberley area between 1867 and 1875. The first relates to the fact that these minerals are found in isolated parts of the nation, and the second is that they must be mined at immense depths.

To cater for the large population influx to the gold and diamond mining regions, including the necessary heavy machinery, and to develop the requisite power supplies—all of which fuelled the growth of commercial farming and manufacturing as well as the creation of new urban areas—the railways needed to be improved. With this in mind, the 19th and 20th centuries saw the hasty establishment of technical institutions, which were followed by increasingly respectable traineeships in response to the rapidly growing demands of South Africa's mining sector, as well as the railways and other industries developing at the time. In line with this, the South African National Qualifications Framework was created in 1995 to promote the value of various credentials that may be recognised by students, businesses and other stakeholders (Matlala, 2021).

Following the Further Education and Training (FET) Act 98 of 1998, which was established after the nation's recently acknowledged democratic administration, South Africa established the expansion of TVET colleges in 2002. To develop the attitudes, perceptions, information and skills necessary for students to succeed in these sectors, TVET colleges focus on studying advancements in modern technology and associated sciences. They prepare students for employment in a wide range of commercial and civic sector disciplines (Makamu, 2022). TVET colleges, previously known as FET colleges, provide education to students who have chosen a vocation-focused education instead of traditional matriculation, and students who have completed their education and want to pursue a tertiary qualification but are not eligible for university admission. The two main qualification streams available at TVET colleges are as follows: Firstly, the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED or 'Report 191') programmes, which were previously the theoretical component of the artisan training system for trainees working in private sector companies. More recently, however, students have been allowed to enrol in NATED programmes without having to work or obtain the backing of employers. The curriculum is attainable over six trimesters (for engineering studies) or three semesters (for business and services programmes). And secondly, the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) programmes were introduced in 2007 and emphasise practical and vocation-specific learning. These programmes span three years and are popular among the majority of students in the TVET sector. Four vocational and three basic subjects are required of NCV students (DHET, 2018). However, the majority of the lecturers at the designated TVET college under investigation lack the necessary experience to teach vocational subjects, only have school educator credentials (DHET, 2013), and have never worked in the industries they teach about (Amedorme & Fiaqbe, 2013). They are therefore unable to properly instruct their students in these disciplines. This sets the stage for increases in staff turnover as well as increasing failure and dropout rates among students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2024), TVET in the United States is often referred to as Career and Technical Education (CTE). It involves training students for both workforce skills and postsecondary education simultaneously. CTE programmes are connected with national career clusters and delivered through a network that includes high schools, community or technical colleges, and on-the-job training. There are various vocational programmes worldwide that cultivate skilled workforces. These include dual TVET models, apprenticeship models, employer-led training, TVET integration with formal education via credit systems and various public-private partnership models.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) recognises several goals that the TVET sector aims to achieve. These fundamental goals include increasing the number of youths accessing available programmes, improving throughput rates, and enhancing administrative capacity ability (DHET, 2018). The college atmosphere should be conducive to identifying and addressing the needs of the diverse student population. Research conducted by the National Skills Authority on the funding of TVET students from 2010 to 2012 sheds light on some of the challenges that TVET institutions face in effectively implementing programmes. The study tracked students registered in the NCV programmes between 2010 and 2012. The indicators show that student dropouts were high during the same period. Siwela and Van Der Bank (2021) suggest that in South Africa, the critical shortage of expertise could be identified as the reason for institutions' failures in student retention. According to Simkins (2013), a similar study also demonstrates poor reportage on performance in the South African education system, particularly the TVET sector, and also noted that achievement rates in TVET colleges are commonly low on both NCV and Report 191 programmes. Research completed by the National Skills Authority states that TVET students registered for the NCV programmes from 2010 to 2012 had a high rate of dropouts in 2012. The study indicates that only 13.6% of the students were still studying, with most having dropped out due to a lack of material and psychological support. The aforementioned information specifies the challenges affecting TVET colleges and highlights the need for comprehensive student support systems. According to Muchineripi (2021), these systems should prioritise both academic and non-academic support. Emphasising the significance of student support systems, Raaper and Brown (2020) point out that support for students should be available in various forms.

Lecturers are individuals who are considered to possess all the qualities, abilities and competencies necessary to be agents of change (Dahri & Yusof, 2021). According to Batti and Mandre (2022), a change agent is an individual who supports change, acts as a means for the change management process, assists an organisation or a specific part of the organisation, and transforms how it operates by inspiring and influencing others. A change agent will promote, champion, enable and support change. The public demands that lecturers be held accountable for influencing the next generations. In order to achieve this, emphasis is placed on the enthusiasm of lecturers to master a specific topic so that they can have a thorough understanding of their subject, the mastery of which allows for successful teaching. Even though a deep knowledge of the subject is imperative, there are additional facts that are also

significant in teaching successfully (Dahri & Yusof, 2021). According to Makibinyane (2020), comprehensive Student Support Services (SSS) should be capable of addressing students' needs. The DHET delivered the Student Support Services Guidebook in 2009 as the foundational document that TVET colleges can use to plan and implement their students' support services (Birch, 2015). According to DHET (2021), lecturers play a crucial role not only in ensuring quality education but also in creating positive and inclusive learning environments in the classroom. They must emphasise providing a helpful academic learning environment, ensure that students are present in class regularly, make use of various teaching approaches to encourage active classroom engagement, and employ numerous classroom evaluation techniques. Lecturers have the responsibility to assess, identify and monitor students' performance throughout the course. TVET in the Philippines offers education and vocational training to prepare students for the workforce and to provide them with the opportunity to participate in upskilling programmes, which enhance productivity and employability. Filipinos who return to other countries are also provided with vocational training to help them enter the workforce (National Skill Development Corporation, 2020).

Lecturers must work together with SSS when overseeing academic support programmes and ensure that the students receive comprehensive support (DHET, 2021). Scholars facing academic challenges require either short-term or ongoing support to thrive academically. Without assistance, there is a high likelihood of the student failing or dropping out. There are several factors that can influence students' academic performance, including low socio-economic status, health issues, physical disabilities, learning abilities, habitual absenteeism, imprisonment, family disasters and unemployment status (DHET, 2021). Although the goal is for public FET colleges to be effective organisations that offer vocational and occupational qualifications, mostly to young people (aged 16 to 24), the DHET's Green Paper (DHET, 2012) claims that this has not been attained. It was determined from the previous analysis of technical colleges, FET colleges, and current TVET colleges that these colleges were failing to satisfy the needs of the people and the economy (National Planning Commission, 2012).

The TVET institutions have undergone tremendous change in recent years, and implementing such drastic changes throughout the colleges has proven difficult, according to DHET (2020). Publicising policy changes on paper is one thing, but educating people and maintaining educational practices that support policy directives is another. The shift in the student population has put TVET colleges at risk of several issues, including multiple linguistic groups

in one classroom, the admission of students with various disabilities, accommodating a diverse student body with varying needs, meeting higher levels of intellectual demand in new programmes, ensuring proper structure and resources for teaching and learning, addressing student unrest, and supporting a wide range of academic support requirements as a result.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that TVET colleges in South Africa are situated in regions where the majority of students reside (Buthelezi, Ntshangase & Molise, 2024). Buthelezi, Ntshangase and Molise (2024) also indicate that providing students with comprehensive support from the college can significantly enhance their academic success. In line with this, to increase students' prospects of success and employability, the SSS Plan promotes a student-centred and comprehensive approach, according to DHET (2020). Additionally, the support includes helping the student choose the best course of study, securing financial aid, accommodating students with disabilities, understanding the college's operational orientation, embracing the academic support vision, and leading the provision of the SSS mission. The goal is to work towards a diverse student body with an empowering learning environment, aiming to improve students' performance in TVET college programmes and provide opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, among other benefits. Additionally, DHET (2020) clarifies that well-organised SSS in colleges will lead to improved retention and throughput rates.

Skills development and TVET are now becoming increasingly important on the international and national policy agenda. For instance, the governments of Sub-Saharan African countries are renewing efforts to promote TVET with the belief that skill formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. The TVET skills are essential to generate jobs, employment and a productive economy (Habtamu, 2021). Education is the most esteemed and highly regarded profession in the world (Giglio, 2015). Nowadays, it is widely recognised that countries have dedicated significant resources towards developing a highly skilled workforce. For this reason, the development and progress of a country are influenced by qualified human resources, the achievement of which is closely linked to the success of the lecturer. Consequently, the teaching profession is a role that requires dedication, understanding and accountability. The study will focus on the effectiveness of lecturers' roles and responsibilities in education and teaching, as well as their interactions with students. Lecturers should strive to improve their self-assessment expertise, and apply a wide range of teaching methods, preparation techniques, demonstrations and assessments for professional development. The focus on the well-being of students in higher education is progressively

being prioritised. University leaders and policymakers are increasingly recognising that students' well-being should be equally important as the academic achievements by higher education (Finley, 2016). Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich and Linkins (2009) argue that well-being, in addition to teaching traditional skills, is an essential outcome of education.

It appears that students often encounter situations that may sometimes lead to them dropping out of their institutions. A common issue students' face is the non-existence of resources such as laptops and data to complete their assignments at home. Even on campus, students often struggle with insufficient resources such as computers or computer labs to conduct their assignments because most of the computer labs are used for classes. Students often struggle to understand college programmes, leading them to choose the wrong programmes, and then drop out due to the pressure they face. Many students also face academic challenges, either due to a lack of understanding of the subject matter or the content itself. These academic challenges are sometimes caused by the fact that they are the breadwinner at home. They have to think about making money while also being a student. It seems that most of the students at the college come from disadvantaged backgrounds and face various challenges. Many students struggle financially and are frequently absent in class as they do not have sufficient funds to attend classes. As a result, some of these students drop out because they cannot afford the costs of attending school. The researcher is familiar with these challenges as she works at a TVET college. It is these challenges that inspired the researcher to choose this research topic in order to find solutions, as lecturers are often unable to solve these problems effectively.

The current study explored the experiences of stakeholders in student support at a specific TVET college in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province. It is significant that this study be conducted to enable lecturers to comprehend their roles in student support, and for stakeholders to know how to provide the necessary support to students. This will help to minimise the issues surrounding student support and student needs. The researcher is of the view that student academic accomplishment can be improved if stakeholders understand their roles in student support, with lecturers being important stakeholders in SSS at any TVET college.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

This study was motivated by the researcher's personal experience as a lecturer and the challenges faced by students. According to Muchineripi (2021), students enrolled in higher education institutions experience numerous challenges throughout their educational journey. These challenges threaten the success of a diverse student population. The obstacles faced by

these students can hinder their integration and successful accomplishment of their academic programmes (Muchineripi, 2021). In line with this, the researcher believes a confidential, secure setting should be provided for students to discuss any personal matters that may be causing them to perform poorly.

Muchineripi (2021) further states that mental health problems are ever-present among college students. Students with mental health problems have the potential to be significantly impacted in their integration process and academic achievement. By emphasising the academic dimension, there is an imbalance in how institutions provide and are accountable for student support. Consequently, these factors contribute to poor outcomes and high dropout rates at TVET colleges. Mgijima (2014) explains that there is a low throughput, high dropout rate, slow progression and poor achievement rates among students in the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programme. McDonnell and Soricone (2014) emphasised the necessity for widespread SSS that are proficient in addressing the countless challenges students face in college. This raises the question: What are the roles of lecturers in student support? The biggest issues facing TVET colleges include the diverse student body, namely: multiple language groups in a single classroom, students with different disabilities being admitted, age groups with different needs on the same campus, as well as increased cognitive demands in new programmes, the need for sufficient infrastructure and resources for teaching and learning, student protests and, consequently, a wider range of academic support needs (McDonnell & Soricone, 2014).

The researcher has been a lecturer at a TVET college for a few years, and it appears that many lecturers struggle to provide adequate support to students. They often do not allocate students enough time or make themselves accessible to assist students with their needs. Many TVET lecturers also seem to lack the necessary knowledge and experience to effectively train students in a formal classroom setting, as they lack sufficient workplace knowledge and understanding (Oosthuizen, Spencer & Chigano, 2022). The concern is that TVET is typically considered an educational field whose central focus is to impart technical skills. Nevertheless, while teaching technical skills is the key implication of TVET, it should not be overlooked that TVET involves human beings as its primary focus – i.e., students. These students also require supportive associations, assisting and encouraging attitudes, understanding effective classroom management and a healthy classroom environment from their lecturers in order to become fully experienced workers (Dahri & Yusof, 2021).

This researcher has observed students displaying a lack of commitment to their studies, and even students initiating unnecessary strikes in order not to write tests or exams because they were unprepared. Students have confided in this researcher as their lecturer that they are only at TVET colleges in order to obtain NSFAS allowance funds, which they then use for themselves and not their education. Students are also not motivated to work towards their education as they lack the necessary vision, with some students not knowing what they will do with their qualifications after completing their courses at a TVET college. Mafunda et al. (2021) highlight that a poor attitude and lack of enthusiasm for education are the primary drivers behind the increase in student nonattendance in higher education. Mafunda et al. (2021) additionally note that students need to be encouraged to be present in class, and that students with minimal academic goals objectives and those who repeat one or more grades are more likely to be frequently absent. This highlights the importance of motivation. Inadequate motivation can cause a student to skip classes or perform badly, resulting in decreased academic performance and ultimately leading them to drop out.

Lecturers often seem to be incapable of addressing or resolving the socio-economic factors affecting students, which if not addressed could lead to them dropping out (Karimshah et al., 2013). Students' backgrounds can also play a part in their nonattendance and self-confidence in class. According to Moon, Kim and Parrish (2020), lack of parental intervention could also lead to nonattendance. This suggests that a student may lack the motivation to attend class due to a lack of parental involvement in their education. Makibinyane (2020) stated in his research that the SSS provided by many academic organisations are not adequately equipped to address the diverse needs of students.

Motaung (2020) states that lecturers do not enhance their qualifications, thus they are not sufficiently competent to provide the necessary support to students, leading to poor performance at TVET colleges. Motaung (2020) also mentions the TVET college lecturers did not receive sufficient professional development when the NCV programmes were first introduced, impacting their grasp of the curriculum's content and their teaching methods in the classroom. Motala and Pampallis (2020) explain that in line with a lack of expertise and understanding, lecturers at TVET colleges are expected to undergo continual professional development in their education and teaching methods. This perspective is supported by Mokhato (2020), who emphasises that the professional development of TVET college lecturers is crucial in improving the quality of teaching and student performance. Therefore, with

effective support from lecturers these issues can be addressed, which is what motivated this researcher to conduct the research.

This study is thus necessary for relevant stakeholders to understand the significance of student support and the type of support that should be offered to students. The available literature does not discuss the role of stakeholders in student support, nor does it emphasise the impact of student support on a student's performance. This study was conducted to clarify the challenges or experiences that students face and to develop strategies to enhance SSS at TVET colleges. As a result, the study was valuable in providing insights to lecturers who are responsible for preparing students for practical work in their field.

1.3. Problem Statement

One of the biggest challenges facing TVET colleges in South Africa is low throughput rates. Students who truly require assistance are not receiving comprehensive and suitable support from TVET colleges, which ultimately hinders their academic achievement. This issue must be addressed and improved upon. Student support programmes are not being prioritised at TVET colleges.

The major issue is the apparent lack of understanding of their responsibilities in student support by stakeholders. It appears that stakeholders are unaware of the most effective ways to assist their students. Due to their other responsibilities at college, TVET lecturers appear to be less focused on their students' support tasks. Therefore, one of the primary questions that this study poses is: Do stakeholders possess the necessary skills and training to effectively assist students? These students need to be supported by South African TVET colleges in order to learn sustainably and to grow academically, morally, socially and emotionally (Khumalo & Makibinyane, 2021).

In line with the above, the researcher is interested in exploring stakeholders' experiences with student support in TVET colleges to identify challenges and suggest possible interventions for improving the execution of their roles. The problem statement was then converted into the main research questions and sub-questions, as outlined below.

1.4 Research Questions

Main research question: What are stakeholders' experiences in student support at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province? This main research question is underpinned by six sub-questions:

- ❖ What are the roles of lecturers in supporting students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ How do lecturers provide support to students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ What are the challenges experienced by lecturers when supporting students?
- ❖ How do lecturers mitigate the challenges they experience in supporting students?
- ❖ What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at the TVET college?
- ❖ How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?

1.5 Aims and Objectives

Research aim

This study aims to explore stakeholders' experiences in student support at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province.

Objectives of the study:

- ❖ To discover the roles of lecturers in TVET colleges.
- ❖ To identify the type of support to be provided to students by lecturers.
- ❖ To identify challenges experienced by lecturers in student support.
- ❖ To discover how lecturers mitigate challenges experienced.
- ❖ To explore the strengths and weaknesses of student support at TVET colleges.
- ❖ To suggest strategies to help support lecturers in providing student support.

1.6. The Significance of the Study

The research aims to explore the experiences of stakeholders in student support at TVET colleges in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. This study serves as a source of information for the management of TVET colleges and the DHET at large to better understand the roles of lecturers in student support in order to develop relevant policies to assist students in all TVET colleges. Understanding the roles and exploring the experiences of lecturers may also assist the

management of TVET colleges in developing strategies to support students. The will also benefit students by reducing the high dropout rate at institutions of higher learning, specifically the TVET colleges. This will help produce students who are well-equipped for the workforce. The goal is to understand the support available for students at TVET colleges. The study aims to fill gaps in the literature regarding the roles of lecturer in student support and the challenges students face that affect their integration and perseverance in their studies. The study aims to classify and label the support services available for students within the TVET context, and to also explore their experiences in order to suggest recommendations for improving these services. This study will also help the DHET determine how to structure TVET lecturer recruitment and how to support lecturers. The study serves as a guide regarding what policies should be implemented to assist both lecturers and students, which can help in developing new policies that can benefit TVET colleges. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the field by developing a model for lecturers' student support. The study also contributes to knowledge by scrutinising the effects of variables that have been disregarded in prior research or recognised but not effectively addressed. A diverse perception as presented by the study participants may highlight characteristics of the subject matter that might not be otherwise apparent. It can also recognise matters that invite further investigation.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is an introductory analysis of prevailing philosophies that serve as a blueprint for developing the point of view one will use in one's work (George, 2022). Grant and Osanloo (2014) agree that the theoretical framework serves as the "roadmap" for the entire dissertation review. They explain that it acts as a template to guide and structure one's study, as well as to outline how one will rationally, epistemologically, methodologically and systematically approach the dissertation as a whole. Abdulkareem (2023) asserts that the theoretical framework is a crucial component in the research process, as it elucidates how a theory is applied in a dissertation, offering strong evidence of academic standards and scholarly functions. Furthermore, the significance of utilising a theoretical framework in a thesis study cannot be overstated. In exploratory research, the theoretical framework serves as the foundation upon which all knowledge is assembled, both literally and symbolically. It supports the study's justification, problem description, goal, importance and research questions. The theoretical framework provides a basis, or anchor, for the methodologies and analysis and, most importantly, the literature evaluation.

According to Hassan (2024), a theoretical framework refers to a collection of models, philosophies, ideas and expectations that serve as a foundation for understanding a specific phenomenon or issue. It provides a conceptual framework that helps investigators plan and guide their work, as well as evaluate and interpret their results. A theoretical framework in research helps to clarify the relationships between various factors, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and direct the formulation of research questions, hypotheses and procedures. It is also beneficial to consider the research from a broad theoretical perspective, and it can be utilised to direct the explanation of findings and the development of recommendations. The theoretical frameworks that guided the thesis were social constructivist theory, cognitive behavioural theory and student support theory. The researcher chose to use these three theories, because they provide intricate and open-minded speculative insights into phenomena that are difficult to define, for example, how people work, how organisations operate, and why people interact in specific ways. These three theories also align well with the student development and the lecturers' execution of their roles and responsibilities. The primary reason for utilising three theories is that they can assist in designing a research question, guiding the selection of appropriate data, interpreting the data, and suggesting clarifications of causes or influences.

1.7.1 Social Constructivist Theory

This study was steered by the social constructivist theory, which posits that learning takes place through social interactions and the assistance of others, often in a group setting. Magashoa (2014) states that social constructivism is founded on detailed assumptions about reality (constructs through human activity), knowledge (human product, socially and culturally constructed) and learning (social process), and further points out that a social constructivist standpoint is founded on assumptions of ontology, epistemology and ideology. Social constructivism proposes that an individual's understanding progresses through social interaction (Lohman, 2021). According to Galbin (2014), social constructionism or the social construction of reality is a principle within sociology and communication that analyses the development of cooperatively constructed understanding of the world. Social constructionism is closely associated with the idea that people collaborate to create artifacts. However, there is a significant distinction: social constructionism focuses on the artifacts that are produced through the social interactions of a group, while social constructionism emphasises an individual's learning as a result of their relations in a group. This notion was chosen because it helped the researcher delineate and shed light on student support and lecturers' experiences with student support at TVET colleges. The idea is that humans gain knowledge about the

world by thinking about and experiencing it. It enables scholars to advance a clear and concise categorisation of the issue, which helps to direct the study process.

1.7.2 Cognitive Behavioural Theory

The study was also guided by cognitive behavioural theory, which suggests that one's point of view, principles and assertiveness impact one's behaviour, and that changing one's thought patterns can result in changes in behaviour and emotional reactions (Hassan, 2024). The theory aided the researcher in establishing a foundation for generating suggestions about the relationships between different concepts and variables such as the participants and the college. This serves as a benchmark for research development and identifying any aspects that require additional exploration. According to Khan, Parvez, Kumari, Parvez and Ahmad (2023), cognitive behavioural theory suggests that our emotional and behaviours can be modified by changing our thoughts. Conversely, changing our behaviours can also impact how we feel and ultimately how we think. However, feelings cannot be directly manipulated; they can be changed indirectly by altering our thoughts and behaviours. For example, we can consider how and why students should be supported at TVET colleges, as well as the importance of student support.

1.7.3 Student Support Theory

This study was also guided by the student support theory, which suggests that student support is an all-encompassing term for all academic and non-academic support pertaining to a student's learning, well-being, spiritual welfare, community engagement, hidden curriculum, extracurricular activities and successful completion of the programme. It should include the foundation for learning challenges, career guidance and counselling, ongoing administrative support, computer skills, technology and library training, tuition and mentoring support, peer support, and community support (Rangara-Omol, 2021). Student support is a common term that encompasses the diversity of services provided by tertiary institutions to help their students in achieving success in their academic pursuits, enhancing their comprehension and successfully completing their education (Simpson, 2012). The student support scheme was created with a multi-cultural approach to encompass all cultures and races in the country. Simpson (2012) asserts that student support refers to actions that help students achieve success in their academic pursuits. There are numerous ways to assist students in higher education so that they can advance in their academic achievements. One such way is through SSS which utilises two main methods. Firstly, lecturers can help enhance students' learning

skills and aid them in utilising their time effectively (Sanchez-Elvira Paniagua & Simpson, 2018). This approach applies a common set of theories that researchers can use to compare and analyse their findings. It contributes to the development of a growing body of knowledge that enables researchers to classify designs and trends across various studies.

Student support services are crucial in student enrolment and for the successful completion of their academic courses. The student support service must be able address student difficulties throughout their studies (Raphael, 2016). According to Education Technology Insights (2022), SSS are crucial as they enhance the quality of student learning, decrease university dropout rates, and boost academic performance. Additionally, Edwards (2016) explains that research shows that many students feel they are not receiving the support they need, even though the relationships students have with their lecturers can significantly influence retention rates. This information will help in ascertaining how students can be supported and identifying their needs.

These theories will assist in justifying and supporting arguments, variables and the phenomena under investigation. They will be used to gather ideas, perceptions and representations in a rational and logical manner to create meaning, and to clarify and interpret. The three theories focus on understanding individuals, their perspectives and how behaviours can impact individuals, and will be used to frame this study.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

A thorough understanding of the experiences of stakeholders in student support at TVET colleges can improve students' success and performance, positively impacting the college's pass rate and overall achievement. Providing effective student support through lecturers may assist in reducing the high failure and dropout rates, as well as reduce the likelihood of students committing suicide on campus.

1.9 Literature Review

The study aimed to explore stakeholders' experiences in student support within the TVET college context. The emphasis of this literature review was to ascertain what other scholars have established through their research that is appropriate to this subject matter, with the key intention of closing the knowledge gaps and ascertaining where this study fits in. McCombes and George (2023) point out that a literature review is an examination of intellectual sources on a specific topic. It provides a general overview of current information, enabling the researcher to identify appropriate theories, methods, and gaps in existing research. The purpose

of a literature review is to evaluate the in-progress state of research and make evident your knowledge of scholarly discussions around a topic. Daniel and Nadia (2023) suggest that a literature review is an organisation of effort that discovers several publications surrounded by a particular topic area and on occasion within a set timeframe. Daniel and Nadia (2023) state leading tenacity of a literature review is to assess the current state of research and demonstrate one's understanding of scholarly discussions on a topic.

The Institute for Academic Development (2022) states that a literature review is a form of academic writing that demonstrates an understanding and thoughtful analysis of the existing literature on a specific topic within a broader context. A literature review also involves a critical evaluation of the material; hence, it is referred to as a literature review and not a literature report. It is a process of reviewing existing literature, as well as a method of writing about it. Snyder (2019) emphasises that a thorough of relevant literature is essential for all research disciplines and for all research-related assignments. An official literature review is an evidence-based, comprehensive scrutiny of a topic (Snyder, 2019). There are numerous motivations for conducting a literature review, which in turn will enhance the extent and sophistication of one's analysis. In essence, a literature review is a thorough evaluation of the existing collective knowledge of a particular subject (Winchester & Salji, 2016).

The importance of the literature review in this study lies in its ability to recapitulate and make sense of a growing body of research, promoting evidence-based practices. The literature review added value to the research by interpreting existing literature. It assisted the researcher to identify gaps in current knowledge and avoid duplicating research that has already been done. The sources for this literature review include dissertations, books, documents, policies, articles and conference papers.

1.9.1 Student Support in TVET Colleges

Supporting students has always been a key aspect of the professional responsibility of academics working in higher education. It is necessary to understand how and why students need to be supported. According to Nkosi, Nkomo and Ramabodu (2023), the primary goal of SSS is to facilitate the academic success and personal well-being of each students. Student support is a broad term that encompasses a variety of services offered by universities to assist students accomplish their academic goals, enhancing their understanding, and successfully complete their studies (Lumadi, 2021). Lumadi (2021) defines SSS as all activities that extend beyond the creation and provision of course materials to assist students in their studies. These

services utilise a variety of approaches to support students in their education (Monyamane & Monyamane-Limkokwing, 2020). According to Wilfong and Miller (2022), SSS provide assistance to students to help them progress and achieve success. Student services administrators strive to help students succeed by supporting their personal growth, academic achievements, and career preparation. Support services are designed to help students overcome a variety of academic challenges and necessities, assist them in achieving their academic goals, and support them throughout their academic careers until they graduate (Netanda, Mamabolo & Themane, 2017). Support can be defined as inspiration, encouragement, help and motivation (Shabani & Maboe, 2021). Giving students real-world assignments and activities to engage them in the learning process is an important means to support their learning. In order to promote active and participatory cooperative learning, students must be assigned project responsibilities.

1.9.2 The Process of Teaching and Learning at TVET Colleges

The TVET college is an educational institution that focuses on acquiring real-world skills, confidence, knowledge and familiarity with various aspects of economic, political and social life (Makamu, 2022). According to UNESCO (2023), TVET comprises education, training and skills development connected to a wide range of work-related fields, production services and means of support. It caters to individuals, institutions, communities and groups of people, promoting employment, decent work and lifelong learning, thereby supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and stability, social justice and environmental sustainability. The TVET Strategy for 2016 to 2021 focusses on three main areas: enhancing youth employment and entrepreneurship, promoting equity and gender equality, and facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies.

1.9.3 The Lecturer as an Information Provider

The work of lecturing is complex and extremely difficult, hence the need for instructors to understand their roles. One of their duties is to deliver information. Todorescu, Popsce-Mitroi and Greculescu (2015) agree that the role of the information provider aligns more with a relatively modern approach based on educational reform, such as offering new teaching guidelines, rather than a traditional approach that focusses solely on imparting and transferring hard-won specialised knowledge through lectures.

The lecturer's superior competencies, including understanding the didactic material, establishing connections between theory and practice, and updating content based on discoveries in precise science (as well as related domains) can be attributed to the role of information provider (Popsce-Mitroi, Greculescu & Todorescu, 2015). Johnston (1996) found that disciplinary knowledge was central to the educators' teaching strategies, even though they did not specifically discuss teaching as imparting the subject's content. The study examined lecturers who had received awards for "outstanding teaching". To impart this knowledge to the pupils, the instructors utilised various forms of communication, including lectures.

Nonetheless, there has been a general push to reduce the number of lectures scheduled in the curriculum and a tendency for new medical schools to stop using them as a teaching method. However, there are many positive aspects about a presentation where students are stimulated or encouraged by the infectious enthusiasm of an expert who is also a skilled communicator. The importance placed on a teacher's role as a source of information is largely cultural. For instance, Gokcora and DePaulo (2018) discovered that Chinese students prioritise the professor's expertise in the subject matter and their ability to convey information more than American students do. Furthermore, a lecturer should stay informed about the latest developments in the field of educational research. The lecturer enhances students' overall knowledge and provides information on interscholastic competitions in areas such as essay writing, elocution, athletics, and culture.

1.9.4 Broadening the Level of Accomplishment for Students

As noted by Matlala (2021), instructors must establish a culture of evidence and reasoning in their classroom. Additionally, instructors need to take steps to ensure that every student is consistently engaged with the course material. After each assessment, students should receive ongoing feedback from all stakeholders. The examination papers should be up to standard and appropriate for the learning outcomes and subject outcomes of that level. Additionally, the instructions on the examination papers should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to understand. Students should be evaluated repeatedly throughout the learning process and again thereafter through summative and formative assessments.

Research shows that student success is improved by the feedback provided during a course. However, when feedback is provided with the guidance of the teacher, it significantly enhances the students' achievements. To show appreciation to students and offer them constructive criticism, instructors should strive to understand each student's strengths and talents. Every

student should be able to complete the task at hand to the best of their abilities. Instructors must support their students' endeavours; otherwise, if they simply deliver information and instruction in a generic way, it may not benefit the entire class.

Given the variety of personalities and experiences that make up a class, it is impossible for instructors to generalise their conceptions of talent in such a creative setting (Mangwaya, Jeko & Manyumwa, 2013). A lecturer must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to teach at a broad cultural and subject matter level. Therefore, teaching is a specific action in the field of education, which impacts the individual, society, and the future of the state. For this reason, preparation by both instructors and students is crucial (McGinnis, 2017). Nowadays, lecturers are becoming increasingly significant, and their roles and responsibilities are growing.

In order to advance human potential and society as a whole, lecturers must adapt their approaches and put in more effort than ever before. They must have a deep understanding of the intricacies, norms, and professional conduct required in the field of teaching in order to effectively carry out this challenging and crucial work (Üstüner, 2017). TVET college lecturers must be conscious of their limitations and acquire new skills to enhance their ability to effectively assist students. To fulfil these duties and commitments, lecturers are expected to be well-versed in a particular topic and to possess a thorough grasp of it, as mastery of a subject enables them to teach effectively. However, while having a thorough understanding of the subject is crucial, other factors are also important for good teaching (Dahri & Yusof, 2021).

Lecturers should be equipped with the necessary knowledge, abilities and attitudes to raise the standard of education. They should also be ready to love and choose teaching as a career, understand the subject matter, accept this demanding role, and not sacrifice themselves through overwork or being unprepared (Tovstokorya, 2017). They also need to remember that they serve as role models for pupils in terms of their speech, demeanour and attire and that they inspire students to emulate them. The lecturers' primary responsibility is to model conduct for the students that aligns with the educational institution's goals and to carry out their duties as an educational leader (Tovstokorya, 2017). In line with this, educational workshops play a crucial role in ensuring that the teachers' and schools' objectives are met at the expected level. Student success is significantly boosted by relationships among school personnel. A trustworthy relationship between students, lecturers and school administration is crucial. When there is a trustworthy, caring and cooperative connection between management and teachers, the quality of education and training is greatly impacted. According to Tovstokorya (2017), the

degree of vocational work contacts among lecturers is inextricably linked to the quality of education.

1.9.5 The Lecturer as Implementer of Curriculum Delivery in TVET Colleges

TVET colleges play a vital role in developing skilled individuals who can contribute effectively to the social and economic advancements of a country (DHET, 2013). Therefore, lecturers are essential for the educational process that takes place in TVET institutions (DHET, 2013). The DHET (2013) emphasises the need for adequately qualified and competent lecturers who understand both the academic- and work-related aspects of TVET. These lecturers play a crucial role in the success of TVET institutions and programmes (DHET, 2013; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2014). Educators are responsible for a range of tasks including teaching, relief teaching, pastoral duties, assessments and lessons planning, as well as evaluating their students' performance (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

1.9.6 Challenges Facing Lecturers at TVET College

According to the South African White Paper on post-school education and training, TVET colleges are required to provide education and training for individuals who have left school in order to advance their skills for industry, commerce, and public-sector institutions (Oosthuizen, Spencer & Chigano, 2022). Davids and Waghid (2019) have noted that previous research has highlighted the fact that some lecturers lack workplace experience and qualifications. It has been found that TVET colleges employ intermediate and FET (grade 10–11) qualified lecturers as well as graduates from universities who lack the necessary workplace experience.

1.9.7 Challenges Facing Students in TVET Colleges

Ajoke (2017) found that resources play a crucial role and significantly contribute to improving operational teaching and learning. According to Mbatha (2021), some TVET institutions in South Africa are not immune to problems such as poor management, resource scarcity, and underutilisation. According to Mbatha (2021), TVET institutions in South Africa acknowledge a history of inadequate financing, poor maintenance of physical infrastructure, and a lack of life cycle planning. According to Muzindutsi and Nhlapho (2017), inequitable resources, poor performance, and a lack of management skills among the problems experienced. Even when resources are available, they are underutilised, and managers lack the qualifications to effectively oversee their use. Students raised in poverty are particularly prone to stressors that undermine school behaviour and performance. For instance, females exposed to abuse tend to

experience mood swings, while males experience a decrease in curiosity, learning, and memory (Jensen, 2013). According to EduZenith (2023), lack of motivation in students can be recognised by several factors, including academic pressure, emotional problems, early adolescence, lack of love, unhealthy home environment, and even the lackadaisical attitude of lecturers. Students may also be demoralised by the structure and distribution of rewards, a lack of apparent value in the course content, and personal problems. These factors highlight the importance of conducting this study to establish strategies to support students.

1.9.8 Professional Development of TVET Lecturers

Professional development is an investment in oneself and one's profession. Lecturers need to take the initiative to acquire new skills, knowledge and competency while increasing value as employees. According to McPherson (2021), training and development for TVET lecturers play a significant role in their classroom management. A lack of training and development in lecturers could lead to difficulties in managing the learning experiences. This lack could stem from inadequate qualifications, experience or mentorship. According to Hendy, Al-Sharkawi, Hassanein and Soliman (2023), employees who are not adequately qualified are likely to experience poor job performance and increased levels of work-related stress. If one's employees are feeling unhappy and undervalued, the likelihood of them searching elsewhere for career advancement and development opportunities will increase. Hendy et al. (2023) also suggest that employees with inadequate qualifications may feel undervalued in their roles. Consequently, they may pursue better opportunities or may end up underperforming.

1.9.9 Types of Support Offered by Lecturers to Students

Students must be supported at any institute, as it assists them to navigate through challenges. Students may suffer from emotional, physical and/or financial frustrations, therefore any support provided to them will assist with their academic success. A positive interaction with students enhances a supportive learning environment, as claimed by Varga (2017). Students achieve better outcomes when they perceive their instructors as more encouraging and supportive. According to Muchineripi (2021), academic support is crucial in ensuring the successful completion of their registered programmes, and academic support emphasises the enhancement of students' academic achievement. Academic support plays a vital role in the improvement of students' academic performance.

1.9.10 Strategies for the Improvement of Student Support

The college must develop strategies to support its students effectively. Lecturers need to understand the specific type of support that should be provided to their students. It is crucial to have a clear understanding of the student population at the college in order to tailor support strategies accordingly. By having this knowledge, the college can create effective support strategies for its students. According to Muchineripi (2021), student support can be categorised into academic support and non-academic support. The institution should acknowledge the challenges that students face that require non-academic support. In the provision of non-academic support, Munyaradzi and Addae (2019) suggest that more attention should be given to addressing the students' needs that are indirectly related to their learning activities when providing non-academic support. The issues may differ among students depending on their background and vulnerabilities. Students' mental health problems are often attributed to psychological, biological and environmental factors (Mohd Shafiee & Mutalib, 2020). Therefore, organisations should be able to identify and address the issues that impact students' mental well-being.

1.9.11 Possible Causes of Student Dropout at TVET Colleges

In a speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training at the Garankuwa campus in July 2018, Mr Buti Kgwaridi Manamela expressed deep concern about the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse among TVET college students. A study conducted by McIntosh, Gidman and McLaughlin (2013) identified factors such as travel times, financial constraints, workload challenges and unrealistic programme expectations as reasons for low academic achievement and a high dropout rate among students.

1.9.12 The Role of Campus Managers towards Lecturers' Support

Campus managers are seen as leaders who may visit classes on an official basis. They should be well-versed in the curriculum to assist lecturers to implement it, deliver teaching materials on time, and hold regular meetings with the Student Representative Council (SRC), lecturers, education specialists, and senior education specialists to identify and address problematic areas that affect each stakeholder to ultimately minimise issues (Ajayi, Mudefi & Owolabi, 2021). Moreover, campus managers oversee the proper operation of their colleges and design strategies for the growth of their colleges, according to Ajayi et al. (2021). In order to achieve this, campus managers are expected to coordinate individuals, programmes and activities. The

should ensure that there are sufficient human resources for the tasks at hand, and that adequate support is provided to ensure tasks are fulfilled successfully.

Although the majority of institutions are responsible for providing opportunities for professors to further their professional development, these opportunities are not always presented in an engaging manner. According to lecturers, professional development often lacks substance and is seen as unnecessary (El-Sherbiny, Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2022). Campus managers should recognise that improved lecture quality is anticipated to result from professional development. Such professional development should be planned and proactive, collaborative and participatory, knowledge-based, focused on student learning, ongoing, rational, and reflective (El Sherbiny et al., 2022). The formation of college culture may also be influenced by the personal values of campus managers. According to McLeod (2021), effective managers impact the academic culture of the institution by spending a significant amount of time outlining and/or articulating college goals. Campus managers are also considered useful in supporting lecturers to improve student achievement, monitor students' academic progress, maintain tentative student performance records, and provide feedback to lecturers.

1.9.13 The Role of HODS

The HOD is typically a lecturer, a subject professional and expert, a mentor and a general college administrator working closely with the campus manager. The academic and supportive roles of HODs as specified by policy include: Synchronising assessment, homework, written assignments, etc., for all subjects within their department, managing and overseeing lecturers on the latest ideas and methodologies in the fields related to their subjects, guiding inexperienced staff members and supervising the work of lecturers and students in their departments (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2018). The HODs have the crucial responsibility of empowering lecturers to achieve professional maturity. The path to reaching this stage is through lecturer professional development. Professional development is at the core of college improvement (Buthelezi, Mhlongo & Msweli, 2021).

1.9.14 Knowledge of the Students' Needs

Knowledge of students' needs includes understanding students' unique skills in order to effectively support their strengths and weaknesses. Students come from diverse backgrounds that manifest in various ways, including skills, abilities, knowledge, family and community characteristics, and experiences. The strengths and needs of students, encompassing linguistic,

content, educational and cultural aspects, are deeply rooted in these backgrounds. By addressing these strengths and needs, educators can positively impact the emotional aspect of language and content learning. Educators can identify their students' strengths and needs so as to nurture them and assist students to achieve their goals (Ernst-Slavit & Egbert, 2023).

1.9.15 Intervention Strategies to Mitigate Lecturer's Challenges

Colleges are revolutionising their approach to student support by employing enthusiastic student success advisers. These advisers are tasked with providing proactive, student-led support rather than waiting for students to experience difficulties before offering help, and are also responsible for restructuring career advice, embedding workplace skills in each programme and building peer support networks (Wistow, 2023).

According to Ndivhuwo, Sundani, and Mamokhere (2021), lecturers need to be mindful of how their daily work in the classroom can be infused with connections and instructional strategies that have been shown to positively impact the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure. One key component of motivating pupils is exhibiting dedication and involvement in their education. Devoted instructors are aware of their obligations to their pupils and work hard to fulfil them (Mart, 2013). Additionally, lecturers should be given opportunities to engage with colleagues, encourage one another in building and sustaining helpful connections with students, and reflect on the successes and setbacks of these endeavours (Ndivhuwo, Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021). Wanders, Dijkstra, Maslowski and van der Veen (2019) contend that students should have the chance to engage in discussion, have conversations, and develop a good rapport with their instructors.

1.10 Research Design and Methodology

This section emphasises the research methodology and design employed in this study. It will discuss the research approach, research design methods, the population and sampling, data analysis and interpretation, the study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

1.10.1 Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm was employed in this research. Park, Konge and Artino (2020) note that research paradigms guide technical findings by setting expectations and standards. Understanding paradigm-specific conventions helps enhance the quality of conclusions in technical studies and detect gaps in generating sound evidence. The paradigm describes a

researcher's logical orientation and, as noted in the assumptions of this paper, it has significant implications for every decision made in the research process, including the choice of approach and methods. Therefore, a paradigm shows how meaning is constructed from the data gathered, based on one's individual experiences. According to Ulz (2023), research paradigms refer to the beliefs and assumptions that determine the structure of one's research. These can be characteristics of one's specific discipline or even one's personal beliefs. There are different types of paradigm pillars namely: epistemology, ontology and methodology.

There are various categories of paradigm approaches to educational research: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. According to Nel (2018), interpretivism takes into consideration what individuals say, do and feel, and how they make sense of the phenomena being researched. Interpretivism is also linked to the constructivist epistemology. These perspectives suggest that individuals do not have direct access to the real world in their reasoning, implying that their understanding of the real world is significant in its own terms and can be accessed through the careful application of interpretivism procedures.

For this study, the interpretive paradigm was chosen because it provides the framework that reality is multifaceted and the procedures are tailored for each case to enhance the credibility of the research findings (Matlhodi, 2019). An interpretive framework also allows for a close partnership between the researcher and participants, and recognises that human perception and behaviours are complex qualities that can be better understood in a relative situation, meaning that subjects are studied within the confines of their natural environment (Matlhodi, 2019). The choice of an interpretivist paradigm assisted the researcher in exploring the roles of lecturers in student support through their subjective experiences and in natural settings in a short amount of time (Thanh & Thanh, 2015).

1.10.2 Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used in this research study. Jansen and Warren (2023) state that research methodology refers to the applied "how" of a research study. More specifically, it is how a researcher methodically strategises a study to ensure effective and dependable results that address the research aims, objectives and research questions. Sreekumar (2023) concurs with the above statement, explaining that a research methodology refers to the modus operandi and processes used to classify and analyse information on the subject of a specific research topic. It is a procedure by which researchers plan their study in order to accomplish their objectives using the selected research instruments. It consists of all the

significant features of research, along with the research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and the complete framework within which the research is conducted. Research approaches are the methodical and organised techniques that researchers use to conduct research. These approaches vary in terms of their fundamental reasoning and methods of investigation. This study utilised the qualitative approach.

According to Muzari, Shava and Shonhiwa (2022), qualitative research is a socially responsive form of investigation that emphasises how people interpret and make sense of their experiences in order to understand the social reality of individuals and gain a deeper understanding of the surrounding circumstances. It is a multiperspective approach to social interactions that aims to describe and interpret the meanings that participants attach to discourse. Cibangu (as cited in Mohajan, 2018) asserts that qualitative research is comprised of procedures such as logic, ethnography, discourse analysis, case studies, open-ended interviews and participant observation. According to Mohajan (2018), qualitative research is a systematic and subjective approach to highlight and elucidate daily life experiences. Qualitative researchers delve into meanings, interpretations, codes, and the processes and relationships of social life.

Qualitative research entails gathering and analysing non-numerical information (such as text, audio, or video) to understand feelings, experiences, or perceptions. It can be utilised to gather detailed information about an issue or come up with new research ideas (Bhandari, 2023). When building, testing, or improving systems or products, qualitative research offers the advantage of providing thorough explanations of people's experiences, emotions and views. According to Crossman (2021), qualitative research is a type of social science study that gathers and analyses non-numerical data to derive meaning therefrom and to aid an understanding of social life by examining specific groups or locations. Additionally, Bhandari (2023) states that qualitative research is employed to comprehend how individuals perceive the world. While qualitative research encompasses a vast array of methodologies, it tends to be adaptable and emphasises the preservation of rich meaning in data interpretation. Sreekumar (2023) states that qualitative research methodologies are based on social science concepts from a variety of fields, including anthropology, sociology and psychology. With this approach, researchers attempt to understand the motivations and emotions of their participants that would have influenced their choice or response to a topic.

Tenny, Brannan and Brannan (2022) claim that qualitative research is a type of research that investigates and offers deeper insights into real-world problems. Qualitative research, at its

core, explores open-ended questions that do not have easily quantifiable answers, such as ‘how’ and ‘why’. Due to the open-ended nature of the research questions involved, qualitative research design is often not as straightforward as a quantitative design. One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to explain processes and patterns of human behaviour that can be problematic to quantify.

1.10.3 Research Design

A single-case study research design was used in this study. The research design provisions the researcher to attain the objectives of the study. A research design provides a clear structure to guide the research methods and choices, and generates a framework for interpreting the research conclusions. This assists researchers in the arrangement of how they will conduct the research and what resources will be required. According to Makamu (2022), research design can be defined as the researcher’s strategy for steering a particular research assignment. Thakur (2021) explains that a research design is the arrangement of environments for the collection and analysis of data in a way that aims to balance applicability to the research objective with efficiency and procedure. Research design refers to the strategy, approach and structure used to address the research question and control for variables. According to Sileyew (2019), a research design is a strategy or convention for carrying out or completing research, particularly a methodical investigation. Seanokeng (2021) defines a research design as the adhesive that holds a research project together, indicating that it is a crucial component of the research process. Matlala (2021) asserts that research design may state to a framework of approaches and methods thoughtfully nominated by an investigator to chain many components of the research judiciously so that a research problem is meritoriously and competently handled. The research design delivers an understanding of how to perform or conduct research using a detailed methodology. Research designs include exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, case study and experimental.

A single-case study research design was used for this study, as the primary objective is to measure any change in existing norms and assumptions. According to McCombes and George (2023), a case study is a comprehensive study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organisation, or phenomenon. Case studies are frequently used in social, educational, clinical and business research. Similarly, Hassan (2024) explains that a case study is a research technique that consists of a comprehensive investigation and analysis of a specific phenomenon or case, such as an individual, organisation, community, event, or situation. A

case study research design was used to comprehend the phenomenon under investigation, namely, the roles of lecturers in student support.

There are various types of case studies, including single-, multiple-, exploratory, descriptive and instrumental case studies. For this study, a single-case study was used. According to Hassan (2024), a single-case study is a detailed examination of a single case. This type of case study is valuable when the investigator aims to comprehend a specific phenomenon in detail. A researcher might conduct a single-case study on a specific individual to explore their experiences with a certain organisation to investigate their management practices. The researcher collected data from various sources, such as interviews, observations and documents, and utilised different methods to analyse the information, such as content analysis or thematic analysis. The findings of a single-case study are frequently used to generate new research questions, develop theories, or inform policy and practice.

1.10.4 Target Population and Sampling

1.10.4.1 Population

According to Alvi (2016), the target population is all individuals who meet the criteria for a particular research investigation. A population is a comprehensive group of prospective participants or respondents to whom the researcher of the study needs to make assumptions about. Bhandari (2023) explains that a population is the entire collection from which assumptions are drawn. The population for this study includes all campus managers, HODs, lecturers and TVET students in Mpumalanga Province.

1.10.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is defined as a process of selecting a sample from an individual or a large group of the population for a specific type of research purpose (Bhardwaj & Banks, 2019). Bhardwaj and Banks further state that there are different types of sampling, namely: Probability sampling (simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling and multistage sampling), and non-probability sampling (purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling).

For this study, purposeful sampling was selected to hand-pick participants from the TVET college under investigation. With purposeful sampling, the researcher selects participants based on their ability to provide the most valuable information for the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Crossman (2021), a purposive sample is a non-probability

sample that is carefully chosen and focused on the characteristics of the population and the objective of the study. Alchemer (2021) states that purposeful sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when selecting participants of the population to take part in their investigations. The researcher chose purposeful sampling because it allows for obtaining in-depth information from carefully selected participants. Additionally, this method is ideal for small sample sizes, as is the case with this study. Purposeful sampling was also chosen because the selected participants possess valuable real-time information that can provide rich data within the constraints of the researcher's budget.

As a result, the researcher realised that individuals with the most experience at lecturing at the college would be best suited to meet the requirements of the study, and contributors were carefully selected as a result. According to Bhandari (2023), a sample is the specific group from which the data will be collected. The sample size is always smaller than the entire population. The sample for this study included four campus managers, seven HODs, seven lecturers and seven students, totalling 25 participants.

1.10.5 Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data collection instruments are an essential component of the research process, as they provide the investigative basis in the quest for answers to a given research problem (Moyo, 2017). The primary purpose of an instrument is to gather data. When conducting a study, it is crucial to use data collection instruments to collect information. This instrumentation is imperative because it helps researchers to collect data accurately. Information was collected and analysed using the recommended practices and sources suggested by Srivastava and Thomson (2009). The data collection instruments include interviews, document analysis and direct observation.

1.10.5.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis is an essential source of confirmation for researchers. This method was selected because of its explanatory value, and because it will assist the researcher to identify themes key for this study and provide evidence to supplement the weaknesses of the interviews. According to Hassan (2024), documentary analysis, also known as document analysis, is a systematic technique for reviewing or evaluating documents. This method involves a comprehensive analysis of documents to extract themes or patterns appropriate to the research topic. By synthesising information, researchers are able to integrate document analysis with

other research methods. Written material is utilised by researchers because the information it provides can be used for various purposes. There are different types of document analysis in qualitative research, namely: semiotics, discourse analysis, interpretative analysis, conversation analysis, and grounded theory.

The documents the researcher sought at the college included lecturer lesson plans, lecturer annual teaching plans, other documents related to student support. This encompassed student support plans from the college or department, attendance registers, which the researcher intended to use to assess the college's monitoring of student absenteeism and its impact on student achievement. Additionally, the researcher looked for school journals, policies, log books, information books, minutes of meetings and agendas. These materials provided the researcher with background information on the college, thereby affording a better understanding of the issues being investigated. These materials also assisted the researcher in formulating interview questions, and identify specific inquiries and circumstances that should be monitored as part of the study.

The college was formally requested to provide documents in writing. The researcher sent an email written to the campus manager appealing for specific documents, outlining their importance, intended use and purpose. This researcher ensured to indicate the significance of confidentiality and highlighted how the study would benefit lecturers in student support.

1.10.5.2 Interviews

An interview is defined as a collaborative discussion between the interviewer and the participants, where the interviewer asks the questions participants to collect information about a phenomenon being explored and to understand the principles, interpretations, sentiments and behaviours of the participants (Motaung, 2020). The purpose of using interviews in this exploration was to interpret the world through the eyes of the participants (Motaung, 2020). According to Taherdoost (2022), an interview is a face-to-face conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, where the interviewer seeks answers from the interviewee pertaining to the topic being investigated.

An interview code of behaviour was established. Semi-structured questions directed the inquiry and responses were recorded on the interview code of behaviour form. Any emergent follow-up questions were also noted. Every attempt was made to ensure questions were posed in an unprejudiced, unbiased manner. According to Taherdoost (2022), in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a list of questions and acceptable responses in advance.

Semi-structured interviews involve asking a series of flexible questions grounded on the topic or areas the researcher intends to cover. The interviewer has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on their initial responses. The goal is to create a natural and comfortable conversation that allows respondents to freely express their opinions on the topic or issue. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they encourage interactive communication, allow participants to express their thoughts freely, and serve as a valuable tool for exchanging information.

Interviewees included campus managers, lecturers, HODs and students. The interviews were both face-to-face and telephonically, as some campus managers, lecturers and HODs were often too busy for face-to-face discussions. The one-on-one interviews took approximately 45 minutes per interview. All interviews were conducted on the college premises during college hours. The interviews were scheduled during the lecturers' free periods to avoid disrupting teaching activities at the college. All questions asked during the interviews were recorded, and participants were provided with a copy of the questions during the interview. Participation in the research study was voluntary. There was no coercion, and no incentives were given to those who took part in the research. The participants' opinions and views were respected, and their views and comments will be kept confidential. Audio recordings were made of all interviews for quality control and data verification purposes. Authorisation to record the interviews was attained from each participant. In keeping with the university data security policy, all information obtained during the research study will be stored in secure locations. Hard copies will be kept in a locked storage room, while soft copies and all digital materials will be password-protected.

1.10.5.3 Direct observations

Observation, as the term suggests, is an approach to gathering information through observation (Dudovskiy, 2022). This information collection technique is categorised as a participatory study because the researcher must immerse him/herself in the setting where the participants are located while taking notes and/ or recording. Observation data collection techniques included watching, listening, reading, touching, and recording the behaviour and characteristics of phenomena (Dudovskiy, 2022). There are different types of observation, namely: participant observation, non-participant observation, direct observation, indirect observation, controlled observation and uncontrolled observation.

The researcher chose direct observation as the method for this research in order to observe the interaction between students and lecturers, the teaching and learning process, as well as the behaviours of lecturers and students at the college. The purpose of conducting observations was to gain an understanding of how things are done at the college. According to Prasanna (2022), observation is a method that involves systematically selecting, observing, paying attention to, understanding, interacting with, and recording the behaviour and characteristics of participants, objects, or phenomena. Researchers employing this method seek to comprehend behaviour and societies by delving into the individuals involved and their beliefs, practices, symbols, attitudes and emotions.

The observation technique employed in this research focused on events occurring at specific intervals during field visits. Detailed transcripts, snapshots and observations were recorded during the observation process, with the date, time and location verified for each observation. As a researcher, I always started by providing consent forms and requesting consent from the participants before conducting any observations in their lecture halls and around the campus. The researcher observed lecturers during college hours, as they attempted to assist and support students both in and outside the classroom. The researcher also noted what actions the lecturers were not taking to support students. Additionally, the researcher observed the behaviour of both students and lecturers at the campuses, as well as the attendance of students at each campus. The communication between lecturers and students was also closely observed. The researcher paid particular attention to whether or not lecturers are adequately equipped and patient enough to assist students facing challenges.

1.10.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is one of the key factors for determining the quality of a study and its findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). In order to maintain a high level of trustworthiness and ensure reliable interpretation of data, Makibinyane (2020) recommends that the following four criteria should be taken into account: truth value, applicability, reliability and impartiality. The researcher achieved trustworthiness in qualitative research by demonstrating that the conclusions met the following criteria:

1.10.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility determines whether the research findings represent reliable information drawn from the participants' original data and provide an accurate interpretation of the participants' original

views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The strategies used to ensure credibility included protracted engagement, consistent observation, triangulation and member checking. These methods determine the investigator's confidence in the accuracy of conclusions based on the research design, informants, and context. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) reference Guba and Lincoln (1989) and explains that the credibility of a study is established when key researchers are immersed in the experience and acknowledge it. In essence, credibility refers to the alignment between respondents' beliefs and the researchers' portrayal thereof. The researcher ensured that there was no ambiguity between the information and their interpretation, and maintained constant communication with her supervisor for guidance.

1.10.6.2 Transferability

Transferability of the research findings is the benchmark for assessing external validity (Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016). Transferability refers to an inquiry's generalisability. In qualitative research, this concept only applies to case-to-case transfer. Transferability includes the issues of application. The researchers' task is to provide a detailed description of the participants and the research procedure in order to determine whether the findings are transferable to their own setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This study makes no claims about the generalisability of the results. Instead, the focus of the interviews conducted with carefully selected participants was to acquire in-depth information rather than aiming for generalisability. Nonetheless, the interview findings may be applicable in similar colleges.

1.10.6.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of data over time and in challenging conditions (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs, 2014). Dependability assures that the research process is logical, traceable and well-documented (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). In order to assess the transferability of results to various contexts, it is crucial to specify the principles and criteria used to select participants, as well as the primary characteristics of the participants (Moretti et al., 2011). For this study, the researcher made sure to follow proper data collection processes and precise decision-making. All records were retained in order that any developments could be reviewed. All data were kept strictly confidential and securely maintained in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer.

1.10.6.4 Conformability

Conformability is focused on ensuring that the researchers' interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, which requires that researchers demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations were reached (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Triangulation aims

to enhance the process of qualitative research by utilising multiple methodologies. Methodological triangulation was utilised to gather data through various methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, debates, and field notes.

According to Botha (2011), the collection of reliable data in qualitative research requires an effective investigator who is knowledgeable about the subject, is clear, gentle and empathic, actively listens, and uses reliable data recording methods. In this study, the researcher verified that the interviews were properly arranged. Questions were posed to confirm or obtain information, and the responses provided allowed for follow-up inquiries.

1.10.7 Ethical Considerations

Letters of consent and ethical clearance must be readily available at the location where the research will be conducted. All participants must be informed about the study. The researcher obtained consent from all participants who were involved in the study (Motaung, 2020). Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) argue that the researcher should always maintain complete personal and professional ethical conduct when interacting with participants in a research setting situation. According to Adhikari (2020), research ethics oversee the principles of behaviour for systematic researchers. Dependability is a requirement for conducting any research. Any exploration that involves the gathering of data or interaction with human populations must include ethical considerations, as these are crucial for conducting professional research.

1.10.7.1 Approval

According to Imperial College London (2023), ethical approval is mandatory for any academic investigation. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of South Africa. The clearance certificate was then used to acquire permission from the selected TVET college to investigate their campus. The researcher requested permission to conduct the research from the campus manager for all seven campuses in writing.

1.10.7.2 Informed consent

Muchineripi (2021) states that informed consent entails sending a request letter to the participants to take part in the study. In this study, the invitation letter provided a summary of the research topic, the main aim of the study, and the rationale for selecting that specific group of participants. It is a signed document that confirms the informed consent of an individual to participate in a research study (Collis & Hussey, 2016). It is also essential to consider the details of the researcher and their contact details. If participants have any inquires about the research

they should be able to contact the researcher. Consent was obtained by asking participants to read and sign consent forms to indicate their willingness to partake in the research. This ensured that participants were fully informed about the nature of the research.

1.10.7.3 No harm or risk to participants

Muchineripi (2021) asserts that the most crucial aspect of ethics is ensuring that participants are not exposed to any level of harm. Additionally, it is essential to protect participants from harm and potential risks. Muchineripi (2021) also states that it is important for the researcher to clearly communicate their intention to shield participants from harm throughout and after the research process. The researcher made sure that participants were comfortable at all times. In the event that a participant experienced harm during the interview or was unwell, the researcher assisted them by requesting help from a health professional. If a participant experienced emotional discomfort, the research questions were rephrased to alleviate any distress.

1.10.7.4 Full disclosure or deception

The participants were provided with relevant information regarding the duration of the study, the estimated length of the interview sessions, and their rights with regard to the interview process. The researcher is obliged to ensure that any facts collected from the participant remain private and confidential, thereby guaranteeing that no other person has access to the raw data unless otherwise consented to by the participant. The researcher informed all participants about the purpose of the study, that they have the right to withdraw at any time, and that their names will not be mentioned in the research and would be omitted from the findings.

1.10.7.5 Voluntary participation

Leavy (2017) supports the idea that contribution should be voluntary, and that this must be clearly outlined in the consent form. The participants also have the right to review and withhold any back interview material if they believe it infringes upon their rights. Moreover, participants have the right to access their interviews before they are published. The participants' rights were clearly outlined in the consent form to ensure their understanding thereof. None of the participants were coerced or incentivised to take part in the study. Compelling participants to partake may lead to false information being presented, as they may not be willing to contribute openly and honestly. Consenting to voluntary participation ensures that participants are willing to provide accurate information and have a clear understanding of the research area and objectives (Mumford et al., 2021). The researcher ensured that participants knew they could withdraw from the research process at any time and that no one was forced to partake.

1.11 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

1.11.1 Limitations

Limitations in research refer to the factors that may affect the results, conclusions, and generalisability of a study (Hassan, 2024). Some interviews were not conducted during college hours as some lecturers were working. Times were arranged based on their availability for interviews. Additionally, some lecturers were not available on the scheduled interview date, so the researcher had to reschedule. Some lecturers also preferred not to be recorded, so every piece of information shared by a participant had to be written down. Another limitation of the study was financial difficulties; the solution was to apply for a UNISA Doctoral bursary. The researcher also experienced limitations in terms of time. The solution was to work on the chapters during the night and for the researcher to use her leave days as a backup. Finally, the researcher's presence at the college during observations influenced participants' responses and behaviour. Participants were hesitant to provide their true perceptions due to the observer's presence. To address this issue, participants were informed of the researcher's availability at the college and observation schedules were created to help them feel more at ease.

1.11.2 Delimitations

The study took place at a specific TVET college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. It is important to note that the study did not encompass all TVET colleges in Mpumalanga or South Africa. This investigation focusses on the experiences of stakeholders in student support within a TVET college in Mpumalanga. Therefore, it is somewhat limited to this particular college, this hinders the generalisability of the findings. It cannot be definitely concluded that the results of this study apply to other TVET colleges or TVET colleges in general. While other colleges may experience comparable outcomes, it is not guaranteed that they align with those identified in the current study of a single college. The campuses were far apart, so the researcher had to travel to reach the other campuses. Another limitation was the research design or methodology, which could have influenced or hindered the interpretation of the findings and led to bias in data analysis. To ensure this was avoided, the researcher used triangulation, field notes, and recorded interviews to minimise bias.

1.12 Definition of Concepts

1.12.1 Technical Vocational Education and Training

According to Njenga (2020), TVET encompasses all processes and levels of education and training that lead to the acquisition of knowledge and skills pertaining to various professions

in different sectors of economic and social life through formal, non-formal and informal learning methods in both school-based and work-based environments. To accomplish its goals and objectives, TVET emphasises the learning and mastery of specific methods and the technical principles underlying those techniques, as well as general knowledge, skills and values. According to UNESCO (2024), TVET is defined as follows: **Technical** refers to a focus on technical matters, including hardware and software, as well as troubleshooting practises and engineering processes. **Vocational** education refers to a profession or an employment, often focussing on hands-on skills within professional trades. **Education** refers to formal education, starting in high school and continuing with post-secondary education such as colleges, polytechnics and universities. **Training** refers to informal education, also known as lifelong learning or ongoing education, which is frequently utilised for enhancing the skills of company staff or a broader workforce through reskilling or upskilling. In this study, TVET is used as a comprehensive term that includes the various phases of the educational process. This includes not only general education, but also the study of skills and associated sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to various professions in different sectors of economic and social life.

1.12.2 Student Support Services

In their research, Lappan, Brown and Hendricks (2020) explain that SSS are defined as “the numerous methods of assistance intended to eliminate obstacles (situational, institutional, dispositional, and informational) and promote academic success”. The SSS facilitate and enable transitions from one educational level to another. These services include psychological support, living and learning communities, disability support, diversity initiatives, specialised learning support, financial support, admissions assistance, cultural activities, student leadership opportunities, as well as parent education. In this study, SSS refers to a range of facilities and activities designed to enhance the learning experience and contribute to students' overall development. Such programmes serve as a bridge between students and the college.

1.12.3 Department of Higher Education and Training

Roskruge (2020) states that the DHET is a government institution responsible for planning, developing, monitoring, and maintaining national policies and systems for post-schooling organisations. Through these efforts, the department aims to cultivate South Africans who are well-educated and skilled and can contribute to the sustainability of our economy. On the other hand, DHET (2003) explains that the DHET is one of the departments of the South

African government overseeing universities and other post-secondary educational institutions in South Africa. It was established in 2009 after the appointment of President Jacob Zuma, when the previous Department of Education was split into separate departments.

1.12.4 Further Education and Training

Karimi (2020) states that FET is an old term that has evolved into TVET colleges. FET encompasses grades 10–12 and is primarily focused on vocational and occupational aspects, including career-oriented training. In TVET, a student receives information on a specific range of job opportunities. TVET colleges are public institutions, therefore their students are eligible for funding from the NSFAS. This form of education and training also includes career-orientated programmes available in technical colleges, community colleges, and private institutions. In order to be considered trustworthy and reputable, an FET college must be registered with the DHET. In this context, FET is referred to as TVET, where students gain knowledge in a variety of job fields or entrepreneurial opportunities.

1.12.5 Professional Development

According to Pelta (2023), professional development is the ongoing process of self-awareness, application, and reflection on how to best apply one's strengths and skills in the workplace. According to Drew (2023), professional development refers to the continuous process of improving one's professional knowledge and skills throughout one's career. In this study, professional development refers to a continuous process of acquiring knowledge that enhances education in a particular career field or develops practical job-related skills.

1.12.6 Student Performance

According to Harvard Business School (2023), student performance in a case process sequence may be evaluated longitudinally across a range of dimensions including class participation, individual written work on papers and assessments, and collective activities such as projects and presentations. Altunbaş and Thornton (2022) state that academic performance is the measurement of student accomplishment across various academic subjects. Lecturers and instructional administrators typically assess achievements based on classroom performance, graduation rates and results from standardised tests. In this study, student performance refers to the extent to which a student has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in educational settings, specifically in college.

1.12.7 Student Retention

According to Wong (2023), student retention is a measure to quantify how many students complete their programme of study and graduate. It indicates how effectively a school ensures students' academic success or completion. According to RNL (2023), student retention is one of the most significant criteria in higher education. Put simply, colleges measure student retention rates as the number of students who re-enrol from one year to the next. The process of student retention includes all the efforts the college makes to improve this rate, aiming to prevent students from dropping out of school before completing their degree. The concept of retention is defined in the literature as the continuation of students' education into the following year until completion (Mason & Matas, 2015). In this study, student retention refers to the process of actively keeping students enrolled in their selected programme at a college.

1.12.8 Student Dropout Rate

Adusei-Asante and Doh (2016) proposed that attrition should be clearly defined as a decrease in the total number of students who initially enrolled to commence a course of study but ultimately decide to end or leave the course. According to Advance HE (2020), a student dropout rate is the number of individuals who leave a programme of study before completing it. A dropout student is defined as "a student who does not submit to ongoing assessable activities", as not submitting such assignments is a significant factor in dropping out of a class (Rodríguez, Guerrero, Baneres & Karadeniz, 2019). In this study, student dropout rate refers to the percentage of respondents who did not finish a programme for various reasons.

1.13 Organisation of the Study

The framework for each of the six chapters that make up the study is provided below.

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

This chapter provides the direction of the study, including its history, introduction, problem statement, justification, importance, and underlying assumptions. The study's goals, along with the sub-questions, are described in depth. Key ideas are clarified, and the study's boundaries and constraints are established.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

The chapter focussed on the theoretical framework of the study, clarifying the chosen theories in detail. The theories discussed were social constructivist theory, cognitive behavioural theory and student support theory. According to social constructivist theory, humans gain knowledge

about the world by thinking about and experiencing it. Cognitive behavioural theory proposes that our point of view, principles, and assertiveness impact our behaviour and that altering our thought patterns can lead to changes in behaviour and emotional reactions. Student support theory provides a rational and logical gathering of ideas, perceptions and representations to create meaning, clarity and interpretation.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

The chapter provides clear details on the literature review of the study. This chapter covers the challenges faced by students and lecturers at TVET colleges. It further explains the strategies that will be used to help students and defines student support, the process of teaching and learning at TVET colleges, the role of the lecturer as an information provider and in boosting the level of achievement for students, the lecturer's role in curriculum delivery at TVET colleges, challenges faced by lecturers at TVET colleges, challenges faced by students in TVET colleges, professional development of TVET lecturers, types of support offered by lecturers to students, strategies for the improvement of student support, and possible causes of student dropout at TVET colleges.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

The chapter presents a clear discussion about the methodology of the study. It covers the research paradigm, namely interpretivism, the research design, which was a single-case study, and the methodology that was used in the study. The theory's succinct explanation supports the qualitative research approach as the methodology. Purposeful sampling, the use of instruments and interviews for data collection, document analysis, direct observation, data analysis, reliability, ethical concerns and constraints are all covered in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Data presentation, analysis and research findings

The chapter presents and discusses findings from the data generated in this study. Themes aligned with the research questions, interviews and observations are explained. All qualitative discoveries are summarised and presented clearly and comprehensively. This chapter presents, interprets and analyses the data collected from participant interviews and observations. The data are presented in the form of direct participant quotations and tables.

Chapter Six: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The study's final chapter summarises the results, presents the conclusions drawn from the results, and offers suggestions based on these conclusions.

1.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the importance of understanding stakeholders' experiences regarding student support at a TVET college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, and what they need to do to provide the necessary support to students. A strong case was presented for the need to conduct an inquiry into stakeholders' experiences regarding student support at the selected college. The background to the study was presented along with the problem statement. The chapter provided insight into the purpose of the study, the methods used to approach the study and the clarification of concepts. The leading research questions and sub-questions intended to guide and maintain the focus of the study were also discussed. The research design, methodology, ethical considerations, data analysis and interpretation were explained. This chapter concluded with the limitations and delimitations of the study. In the following chapter, a review of the theoretical framework in terms of lecturers' experiences is discussed.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter covered the background, introduction, research questions, the aims and objectives of the research, problem statement, significance of the research and the assumptions of the research. This chapter covers the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework is a 'blueprint' or guide for research (Adom, Hussein & Adu-Agyem, 2018). It is a framework based on an existing theory in a field of inquiry that is related to and/or reflects the hypothesis of a study. It is a blueprint that is often 'borrowed' by the researcher to build his/her own research inquiry, much like constructing a house. It serves as the foundation upon which research is constructed. Sinclair (2007) along with Fulton and Krainovich-Miller (2010) compare the role of the theoretical framework to that of a map or travel plan. In this chapter, researchers such as Vinz (2023) explain that a theoretical framework serves as an initial analysis of current theories acting as a roadmap for the emerging perspectives the researcher will use in their investigation. Theories are developed by researchers to explain phenomena, draw connections, and make predictions. A theoretical framework outlines the existing theories that support one's research, demonstrating that one's paper or dissertation topic is relevant and grounded in established ideas.

Furthermore, Thobi (2022) states that a theoretical framework sustains academic research by proposing heightened academic standards and clearly defined scholastic functions. In actuality, it offers clarity on language, concepts, and assumptions to enable researchers to better comprehend the phenomena they would be investigating. Various authors, including Thobi (2022), endorse this view, stating that the theoretical framework allows researchers to connect concepts. Similarly, in agreement is Tredoux (2020), who describes it as aimed at representing the theoretical perspective used to explain academic research results. Three theories serve as the foundation for this investigation: the student support theory, the social constructivist theory, and the cognitive behavioural theory.

2.1.1 Advantages of Theoretical Framework

Researchers can identify the key concepts and variables they need to examine, as well as the relationships between them, by using a theoretical framework. This helps researchers focus their resources and efforts and gives the study a defined direction based on sound theoretical values and perceptions (Tredoux, 2020). According to Hassan (2024), this strengthens the

research's cogency by ensuring that it is based on established information rather than speculative assumptions.

A theoretical framework provides a common vocabulary and set of concepts that researchers may utilise to connect and differentiate their findings, as explained by Hassan (2024). This aids in the accumulation of knowledge and enables researchers to identify trends and patterns across multiple studies. A theoretical framework provides a foundation for speculating on the relationships between different ideas and factors, thereby guiding the progression of the research and identifying areas that require further study (Hassan, 2024).

A clear statement of theoretical assumptions allows the reader to critically evaluate them, according to Zaheer (2024). The theoretical framework connects existing knowledge to the researcher. A relevant theory serves as a guide, providing a foundation for the research methodologies and assumptions. When articulating the theoretical assumptions of a research study, one is forced to answer the 'why' and 'how' questions. This process allows the one to go beyond merely summarising observed phenomena and draw broader conclusions about various aspects thereof. Having a theory makes it easier to determine the limits of such generalisations. A theoretical framework specifies the relevant factors that have an impact on a phenomenon of interest and emphasises the necessity of carefully examining how and when those crucial variables may vary. Three theories serve as the foundation for this investigation: the student support theory, social constructivist theory, and cognitive behavioural theory. The use of these three theories improved the study's efficacy and efficiency, thereby adding value to the research process.

2.2 Cognitive Behavioural Theory

The foundation of CBT is recognising how thoughts and beliefs impact our interactions with the world, and how examining them and considering alternative explanations can lead to change. CBT incorporates mindfulness, behavioural challenges and practice (Burkholder, 2022). By utilising CBT, cognitive behaviour therapy assists people to identify and change thought patterns that can negatively affect their behaviour and emotions. The goal of CBT is to examine negative thoughts, question them, and replace them with more accurate and realistic thoughts (Cucchi, 2022). This theory is relevant because the aim of this study is to assist students. The study explores stakeholders' perspectives on student support, including their feelings towards it. Subsequently, the study challenges their beliefs and enhances their experiences with student support.

Additionally, according to Parvez et al. (2023), CBT is a psychological theory that primarily focuses on how specific thoughts lead to specific emotions, which then lead to specific behavioural reactions. CBT suggests that by changing our thoughts, we can also change our emotions and, ultimately, our actions. Conversely, changing our actions can also impact our emotions and thoughts. While we cannot directly control our emotions, we can indirectly influence them by adjusting our thoughts and behaviours (Parvez et al., 2023).

According to IvyPanda (2019), CBT is a psychological theory that examines the internal state of the mind and explains human behaviour by studying the thinking process. It is based on the idea that our minds function similarly to a computer when processing information, with input, storage and retrieval functions. The core focus of CBT is the acquisition, processing and storage of information. The key components of CBT are memory, perception, attention, language, intelligence and problem-solving. The theory explores processes that occur in the absence of a response to external stimuli and delves into abstract aspects such as dreams and hallucinations. While behaviourism concentrates on external behaviours, cognitive theory concentrates on the internal workings of the mind (IvyPanda, 2019).

This theory was useful to the researcher because CBT and treatment have evolved over three phases: (a) behavioural principles of human behaviour, (b) cognitive constructs and cognitive mediation, and (c) mindfulness including acceptance and commitment. The principles are firmly based on evidence-informed and evidence-based practice. The concepts describe how behaviour and cognitions are learned and how they can be changed. CBT principles provide practitioners with effective interventions for a variety of issues, including child and adult development, cognitive processing, as well as addressing problematic behavioural and mental health issues (Kasl & Cobb, 2013).

2.2.1. Advantages of Cognitive Behavioural Theory

CBT focuses on the present and the here and now, rather than on a protracted analysis of the subject's developmental history. CBT is based on the cognitive model of emotional response. This model informs us that our feelings and behaviours stem from our thoughts, as opposed to external stimuli. CBT is goal-oriented and problem-focused (Riopel, 2019). The cognitive approach is not just useful for learning more about the thought process; it is also greatly useful in helping people improve their behaviour. The main advantage of CBT is that it can easily

work together with other approaches to bring about positive results. The goal of CBT goal is to assist in changing negative thoughts and behaviours by developing positive solutions to the issues a person is struggling with. By utilising various CBT methods, the negative aspects of a person's behaviour and thinking can be challenged, thereby empowers them with skills and techniques that can be used for ongoing improvement of their mental health.

2.2.2 Limitations of Cognitive Behavioural Theory

CBT has become increasingly popular during recent times. However, it also comes with certain limitations (Cudmore & McGrath, 2022). It is imperative to understand these limitations to discern when an alternative or complementary treatment should be considered instead. Cudmore and McGrath (2022) further state that CBT does not completely solve all problems. Many studies investigating the use of CBT do not use well-constructed control groups. When they do, the effectiveness is still usually good, but not as impressive. The exact role cognitive processes play is yet to be determined. The cognitive model and theories are very narrow in scope. Our thoughts are just one part of being human – more issues need to be addressed. First, behaviorists see this theory as weak due to the abstract nature of thoughts and the difficulty in defining them. What may be seen as self-critical by one researcher may look like a rational remark by another. Second, there is no agreed upon definition or application of the theory. Because Piaget concentrated on the universal stages of cognitive development and biological maturation, he failed to consider the effect that the social setting and culture may have on cognitive development. The main disadvantage of the cognitive approach is that it refers to cognitive processes that we cannot directly observe. Another weakness of the cognitive approach is that it ignores other factors towards (Alahmad, 2020). The theory aligns with this study because it assists in changing negative thoughts and behaviours by developing positive solutions to issues that participants might have had before the study. The use of this theory helped establish relevance and highlighted its contribution to the field.

2.3 Social Constructivist Theory

Social constructivism is a learning theory propounded by Lev Vygotsky in 1968. The theory states that language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate and understand reality. According to Vygotsky (1968), language and culture play essential roles in both human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world. This means that learning concepts are transmitted using language, and then interpreted and understood through experience and interactions within a cultural context (Akpan, Igwe,

Mpamah & Okoro, 2020). Lohman (2021) concurs with this idea and states that social constructivism is the belief that learning occurs through social interaction and the help of others, often in a group setting. Social constructivism posits that the understanding of an individual is shaped through social interaction. The theory was developed by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934). At the foundation of this theory is the belief that knowledge is not a copy of an objective reality, but is rather the result of the mind selecting and making sense of and recreating experiences. This means that knowledge is the result of interactions between both subjective and environmental factors (Lohman, 2021). This theory is relevant to this study in terms of experiences, as the aim of this research is to investigate the experiences of stakeholders in student support roles.

Constructivism was promoted by Jerome Bruner in 1966. The idea is that humans gain knowledge about the world by thinking about and experiencing it. According to Olorode and Jimoh (2016), cognitive constructivism is a philosophy that is based on notions from cognitive theory. When we learn something new, we either accept it as true or reject it as irrelevant, according to Kussmaul and Pirmann (2021). Regardless, we generate our knowledge. We need to look into it, ask questions, and assess it to achieve this. This illustrates how students gain knowledge while attempting to interpret their experiences. Interactions with their surroundings cause people to actively generate new information (Kanno et al., 2018). Constructivist learning encourages students to explore, reflect, and share their work in the classroom using real-world methods. The idea encourages students to discover their definitions and concepts rather than memorising those of others. By analysing where a phrases fits in a sentence, students can formulate their own simple explanation rather than just learning the traditional meaning. They sometimes do this with their peers. Moving on to the social aspect of constructivism (Saleem, Kausar & Deeba, 2021), this theory offers a valuable lens for examining how TVET stakeholders perceive social learning experiences and knowledge sharing practices. Through the application of this theory, the interactions of TVET stakeholders within their communities of practice were analysed, including how such interactions influenced the acquisition and development of their professional competences.

According to Saleem, Kusuar and Debea (2021), social constructivism is a form of cognitive constructivism that emphasises the collaborative nature of learning. Social constructivism was developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky, a cognitivist, rejected the assumption made by cognitivists such as Piaget and Perry that learning could be

separated from its social context. Furthermore, McKinley (2015) explains that social constructivism is a sociological theory of knowledge that suggests human improvement is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through collaboration with others. Maharjan and Bhattarai (2016) argue that strong social constructivism as a philosophical approach tends to imply that "the natural world plays a small or non-existent role in the construction of scientific knowledge".

The constructivist learning theory explains that we learn by 'constructing' knowledge in our minds. Constructivism argues that learners have an active role in thinking things through, mulling them over, and coming to conclusions based on logic and critical thinking. Constructivism also argues that learners can build on their prior knowledge, like a builder constructing (and sometimes deconstructing) a skyscraper (Drew, 2023).

Thus, according to Drew (2023), the main ideas are as follows: learning is a cognitive process that involves more than just memorising knowledge; it requires students to think critically and learn from their mistakes. Before constructivism gained popularity, educators relied on a behaviourist approach to instruction, where students were expected to passively absorb information by repeatedly reciting answers while seated in classes and mimicking the teacher's words. According to Drew (2023), Piaget developed three basic ideas that are still used in constructivist schools today. The first idea is that we learn through experiences (Piaget, 1936). Piaget proposed that students acquire knowledge by reflecting on new experiences and comparing them to previous experiences. Piaget is the most widely recognised constructionist and many of the foundational concepts of constructivism were developed by him. Piaget identified six essential elements that make up our learning process: a) Experience-based learning, whereby we mentally process new experiences whenever we encounter them. These experiences help us comprehend our realities. Piaget referred to students as "lone scientists" who conduct research in the real world to learn. b) Prior knowledge, where every new encounter is contrasted with earlier encounters. Here we examine our recent experiences and apply them to comprehend the subject at hand. c) Cognitive schema, which Piaget defined as mental knowledge bundles. We can alter a cognitive schema through accommodation, or add to it through assimilation. d) Assimilation, a phrase coined by Piaget to describe "adding new knowledge" to our cognitive schemata, or knowledge base. e) Cognitive disequilibrium, where a new experience may conflict with what has already been learnt. In such a state, a student may be perplexed and unable to comprehend what they are seeing. The student is currently

experiencing cognitive disequilibrium. The desire to return to a state of cognitive equilibrium, where everything makes sense, may never go away. f) Accommodation, where we must "fix" or adjust outdated or flawed past information to overcome cognitive dissonance or confusion. It may be necessary to revise and update a cognitive schema.

Piaget's second idea is that social interaction is how we learn (Vygotsky, 1978). Drew (2023) argues that Vygotsky developed "social constructivism". This hypothesis emphasises the importance of social interaction in the formation of new concepts in our brains. Both Piaget and Vygotsky believed that experience was crucial to learning. However, Vygotsky believed that students were social creatures, whereas Piaget believed that students were "lone scientists".

Perceptions are interpretations that people have how they see the world, and how they decipher sensory impressions. Perceptions involve awareness, or an understanding of something (Gedik & Bellibas, 2015). This provides a framework for thinking about and analysing stakeholders' experiences in student support.

2.3.1 Characteristics of Social Constructivism

The concept of how social constructivism views learning and learning communities can be understood by examining the principles that underpin this perspective, according to Saleem, Kausar and Deeba (2021). The following sections outline key aspects of social constructivism.

2.3.1.1 Learners construct their knowledge.

Since their minds generate new knowledge and information, students, trainees, and others should strive to expand their knowledge. This process involves judgement, reasoning and conventional knowledge. It is impossible to fully grasp new ideas and concepts until they are connected to earlier ideas and concepts. According to Dewey (1897), education is not simply a passive process of receiving information; it is an active and fruitful one. Information, concepts and knowledge acquired from others should be evaluated and adapted rather than simply assimilated in their existing state (Saleem, Kausar & Deeba, 2021).

2.3.1.2 Knowledge is acquired through experience.

Lecturers teach students theoretical and conceptual knowledge, while people learn from their life experiences. On the other hand, learners, especially adult learners, acquire academic knowledge by applying their past experiences to enhance their learning experiences, thereby understanding and interpreting the relevance of the knowledge gained. Therefore, learners' real-life experiences contribute to their learning. Similarly, the same transpires when lecturers

impart knowledge to their students on a specific idea or theory (Saleem, Kausar & Deeba, 2021).

2.3.1.3 Inclusive and Equitable Learning Communities

Learning communities that are inclusive and equitable are characterised by people's desire for knowledge, information and awareness, as well as their acknowledgment of the social aspect of learning. In addition to helping students develop a sense of self-worth and respect for their beliefs, perceptions, perspectives, attitudes, and lifestyles, Dewey and Piaget placed a strong emphasis on the need for learning communities to be inclusive. Institutions should value each individual's individuality and provide a basis for individuals to create their own reality from their own viewpoints (Rannikmäe, Holbrook & Soobard, 2020). The characteristics of social constructivism include the following: learning is a social activity, all aspects of an individual are interconnected, knowledge is built based on experience, learners actively create knowledge, and learning communities need to be inclusive and egalitarian. The social constructivist viewpoints hold that learning is a self-motivated process that builds on presumptions and resolves cognitive challenges by engrossing learners in the acquisition of new ideas and concepts. In addition, lecturers have the ability to design curricula and teaching strategies that go beyond prior knowledge to include new information (Singh & Yaduvanshi, 2015). By enrolling in educational programmes, training facilities, group discussion forums, and collaboration, people gain knowledge and awareness about a variety of concepts, techniques, understandings, experiences and wisdom (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

2.3.1.4 Learning is a social activity.

People learn through social interaction, interpersonal relationships, and communication with others in society, as well as through language, culture, and other social rules and beliefs. Just as being an active or sociable member of society is important, learning is a social activity. Through learning, a person gains knowledge about a variety of subjects and becomes familiar with different places, things, and concepts. When people isolate themselves and avoid interacting with others, it makes it difficult to be exposed to a wide range of ideas and information. In a community setting, students receive strong emotional support, which helps them to overcome obstacles and take charge of their education (Saleem, Kausar & Deeba, 2021).

2.3.2 Advantages of Social Constructivism Theory

The social constructivist learning theory helps educators tailor their classroom instructions to students' levels of understanding, as well as their goals and needs. Some benefits that stem from this type of learning include increased creativity, the ability to take more risks and the freedom to explore in various ways. It encourages discovery through problem-solving and collaboration. Students can then put this new understanding into practice with different activities or assignments. It prompts students to reflect on what they have learned. This can be achieved by asking questions about why something is important, or reflecting on the activities that help them learn a specific concept (Knapp et al., 2019).

According to Lucañas and Maosheng (2023), learners may enjoy this new approach to learning, but they do not actively construct meaning or build appropriate knowledge structures; instead, they simply copy what the better students do. Lucañas and Maosheng (2023) further argue that it is difficult to break this cycle for those who have been taught in classrooms where they were expected to passively absorb information. Educators are not trained in this approach, and therefore require training in this regard. All students have different prior learning experiences. This approach requires ample time for implementation. During the initial stages, students may experience confusion and frustration. The need to give up control in the classroom may be difficult to do (Lucañas & Maosheng, 2023).

Chu et al. (2022) emphasise that constructivist teaching places greater emphasis on sensory input, a factor that has long been overlooked by many traditional educators. In the past, students were expected to passively sit through lectures, take notes and complete tests. Although some of these practices still occur in classrooms, an increasing number of lecturers are recognising the importance of actively engaging students in the learning process, using all of their senses, not just their eyes and ears. Students are meant to be passive participants in the classroom; rather, they need to be actively engaged in understanding “the bigger picture” of the world around them. Chu et al. (2022) further reveal that the constructivist teaching method has been used in special education settings for some time. It is quite effective for students with special needs such as sensory processing disorder or those on the autism spectrum. Some of these students have brilliant minds but simply cannot be reached through traditional methods. Rather than just giving out information, a lecturer acts as a guide for a learning journey and actively participates in the learning process with the students, as well as encouraging them to challenge ideas.

2.3.3 Limitations of Social Constructivism Theory

This theory may not work for all students. Depending on the group, some students may not be motivated enough to enthusiastically participate in their educational development. Researchers such as Zhang and Hu (2024) argue that social constructivism is viewed by critics as being too idealistic. Walsh (2024) indicates that the theory could force students to be dependent on others and limit their ability to think independently. Understanding truth from a socio-cultural perspective may mask truth or reality and its objectivity. Additionally, Saigo and Taguchi (2023) explain that the theory of constructivism has been criticised for suggesting that there is no singular truth, as all truths are viewed as equally valid. Constructivism has been considered to be somewhat at odds with the concept of the self as it is typically understood in psychology. Traditionally, psychology has focused on the individual, often minimising the role of context and culture, but constructivism looks at the context in which the self exists and considers the self to be fluid and changing.

Furthermore, McPherson (2021) contends that because constructivism, as a teaching method, may be misleading due to its association with low intellectualism. He also states that the constructivist approach necessitates a high level of competence, rather than focusing solely on the methodology. In practice, the approach has not been used effectively in the classroom. Moreover, according to McPherson (2021), seasoned lecturers believe that constructivist teaching is less effective, as students learn best using conventional teaching techniques. Additionally, it is a time-consuming and exhausting approach, as it necessitates extensive preparation on the part of lecturers who must divide pupils according to their needs and interests. Students may feel uncertain and alone if they are grouped based on their skills, needs and academic performance.

According to Barron, Williams, Tutika, Lazarus and Bartlett (2023), the biggest disadvantage of constructivism is its lack of structure. Some students require highly structured environments to be able to excel. Constructivism calls for the lecturer to discard standardised curriculum in favour of a more personalised course of study based on the student's existing knowledge. Such an approach could lead some students to fall behind their peers. Constructivism may have its place in the learning system, but as an absolute learning system, it has certain flaws. Students may benefit from some constructivism principles integrated into the classroom setting, however, most students need more structure and evaluation to succeed. Another disadvantage is that it can lead students to feel confused and frustrated because they may struggle to form

connections and abstract concepts between the knowledge they already possess and the new knowledge they are acquiring (Omoroghomwan, 2017). This theory is relevant to this study because it encourages discovery through problem-solving and collaboration. The researcher ensured a safe environment for all participants and explained their role at the college.

2.4 Student Support Theory

Student support is an all-inclusive term encompassing academic and non-academic assistance for students' learning, health, spiritual well-being, community engagement, hidden curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and successful graduation from the programme. It should include preparation for learning challenges, career guidance and counselling, ongoing administrative support, computer skills, technology and library training, tutoring and mentoring assistance, peer support, and community support (Rangara-Omol, 2021). Furthermore, student support is concerned with both the individual and/or cohort of students' interaction with the learning environment, learning management systems and educational processes (Rangara-Omol, 2021).

Jacob, Lefgren and Sims (2010) explain that student support is intended to reduce the divide between lecturer and student(s) to ensure a perfect match the objectives, resources and aptitudes of students and the offerings, academic requirements and characteristics of the organisation. An optimum fit between students and the organisation at various stages of the student journey is crucial for ensuring and supporting both student and institutional success. The community of learning and practice could include lecturers, tutors, fellow students, workplace mentors and supervisors, as well as practical and technical support staff, contingent on the specific programme requirements.

Therefore, Jacob, Lefgren and Sims (2010) assert that student support, through various processes, is intended to improve communication between the student and the lecturer. Firstly, it is understood that an institutional commitment to understanding and to accommodating the diverse life-experience of students, and how these experiences influence the curriculum and teaching methods, should be the foundation of the design process, rather than an afterthought. This means taking the variety of the student population into account from the start and incorporating features into the learning resources, environment and system that permit a diverse set of students to access the learnings. Secondly, by encouraging students to take responsibility for their choices and to recognise the impact of their decision and commitments. Thirdly,

through collaboration and organised exchange of ideas in learning experiences which involve resources and the effective use of various technologies and resources. Fourthly, through intentionally planned and targeted interventions aimed at determining the development and demonstration of competencies. These interventions by various stakeholders are optimally aligned and integrated and are designed for maximum impact at specific stages of individual students' learning journeys and, where possible, groups of students' needs. Lastly, students can access several surplus support services at their convenience, including administrative support.

Lumadi (2021) explains that student support is a term that refers to the services that assist students to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their educational goals. Student support may include strategies and specialised support provided by professionals such as psychologists, guidance officers, counsellors, tutors, mentors, and others. Student support can vary depending on the institution, the student's needs, and the available resources. The purpose of support services is to help students with their various academic demands and needs, and supporting them with their academic goals and throughout their academic journey until they graduate (Netanda, Mamabolo & Themane, 2017).

According to Frye (2014), there are three types of student support:

Table 2.1: The three types of student support

Academic (cognitive support)	Affective (also includes social elements)	Administrative (non-academic) support (includes technical support)
This type of support is comprehensive and comprises “content”-related and “non-content” associated student support to enhance the cognitive dimension of the learning experience. Academic support is – and should be – integrated into the course	This type of student support emphasises the influence of students’ life experiences (environmental, inter and intra-personal) on student success and retention. Although effective support should be an integral aspect of all SSS offered by any stakeholder, effective	Non-academic factors are often more important than academic factors in their impact on student success and retention. Frequently, these factors are beyond the control of control students and hinge on the effectiveness and competency of institutional

design of the learning materials and resources.	student support often entails specialised interventions by qualified staff. Affective student support avails pastoral care and guidance to students, addressing their needs throughout their entire academic experience.	systems, procedures and processes.
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The SSS are designed to enhance students' academic abilities, foster the self-assurance necessary for academic success, facilitate student engagement and integration into the educational system, and equip students for active roles in society, according to Shabani and Maboe (2021). Support entails providing encouragement, assistance, guidance and enthusiasm. Providing students with real-world assignments and activities that actively engage them in the learning process is important for empowering their learning. In order to promote active and participatory collaborative learning, students should be assigned group projects to work on (Shabani & Maboe, 2021).

2.4.1 Categories of Student Programmes

Research shows that the area has changed since 1989, as different organisations now offer various types of support services (Kumtepe et al., 2019). Because different organisations offer different kinds of SSS at different times, there is no universally recognised definition of what constitutes a successful student support service. All services that accelerate students' learning are encompassed by SSS. There are various needs that students must meet. Some of the most important learning needs include new student orientation programmes and student discipline; survival needs such as career service, financial support and avocation; counselling needs (educational, psychological, social and professional), and entertainment needs (sports). All these necessities must be met to ensure a quality education for the students. Students require additional assistance in addition to basic humanitarian aid. Therefore, both educational and non-academic support services are essential to enable students to overcome the obstacles to their success (Shaheen, Mahmood & Shah, 2020). For this study, the researcher focussed on academic, physical, emotional, social and financial support.

2.4.2 Academic Support

The term academic support encompasses a wide range of instructional methods, educational services and school resources provided to students to help them accelerate their learning progress, keep up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school. When the term “academic support” is used in educational contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, it may be difficult to determine precisely what it is referring to. The term “support” may also be used in reference to a variety of academic support strategies (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Academic support encompasses a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, supplemental courses, holiday learning programmes, after-school programmes, teacher advisors, and volunteer mentors, as well as alternative methods of grouping, counselling, and instructing students. Academic support may be provided to individual students, specific student populations (such as non-English speakers or disabled students), or all students in a school (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Academic support typically refers to the services provided to underperforming students, and it may also be used in reference to “enrichment” programmes and more advanced learning opportunities provided to higher-achieving students.

The UKZN (2023) offers academic support programmes to assist those students whose academic potential has not been realised due to disadvantaged educational backgrounds. These programmes come in the form of access and foundation programmes, restructured first-year courses or additional courses in essential skills such as communication and academic writing. Pre-university courses prepare students for the challenges of the academic environment, while mentorship and internship programmes promote the academic and vocational development of students. Academic support is aimed at improving the performance of underperforming students in all programmes offered in TVET colleges (DHET, 2023).

2.4.3 Emotional Support

The following are the main conditions of the investigated psychosocial support framework for sustainable learning at a public TVET college: lowering the low socio-economic status of students at public TVET colleges; boosting students' self-esteem; enhancing their resilience; assisting students' with stressful situations; promoting and encouraging peer counselling; offering training on how to handle students' emotional and social needs; lowering the high absenteeism rate; and offering counselling skills and addressing psychosocial challenges (Buthelezi, 2020). Kotomina and Sazhina (2018) define emotional intelligence as the ability to

accurately perceive, access and generate emotions to support thinking and comprehend emotions and emotional knowledge. Additionally, Kotomina and Sazhina (2018) note that researchers have demonstrated that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in higher education. Dolev and Leshem (2017) contend that developing emotional intelligence is crucial at any age. Students can achieve this growth in a variety of ways, either independently or with assistance. Therefore, to enhance students' academic performance, instructors and student development professionals can assist them in enhancing their emotional intelligence. According to Buthelezi (2020), fostering and advancing emotional intelligence at public TVET colleges necessitate skills that fall into the following categories: self-awareness, empathy, emotion management, self-motivation, and interpersonal interactions. Accordingly, it can be concluded that students' emotional and mental health are crucial aspects that require attention in order to support their success and ongoing learning at public TVET institutions. According to Buthelezi (2020), emotional development involves the ability to experience emotions such as passion, love, desire, grief and rage, as well as the discovery of a genuine and distinct sense of identity in relation to others.

2.4.4 Physical Support

The concept of disability is dynamic and arises from the interplay between individuals with long-term physical, intellectual and sensory impairments and environmental and attitudinal barriers that prevent them from fully and equally participating in society (Mbense, 2019). Mbense (2019) goes on to say that certain disorders might cause physical disabilities that develop over time or that are acquired at birth. Some physical limitations are obvious, whereas others are variable or intermittent, chronic, progressive, or fixed. For example, a person who is physically disabled may request help in using assistive equipment such as a wheelchair or crutches to help with mobility. The term "physically impaired" also includes those who require certain modifications to fully participate in society.

Visual impairment can result from a variety of causes, such as illness, genetic disorders and accidents. People with visual impairments may have different needs depending on their degree of impairment, ranging from short-sightedness to complete blindness. Retinal separation (loss of vision), diabetes (progressive blindness), and cataracts are some of the causes of visual impairments (Nazarov et al., 2012).

2.4.5 Social Support

“Social support” is the psychological term for the emotional and physical comfort that stems from our relationships with others. It is essential for maintaining both mental and physical health and can manifest as advice, guidance, empathy, or practical assistance (Sam, 2023). It is imperative to understand social support, as it has been linked to better physical and mental health outcomes, such as lower rates of depression, stronger immune systems, and increased quality of life (Szkody et al., 2024). Additionally, it is essential for the development of resiliency, assisting people in managing life's stresses, and cultivating a sense of community and belonging. According to Wikipedia (2023), social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and most importantly, that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can take various forms, including emotional (e.g., nurturance), informational (e.g., advice), companionship (e.g., sense of belonging), tangible (e.g., financial assistance) or intangible (e.g., personal advice). Social support can be measured in terms of the perception that one has assistance available, the actual assistance received, or the degree to which a person is integrated into a social network.

According to Drageset (2021), research shows that having a solid social support network of friends, acquaintances and mentors to turn to, especially in times of need or crisis, positively influences academic performance, enhances overall well-being and eases the anxiety many students face as they transition from life as a school pupil to tertiary education. This is especially true for members of underrepresented groups on campus. They further state that students at tertiary institutions need to discover friends and mentors in their new setting in order to assist them in figuring out how to overcome the challenges they face, such as a more difficult academic curriculum, a totally new social scene and an entirely new set of freedoms (Drageset, 2021).

2.4.6 Financial Support

Student poverty and insufficient funding have consistently been cited as key reasons for student academic failure and progression difficulties (Mngomezulu, Dhunpath & Munro, 2017). Access to financial support is critical for students in South Africa to pursue higher education and achieve their academic and career goals. Financial support towards studies can help students cover the costs of their tuition fees, accommodation, textbooks and living expenses, which are often barriers to accessing higher education. The importance of financial support towards studies for students in South Africa cannot be overstated. It provides students with the

opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the workforce, contribute to the economy, and improve their standard of living.

2.4.7 Advantages of Student Support

Student support services are crucial for student enrolment and the successful completion of courses within the required time. The SSS must be able to deal with student difficulties throughout the course of their studies (Raphael, 2016). Researchers such as Shabani and Maboe (2021) posit that SSS are recognised to enhance students' academic skills, cultivate the confidence necessary for academic achievement, facilitate student engagement and integration into the academic system, and prepare students for active lives in society.

Cook, Fetting, Morizio, Brodsky and Gould (2018) argue that college support staff play an important role in ensuring students are learning in a safe and supportive learning environment, as they can foster positive, trusting relationships with students and improve the school climate by encouraging parent and family involvement in the student's education. Institutional support staff can go beyond the curriculum by providing youth development resources for families and lecturers that address trauma-informed practices and positive behavioural interventions. Because students connect with support staff regularly throughout the day, the support staff can model positive behaviour and send encouraging messages to students as well.

2.4.8 Limitations of Student Support

While institutions are making extensive efforts to improve students' positive experiences by launching various SSS programmes, the success of these programmes depends mainly on the student's help-seeking behaviour (Okpych, Park, Sayed & Courtney, 2020). Students need to know and understand what they are learning in order to avoid difficulties, which materials to study, for how long, and when to seek help. Seeking help is associated with higher academic ability and positive teacher–student relationships (Chu, Huang, Xie, Tan, Kamal & Xiong, 2018). Similarly, Johnson et al. (2022) note that lack of resources, cultural differences, social stigma, and hesitancy are significant factors that hinder students from seeking help. Additionally, Edwards (2016) explains that research shows that many students feel they are not receiving the support they need, and that the relationships students have with their lecturers can have a significant influence on retention rates.

2.5. Rationale for Using Three Theories in this Study

The researcher's decision to incorporate three theories in this research was based on the fact that these theories provided a framework for the entire research process, and assisted in identifying the problem, as well as clarifying the purpose and significance of the research. Furthermore, the theories assisted in demonstrating how the research aligns with existing knowledge, theory and research. This provided a basis for the research questions, the literature review and the methodology and analysis chosen. The theoretical framework should be assembled as a vital part of intellectualising and grounding the research (Cai et al., 2019).

The use of three theories, namely, cognitive behavioural theory, social constructivist theory and student support theory helped in understanding the applicability of what was discovered during the research. These clarifications contributed to the accumulation of a knowledge base that can enhance education. The researcher believed that using three theories enriched the quality of research by providing a rigorous and organised approach, which could enhance the likelihood of generating valid and reliable results. The theoretical framework articulates and supports the theory that elucidates the reason behind the research problem under investigation.

Cognitive theory assisted in comprehending that altering our behaviours can also lead to changes in how we feel and ultimately how we think. Even though feelings cannot be directly controlled, they can be indirectly influenced by changing our thoughts and behaviours. This is evident in how lecturers and students perceive student support. Social constructivist theory helps us understand that students play an active role in processing information, reflecting on it, and reaching conclusions through logical and critical thinking. Student support theory assists in understanding academic potential and providing support to students throughout their academic journey until they graduate. The triangulation of the three theories strengthened the researcher's arguments in the attempt to answer the main and sub-research questions of the study. The three theories complement each other by providing a range of insights or explanations. They can also be contradictory, allowing comparison between the insights. By complementing each another, the theories avoid a limited perspective that can easily be disproved.

2.6. The Relevance of Theories in the Literature Review Chapter

A theoretical framework comprises concepts and existing theories that are applied to a particular subject, along with their descriptions and references to relevant scholarly works.

According to Sundelowitz (2019), the theoretical framework must establish an understanding of theories and concepts that relate to the subject matter of one's research and flow into the broader fields of knowledge under consideration. There is a fundamental connection between the literature and the theoretical framework. A theoretical framework can serve as a guide for logically creating and comprehending the interconnected components of the literature evaluation (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

These ideas served to support and confirm the researcher's viewpoint, variables, and the phenomenon under investigation. It will be useful for the researcher to discover any gaps in the material being studied and to find an underlying theory that might serve as a foundation for a point of view. The literature review can be enhanced by incorporating other hypotheses. According to Vinz (2023), it allows one to understand how previous scholars have accurately defined these crucial perspectives and established connections between them through thorough literature research. The researcher aimed to clarify and critically evaluate the approaches utilised by other authors in developing the theoretical framework. Theories are expressed to clarify, visualise, and comprehend occurrences, as well as frequently question and expand on current knowledge while staying within crucial limiting assumptions. The preparation that can hold or support a research study's hypothesis is known as the theoretical framework.

2.7 The Relevance of Theories on Research Design and Methodology

The approach that researchers follow while conducting a study is known as research methodology (Taylor, Bogdan & Devault, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). It is the method employed for addressing problems in order to resolve them. The theoretical framework must align with the methodology and data-collection strategies of the current study to address any issues and research concerns and explore the practical implications. The framework guides the inquiry, informs the various approaches for gathering and analysing data, communicates results, and reveals the researcher's biases (Luft, Jeong, Idsardi & Gardner, 2022). Consequently, the three hypotheses selected by the researcher for this study informed the research design and methodology.

2.8 The Relevance of Theory in Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The theoretical framework provides a structure for identifying patterns in the data, organising one's thoughts on how these patterns relate to each other, and helps to articulate one's conclusions more clearly in light of existing theories. It assists in making connections between

the abstract and concrete elements observed in the data (Kivunja, 2018). As a result, the researcher believes that the theories offered a practical guide for presenting and analysing data in qualitative research. Understanding the various steps involved in reporting qualitative data and the depth of information provided makes it a valuable resource for any field in which qualitative research is conducted (Ningi, 2022). Consequently, in any qualitative data presentation, the focus is always on making sense of the data.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical framework used by the researcher, as well as the three theories that informed the study, namely: cognitive behavioural theory, social constructivist theory and student support theory. This chapter highlighted the importance of these theories and how they should be used, as well as their advantages and disadvantages. The theories were then used to emphasise the central notion of the theoretical framework of the study, clarifying how they are interconnected. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology and design.

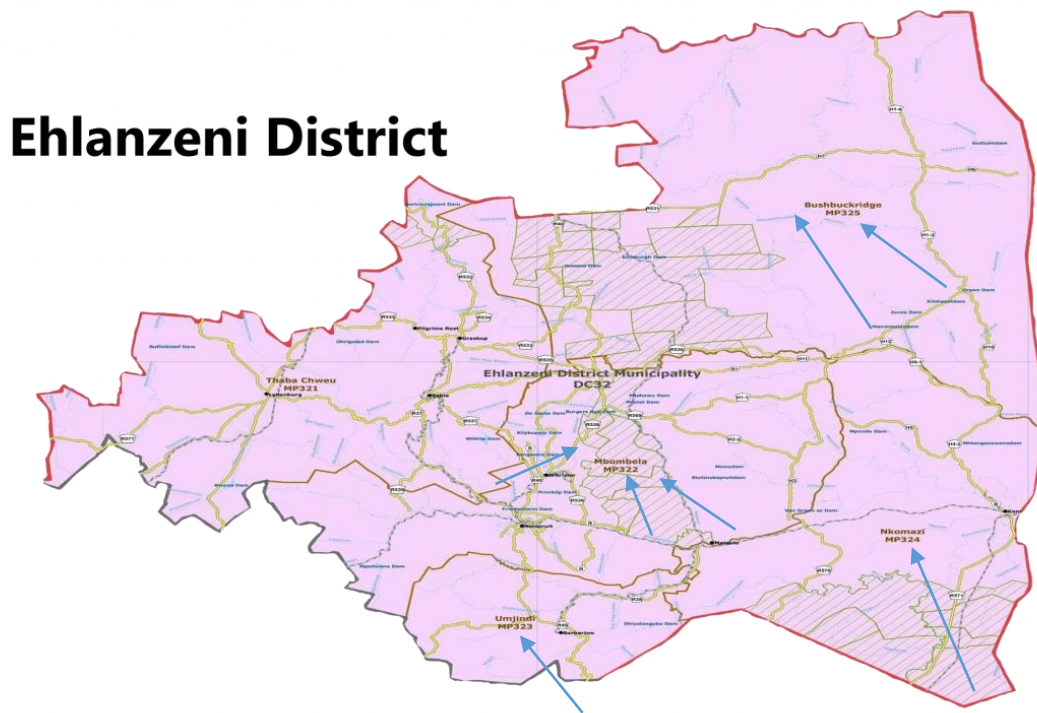
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters presented the theoretical framework related to the study, which is interconnected to the literature review. The framework of this study informed some of the literature directions to determine the gaps in the research that need to be addressed concerning the experiences of stakeholders in student support at TVET colleges. This chapter focuses on the literature review of the previous research.

A literature review is a systematic and comprehensive inquiry into books, scholarly articles, and other relevant sources applicable to a specific topic, thereby providing a foundation of knowledge on the subject (Karas, 2023). Literature reviews aim to categorise and analyse the current literature on a topic in order to support the research by uncovering any gaps in existing research. This examination should be responsible for the depiction, summary, and critical assessment of works connected to the research problem, and should also aim to improve the overall knowledge of the topic as well as validate how the research will fit within a larger field of study (Karas, 2023). Additionally, it considers the purpose of a literature review, which is to provide a foundation of knowledge on a topic, categorise previous scholarship to avoid duplication, and give credit to other researchers (Karas, 2023). A literature review helps in pinpointing inconsistencies such as research gaps, challenges in previous studies, open questions left from other research, and the need for additional research (thereby justifying one's own research), as well as identifying the relationship of works in the context of their contribution to the topic and other works and, lastly, it places the research within the context of existing literature, making a case for why further study is needed (Karas, 2023).

3.1.1 Location of the Study



3.2 Challenges Faced by Students at TVET Colleges

3.2.1 Lack of Resources

A resource can be defined as something that is regularly made available or intended for use to cater for a specific need (Mbatha, 2021). Additionally, anything at an institution that maintains the teaching and learning process is considered an educational resource (Mbatha, 2021). According to Wiesbaden (2021), resources for TVET are generally limited. Equipment from previous projects sits idle due to costly replacement parts, a lack of expertise to repair the traded-in equipment, and a limited understanding of how to utilise it. Some of the equipment has now become obsolete due to changes in technology. Moreover, insufficient support has been provided by the private sector division to strengthen TVET.

Researchers including Marcus and Janse van Rensburg (2020), Serumu (2014), Shodeinde et al. (2020), Thomas and Autio (2019), Gamede and Uleanya (2019), Kigwilu and Akala (2017) and Konayyuma (2019) concur that some TVET colleges in underdeveloped nations exhibit unprofessional behaviour, lack of resources, and inadequate utilisation of those resources. According to the findings of these studies, some TVET colleges encounter a variety of difficulties, such as inadequate resources, inadequate teaching and learning materials, a lack of

physical resources, inappropriate equipment, a shortage of preparation materials, and a lack of facilities and utensils needed for instruction.

It is well known that a lack of educational resources hinders teaching and learning, which in turn affects student achievement (Mbatha, 2021). South African TVET institutions are not immune to issues of poor management, and resource scarcity and underutilisation, according to Mbatha (2021). Additionally, Mbatha (2021) notes that TVET institutions in South Africa acknowledge a history of inadequate finance, poor infrastructure maintenance, and a lack of life-cycle planning. According to Muzindutsi and Nhlapho (2017), inadequate distribution of resources, poor performance, and a lack of management skills are all problems experienced in the TVET sector. Even when resources are available, they are not being utilised to their full potential, and managers are not suitably qualified to hold their employees accountable. In Myanmar, the challenges faced in TVET programmes revolve around the lack of support from the government in terms of funding campaigns and dissemination of information (Zulkarnain & Yasin, 2023).

Ajoke (2017) reveals that resources play a crucial role and contribute significantly to improving operative teaching and learning. As a result, adequate instructional resources such as workshops, functional equipment, experienced and knowledgeable lecturers and facilities should be provided, as the lack of these resources obstructs the progress of skill-based courses. The management of instructional resources is critical (Mbatha, 2021). Additionally, there are secondary teaching support facilities that cater to people's physical and mental needs, such as offices, restaurants, proper acoustics, restrooms, laundry services, communal areas and cleaning services (Akpabio, 2015). However, many South African pupils attend institutions with inadequate infrastructure, which has a negative impact on a student's academic performance, according to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (2023). Many individuals from previously disadvantaged metropolitan areas attend schools that are overcrowded, with dilapidated classrooms, inadequate study areas, and lacking libraries. The situation is even worse for rural areas, where students have to deal with overcrowded classrooms, poorly maintained facilities, lack of libraries, no electricity, and unsanitary pit chamber pots that put learners' health and safety at risk. Not inadequate infrastructure not only poses a health risk for students, but it also makes it difficult for students to focus and succeed in school due to the lack of proper resources. It is for this reason why adequate infrastructure should be a priority in any educational institution. According to a study conducted in Nigeria, the lack of

involvement in TVET was attributed to factors such as the construction of vocational schools and the number of TVET classes available (Zulkarnain & Yasin, 2023).

3.2.2 TVET Students' Upbringing

There are various factors that may lead to TVET students experiencing different learning encounters in the classroom. These factors include changes in the student's socio-economic status, motivation towards studies, learning disabilities, as well as their domestic or family circumstances. While learning challenges may not be directly linked to all of these factors, they certainly play a role in the students' academic success.

3.2.2.1 Poverty is still a deterrent

South Africa's economy has been confronted by several challenges over the past five years, such as low and weak economic growth, enduring high unemployment levels, increasing consumer prices and greater household dependency on credit (Statistics South Africa, 2017). This all leads to poor economic growth (Nortje, 2017). Poverty has become one of the most predominant factors of academic accomplishment in our educational institutions today. As the number of scholars raised in poverty rises, educators need to be aware of the effects of poverty on student behaviour and learning ability in the classroom. Lecturers must incorporate verified strategies to assist in narrowing the gap in academic achievement between those raised in poverty and those raised in more affluent homes (McKenzie, 2019).

The stress related to housing uncertainty and food insecurity negatively influences everyday life for low-income college students. The inability to meet basic needs has negative consequences for their psychosocial outcomes and educational achievement, including college completion, academic performance, concentration in class, class attendance, fear of disappointing family, sadness, hopelessness, isolation, embarrassment and frustration (Majumder, 2021). According to the 2022 Global Youth Wellbeing Index, which considered factors such as economic opportunity, health, education, safety and security, information and communications technology, and citizen participation (National Planning Commission, 2020), the vast majority of young people worldwide report declining levels of well-being. Students raised in poverty are particularly prone to stressors that undermine school behaviour and performance. For instance, females exposed to abuse tend to experience mood swings in school, while males experience diminishing curiosity, learning, and memory (Jensen, 2013). Poverty is connected with substandard housing, lack of food, homelessness, insufficient childcare support, dangerous neighbourhoods, and under-resourced schools. In addition,

low-income children are at greater risk than higher-income children for a range of cognitive, emotional and health-related problems, including detrimental effects on executive functioning, lower-than-average academic achievement, poor social-emotional functioning, developmental delays, and behavioural problems (Abrams, 2022). Furthermore, psychological research also indicates that living in poverty is connected with variances in structural and functional brain development in children and young adults in areas connected to cognitive processes that are crucial for learning, communication and academic achievement, including social-emotional processing, memory, language, and executive functioning.

Students living in poverty frequently have fewer resources at home to complete assignments, study, or engage in activities that help equip them for academic success. Impoverished families often lack access to computers, high-speed internet, and other materials that can support a student outside of school (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2023). Students who have experienced emotional and social problems may also express acting-out behaviours during school hours (McKenzie, 2019). Furthermore, McKenzie (2019) explains that in order to surmount academic and behavioural problems faced by children raised in poverty, lecturers must develop solid relationships with their students, exemplify respect in their connections with students, set social skills in lessons, endorse inclusive classrooms, be familiar with the signs of poverty, empower students, modify classroom environments, construct fundamental skills, provide accurate assessments, and recruit caring and compassionate staff. Building caring and supportive interactions with students is the first and most effective strategy to increase student effort and motivation (Budge & Parrett, 2018).

3.2.2.2 Lack of motivation

Motivation in education is the driving force behind a student's academic journey, influencing their likelihood of persevering and remaining focused. Motivation helps students to concentrate on their main goals and overcome any obstacles that may arise (Hawthorne et al., 2021). Motivation is also mirrored in students' commitment and involvement to the learning environment, as well as their enjoyment of the learning process (Souders, 2020). Motivation is not the same as commitment, which is the level of dedication a student demonstrates through their busyness and focus (Loveless, 2022). According to EduZenith (2023), lack of motivation in students can be recognised by several factors, including academic pressure, emotional problems, early adolescence, lack of love, an unhealthy home environment, and sometimes

even the lackadaisical attitude of lecturers. Students may also be demoralised by the structure and distribution of rewards, a lack of apparent value in the course content, and personal problems. Lecturers can overcome this by creating a warm and inclusive classroom environment. Students may lack motivation due to the perceived pointlessness of studying and may disengage from the connection between education and real-life applications. As a result, students may lack the motivation to fully commit themselves to TVET education. Concluding TVET in many countries will not lead to high-paying occupations. However, TVET institutions that offer courses applicable to the needs of the market are successfully preparing students to enter the workforce and support themselves. Lack of motivation is one of the core reasons for procrastination. Students who are not motivated to study tend to constantly reschedule tasks until the end of the semester, putting themselves under pressure and in unhealthy conditions, such as stress due to panicking once they realise they cannot complete the work in time (EduZenith, 2023).

Another reason for low motivation is when there is a poor relationship between the students themselves. The students' relationships with their peers can be a significant motivating factor, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie in their learning, especially if they do not share a common language for communication (Pachina, 2020a). Utilising plenty of pair and group work is a good way to support peer rapport, particularly activities that help them get to know one another. Pachina (2020a) further states that motivation may be low in a classroom if the pace and style of the teaching are boring for the students; for example, from the lecturer using the same pace and tone of voice throughout their lessons, or from a series of lessons with similar activities in the same order. The lack of motivation resulting from students being bored by such predictability can be improved by the lecturer. The lecturer should ignite enthusiasm about the subjects and vary the pace and manner of the teaching methods. Introducing greater diversity into the lesson activities by including games, audio materials, videos, and a mix of trusted and original materials can keep students engaged and eager to see what will come next, therefore helping to maintain their interest (Pachina, 2020b). Teachers Institute (2023) recognises that not every student has the same aptitude and mental ability. Everyone takes time to learn and perform at their own pace. While some students excel at tackling the challenges of academic success and perform well in exams, others may struggle to handle the pressure. Consistent poor performance can negatively impact the student's self-confidence, causing them to feel lost among their more successful peers.

3.2.3 Lack of Industry Experience for Many TVET Lecturers

TVET institutions cannot afford to hire trainers from the industry because their fees are significantly higher. As a result, they often have to hire former students from government educator training institutions. These new lecturers often lack technical skills, leading to a lack of participation from other stakeholders. This issue stems from the lack of relevance in TVET programmes and the lack of skills of TVET graduates in the industry. If the industry is heavily involved in TVET, there is a high probability that its graduates can easily find employment. Successful lecturers should be multifaceted professionals with a professional teaching credential in addition to practical skills (Schmidt, 2019). According to Schmidt (2019), industry managers in Australia ensure that lecturers acquire the necessary technology skills and knowledge, while vocational education teachers (VET) focus on gaining pedagogical knowledge and abilities in the workplace. Lecturers receive valuable input on best practices and processes from professionals in the field through work-integrated learning. With the use of this information, instructors can modify their curricula and teaching strategies to better align with the demands of the labour market. The results showed that having industry experience enhanced their teaching experience. To ensure that VET teachers have the necessary skills, a balance of industry knowledge, educational content, and contemporary teaching methodologies must be maintained (Schmidt, 2019).

Therefore, it is the researcher's view that resources must be provided to students. The campus managers should ensure that the college budget is allocated according, and they can also seek sponsors if needed. Once these resources are provided, it will reduce the high rate of absenteeism and student dropouts. It is the researcher's opinion that NSFAS should be addressed as early as possible to tackle the persistent poverty issue. Additionally, lecturers could consider mentoring individual students to provide motivation. It is the researcher's opinion that the college should appoint experienced industry professionals or qualified lecturers to bridge the gap in the industry.

3.3 Challenges Faced by TVET Lecturers

TVET lecturers play a wide range of intricate roles. In addition to the obligations and expectations that come with their internal position and work in the classroom and at the TVET college, TVET lecturers also have to deal with rising expectations about what they can do outside of the classroom to change domestic economies and societies (Wedekind et al., 2024). TVET lecturers encounter difficulties in providing student support, primarily because they lack

management support for their professional development in student guidance, insufficient staff and resources for SSS, systemic problems such as personal issues and disadvantaged backgrounds, and inadequate training on inclusive education and identifying student barriers. The poor throughput rates are caused in part by these difficulties.

The qualifications of lecturers have been outlined in the policy for TVET lecturer qualifications (DHET, 2013) as a crucial factor for effectively managing students in the classroom. TVET lecturers are deemed qualified when they possess both academic and workplace qualifications. However, possessing these qualifications does not automatically indicate competence, highlighting the importance for ongoing staff development and training.

The researcher is of the view that lecturers encounter numerous challenges at colleges and employ different techniques to address them effectively. It is essential for lecturers to take control of their classrooms, understand each student, and address their individual challenges.

3.3.1 Academic Qualifications of TVET Lecturers

The TVET colleges are required to educate and train individuals who have left school to advance their skills for use in industry, commerce, and public-sector institutions, as stated in the South African White Paper on post-school education and training (Oosthuizen, Spencer & Chigano, 2022). Davids and Waghid (2019) point out that previous studies indicate that some lecturers lack workplace experience and qualifications. It was determined that TVET colleges hire university graduates, as well as intermediate and FET (grades 10–11) qualified instructors even if they do not have prior job experience (Davids & Waghid, 2019). The background of TVET lecturers and trainers vary significantly in terms of qualifications (level and type) and job experience. Different countries in Europe require different qualifications and/or competences to teach in VET, including academic qualifications, work experience, state examinations, foreign language ability, practitioners/professionals, flexibility, social criteria, continuing professional development, and supervised practice (Cedefop, 2022). The prerequisite for becoming a TVET teacher has been raised by TVET institutes in a number of nations. A degree from a university or university of applied sciences, along with at least three years of work experience in an area connected to the degree, are prerequisites for beginning professional teacher education in Finland, which leads to a career as a TVET teacher. Having a first degree in the relevant occupational field being taught is a prerequisite for beginning a Master's in Teaching and Learning programme in Malta, which prepares individuals for teaching VET subjects in secondary schools (first TVET). In Kenya, a bachelor's degree is also

necessary for TVET trainers. These examples highlight the importance placed on both educational qualifications and work experience before entering the teaching profession (Muscat, 2023).

Lecturers who lack workplace experience may find it difficult to connect content with the needs of the industry for which they have to prepare their students and may not know how to link theory with practice during lessons. Teaching and learning at TVET colleges require concrete experiences and meaningful occurrences. Real, tangible experiences can alter the perspectives of both students and lecturers and profoundly impact them. This can be seen as a pedagogical journey. A significant percentage of TVET instructors also lack job experience, according to previously cited studies (McBride, Papier & Needham 2009; Manyau, 2015). The above statement is supported by the DHET's Green Paper (DHET, 2012), which highlights a well-known deficiency in lecturer credentials and competencies. This deficiency is related to industry requirements and the types of skills that TVET institutions provide or seek for the industry. Students who are pursuing the NCV are required to complete four vocational courses, which include three core topics (DHET, 2018).

The fact that these new and complicated courses were not included in their secondary curriculum training has frustrated the lecturers who teach practical subjects. According to Amedorme and Fiagbe (2013), the majority of the lecturers at the selected TVET college lack the necessary skills to teach vocational subjects. They have only been certified as school lecturers (DHET, 2013) and have never worked in the industries they teach about. Moreover, Oosthuizen, Spencer and Chigano (2022) state that a participant's application of the acquired information and abilities determines, among other things, the level of a professional development experience and its impact.

The difficulty, as noted by Oosthuizen, Spencer and Chigano (2022), is in the lecturers' capacity to use their acquired knowledge and abilities in the classroom. For lecturers to be effective, TVET colleges should hire specialist instructors who possess essential practical skills and knowledge, and provide them with advanced skills (Makamu, 2022). Therefore, the researcher argues that lecturers should be qualified professionals who are specialists in their field. This way, lecturers can impart their practical knowledge gained from industry experience to students. Their qualifications will also help them determine the most effective methods for imparting this knowledge to their students.

3.3.2 Professional Development

In order to fully grasp the importance of professional development, it is crucial to first delineate and understand the term “professionalism”. Professionalism encompasses a set of skills and standards that individuals in a particular field are expected to uphold (Vivanco, Delgado & Roberto, 2015). It can be seen as a status that is continually expanded, maintained and improved through ongoing dedication and persistence of those who adhere to the core beliefs and values that define it (Vivanco, Delgado & Roberto, 2015). Additionally, Dinger et al. (2015) suggest that professionalism also involves the mindset with which individuals approach their work.

Professional development entails educating oneself through learning and training to improve one’s profession (Rianti & Salsabilah, 2024). However, Dlamini (2022) clarifies that continuing professional development is sometimes defined as academic faculty development. Dlamini (2022) asserts that academic professional development has received increased institutional and theoretical attention over the last 20 years. For an organisation's human resources to adapt to the changing trends of globalisation, professional development is essential, as explained by Entsie, Owusu-Cole and Ofosua (2020). Several occupations, including teaching, require ongoing professional development. The need for academics to engage in ongoing professional development is increasingly recognised as a vital instrument for improving instruction and learning. In China's TVET environment, informal workplace learning plays a crucial role in promoting teacher professional development. According to Jin, Tigelaar, van der Want and Admiraal (2022), many Chinese TVET teachers have limited knowledge of vocational schools, as they typically start working directly after college. Informal learning is crucial for integrating professional knowledge into vocational school culture and becoming a qualified TVET teacher. In China, teacher professional development aims to enhance teachers' adaptability to their work responsibilities, in addition to promoting learning and growth.

By fostering both professional and personal growth, continuing professional development has a positive impact on their teaching practice (Lee et al., 2020). The function of the educator is evolving, and academic work is becoming increasingly complex in organisation. Delivering information, class size, student diversity, competencies, subject-related decisions, and student expectations are just a few of the difficulties faced by academics (Brew, Boud, Lucas & Crawford, 2018). Higher education institutions must thus take into account and implement various professional development models to support scholars in the emerging fields of teaching

and learning to address these issues. Academic professional development is increasingly necessary for higher education institutions to remain competitive (Inamorato dos Santos et al., 2019). Furthermore, research shows that ongoing professional development enhances lecturers' abilities in predicting students' approaches, anticipating errors, and selecting the most effective teaching practices for individual students, according to Dlamini (2022).

Student-centred professional development focusing on creativity and emphasising active learning instructions may have a positive impact on student performance if it is well planned and implemented, according to Wheeler and Bach (2021). To replace in-depth instruction and promote students' independence and self-sufficiency, the student-centred method shifts the lecturers' focus to the student (Christersson et al., 2019). Professional growth, according to Parsons (2022), can be extremely beneficial for employees. It can help individuals expand their knowledge base, improve their performance and productivity, create opportunities for career advancement, enhance both hard and soft skills, and boost their self-confidence. In addition, it can assist in setting individuals apart in their profession, reinforce their knowledge, and expose them to fresh ideas. Saunders and Bristow (2023) state that some advantages of professional growth may include: improved confidence, increased job satisfaction, staying current in one's field, increased marketability, and staying motivated.

Professional development is also highly beneficial for companies, and can lead to higher employee retention rates and enhanced competence. According to Hendy et al. (2023), underqualified employees are likely to experience poor job performance and increased levels of work-related stress. If employees feeling unhappy and undervalued, the likelihood of them looking elsewhere for career advancement and development opportunities will increase. Hendy et al. (2023) also state that with increased workplace stress, poorly qualified workers are likely to feel unacknowledged in their jobs, leading them to either leave in search of better opportunities or underachieve. According to McPherson (2021), training and development for TVET lecturers play a significant role in their classroom management, as a lack of training can result in difficulties when handling the learning challenges. This lack of training could stem from inadequate qualifications, experience or mentoring. McPherson (2021) adds that TVET lecturers lack expertise in areas such as career development, curriculum preparation, technical skills, and instructional methodologies. Lecturer development and training are the responsibilities of the institution's administration and are typically overlooked. Even if new management is in place or skill-building programmes have not been implemented, staff

development and training remain essential. Manyau (2015) suggests that informal learning is often used to enhance the teaching abilities of untrained lecturers due to a lack of training. According to Van der Bijl (2015), lecturers rely on their management to offer formal or informal coaching programmes to help improve and develop their teaching abilities. When lecturers are not properly equipped to effectively manage their classes, students may become disheartened and encounter challenges as a result.

These lecturers frequently lack expertise or mentorship from more experienced colleagues. It can be argued that lecturers should always seek out new ways to better themselves, whether through training sessions or short courses. This is because the curriculum changes periodically, so lecturers should constantly strive to enhance their skills. By engaging in professional development, lecturers will stay current in terms of any developments in their field. Research indicates that a positive learning environment leads to better student performance (Van der Bijl, 2015).

3.3.3 Students with Special Needs

The world, despite being a global village, has different methodologies when discussing broad educational issues, especially those concerning inclusive education (Sako, 2020). Global indicators show that aspects of higher education institutions' participation, advancement, retention, and accessibility for students with impairments have received less attention than that given to regular students (Ahmed, 2016). According to UNESCO (2023), students with disabilities continue to face discrimination and social exclusion in several nations (Mugor, Chang'ch & Keter, 2014; ILO, 2017). According to Sako (2020), the DHET has made it a priority to strengthen and develop public TVET colleges by improving their governance and management, fostering excellence in teaching and learning, increasing their overall responsiveness to labour and local markets, developing SSS, and creating structure. However, despite the latent support for increased involvement of students with disabilities post-1994, hurdles continue to exist. Over the years, students with special needs have faced the challenges of an inaccessible physical environment. According to DHET (2016), all universities are required to ensure that students with mobility issues have appropriate access. However, DHET (2016) acknowledges that students who require assistance with mobility still face significant challenges due to the lack of user-friendliness of the physical environment. Colleges and universities continue to face various obstacles for students with impairments. According to Kochung (2011) and De la Morena et al. (2017), these obstacles include unfavourable attitudes,

architectural barriers, inaccessible information and technology, regulations and policies that are not necessarily inclusive, and approaches that do not promote inclusion.

Obstacles are linked to instructors' perceptions and attitudes towards disabilities, as well as the accessibility of their teaching strategies. Stereotypes and attitudes offer insight into the experiences of people with disabilities and the challenges they face (Marquis et al., 2016). The absence of training materials and an unadapted curriculum further exacerbate this, making it more challenging for people with disabilities to access educational opportunities. Despite the obstacles that persons with disabilities face, negative attitudes towards them are often prevalent. These perspectives indicate how the current system has failed to address additional barriers (Sako, 2020).

The researcher is of the view that students with special needs must be allowed to obtain an education. The researcher agrees with other researchers who have stated that TVET colleges should provide space available for students with special needs, and that SSS should be available to assist all students, and those with special needs should declare them when they apply so that the college can provide appropriate assistance.

3.3.4 Absenteeism

Absenteeism has become a common occurrence in schools nowadays, indicating unscheduled absences for various reasons. This practice is considered harmful in the long run, as it not only affects the performance of the absentee but also fosters a negligent attitude (Khan, Raman, Sambamoorthy & Prashanth, 2023). Eneza Education (2013) explains that absenteeism in school refers to the act of staying away from school without providing a genuine reason for not attending classes. Absenteeism is a form of behaviour that negatively impacts the performance of students. Maxwell (2018) argues that the issue of absenteeism is unavoidable because students occasionally miss school activities and lessons, which can become problematic if they are absent for an extended period. According to Maxwell (2018), absenteeism creates a dull, frustrating and unwelcoming classroom atmosphere. It makes attending students uncomfortable and can make the educator short-tempered. This disruption interrupts the self-motivated learning environment and negatively impacts the overall well-being of the class. Birioukov (2016) explains that absenteeism refers to a student being absent from school. Nonappearances can be motivated by poor relationships with other students, academic failure, or structural reasons such as having to work during school hours or taking care of a sick family

member. Absenteeism has been recognised to have numerous negative impacts on student's academic results.

The lack of attendance at TVET colleges can be attributed to a variety of reasons, as stated by Kasita (2019). Both young individuals and older students enrol in TVET institutions. Kasita (2019) posits that reasons for non-attendance may include factors such as teenage pregnancy, unemployment, and poverty. She elaborates that students' personal issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse, illness, socio-economic challenges such as poverty, and family issues such as parental divorce, all contribute to student non-attendance. Kasita (2019) suggests that students' differences of opinions may have an impact on their attendance. Personal issues that decrease their interest in attending college can lead to a decline in academic performance. Factors within the college environment, such as early parenthood, low performance and repeating classes, peer pressure, negative family background, and difficulty forming positive relationships, connections, can also contribute to student absenteeism. Bunking off is often associated with college-related factors such as a lack of resources, the relationship between students and instructors, a less stimulating environment, and student boredom. The college student population is made up of individuals with a diverse range of personal characteristics, abilities, knowledge, interests, aspirations, and opportunities. Because of their unique abilities and traits, some students may be more prone to absences than others (Kasita, 2019). Attendance during lectures is a significant issues in Nigerian tertiary institutions, as outlined in students' information handbooks, which are provided upon registration (Egede & Bivwiere, 2021). Orientation programmes for new students often emphasise the importance of attending classes (Egede & Bivwiere, 2021).

Learner absenteeism not only disrupts the absent learner, but also negatively affects the lecturer's ability to plan and deliver classroom instruction in a coherent and organised manner. Failing to present lessons in a sequential order affects the absent learner and hinders the lecturer's capacity to structure and present lessons logically. This lack of chronological presentation impacts the overall development of all learners by creating challenges in general classroom management (Mboweni, 2014). According to Myataza (2019), lecturers play a significant role in students' absenteeism. When a lecturer makes negative comments about a student, it can lead to the student choosing to stay at home instead of attending college. Myataza (2019) argues that there is a direct link between lecturers and students' absenteeism. Lecturers

should treat all students equally and with respect. Showing favouritism towards certain students can discourage other students from attending classes (Myataza, 2019).

Moreover, Myataza (2019) states that non-attendance of classes in higher education institutions is sometimes influenced by a lack of interest in a particular subject or module, or dissatisfaction with a lecturer (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011). These authors also point out that students may be unhappy with a lecturer's teaching style or the way the material is presented. Sometimes, students skip classes because they find the content uninteresting (Cushion & Nelson, 2012). Additionally, students often criticise the length and tiring nature of classes, claiming they are too long and exhausting for a whole day (Simelane, 2013). Students also report feeling overwhelmed by the workload, as they are preoccupied trying to keep up on assignments and prepare for presentations and upcoming tests (Ginty & Boland, 2016).

The researcher agrees with the points raised by the aforementioned researchers that lecturers play a significant role in student absenteeism. The researcher believes that students are absent from class for various reasons, and it is important for lecturers to identify these challenges and provide support to students. Lecturers should engage in conversations with students, utilising an open-door policy so that students feel comfortable sharing their concerns. The use of referral forms can help ensure that students receive the necessary support.

3.3.5 Students Preparedness

In South Africa, education is hindered by a lack of educational readiness, bilingual requirements in English-medium environments, large class sizes, and inadequate curriculum planning. The challenge for higher education institutions lies not only in increasing student numbers and diversity, but also in providing quality education. Many university programmes focus heavily on theory, neglecting the practical experiences of students. As a result, their ability to apply theory to real-world situations may be compromised. A higher education report on student experiences suggests that current group of students is not inherently underprepared, and that the failure to thrive lies more in systemic weaknesses in higher education (Roman, Titus & Dison, 2016).

The high rate of student non-performance is correlated with an increasing dropout rate, which is seen as a problem in higher education (Du Plessis & Gerber, 2012). According to McPherson (2021), students often feel disillusioned and become frustrated with themselves when an educational goal is not achieved. Such disillusionment often leads to feelings of hopelessness

and demoralisation, which can result in academic challenges for students. In some cases, behavioural issues may arise as students who struggle academically may become resentful towards their better performing peers (McPherson, 2021). According to McPherson (2021), behavioural issues frequently arise as a result of students' academic setbacks. These students often struggle to keep pace with their peers, leading to a loss of focus and causing them to struggle academically. Interestingly, Hugo (2016) suggests that even students with solid educational foundations may face learning difficulties when their academic potential is not fully utilised by their teachers. As a result, these students may become distracted in class, growing frustrated or even disinterested (Hugo, 2016).

The researcher agrees with Du Plessis and Gerber (2012) that the dropout percentage among students is often due to non-performance. Students frequently enrol in colleges just to receive NSFAS funding and often select inappropriate programmes. Consequently, it becomes evident that students lack preparedness, as they are unprepared for the demands of the programmes chosen. This lack of readiness ultimately results in student non-performance and dropouts.

3.3.6 Academic Support from the College

The term “academic support” encompasses a wide range of instructional methods, educational services, and resources provided to students to help them enhance their learning, interact with their peers, meet academic standards, and achieve success in school. It can be challenging to pinpoint the exact meaning of "academic support" in educational settings without specific examples or further clarification. Various strategies aimed at academic support may also be referred to as "support" or "supports" (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). According to DHET (2020), colleges should integrate the efforts of work management, academic, and student support staff to identify students in need and collectively take responsibility for providing them with the necessary assistance to improve their chances of succeeding academically.

As a primary source of assistance, academic support programmes must be approved integrated into curriculum delivery contact hours. Colleges should provide practical courses to aid students in their studies. Academic support and improvement are essential for the vast majority of students to successfully complete their education. Academic assistance should be considered a fundamental aspect of education and learning, and should be carefully planned and included in the overall academic interventions at each college. Early identification of academic support needs is crucial as it leads to timely interventions.

The development and implementation of academic support programmes should be closely tied to academic departments and faculty input, in addition to falling under the purview of SSS. In order to enhance academic outcomes and offer effective assistance to students facing academic challenges, the institution should consider forming multidisciplinary teams at each campus. Academic assistance programmes for students need to be fully integrated into the educational process. In order to enhance student learning, instructors should regularly assess their students' performance and learning needs and adjust their lesson plans and teaching methods accordingly. Colleges should promote stronger and more meaningful connections between instructors and students (DHET, 2020).

The key idea is that instructors can better serve their students and provide them with a higher-quality education by getting to know them well and understand their individual learning needs, interests, and aspirations. Colleges should invest in e-academic programmes that identify students' learning challenges and issues in order to support instructors in delivering academic programmes that target areas of need. According to DHET (2020), academic support includes a range of instructional modalities, such as tutoring sessions and additional courses. The recommended academic assistance strategies that colleges should offer to students are outlined below. However, it is advisable for colleges to utilise their preferred academic support programmes to meet the needs of students and make use of the resources available at the college.

3.3.6.1 Classroom academic support

Developing honest relationships between lecturers and students is essential for fostering trust in the academic relationship. By doing so, lecturers can identify learning challenges early on and provide necessary support and engagement before they escalate. With the assistance of career counselling professionals, lecturers should have student profiles or summaries so they can better understand the socio-economic and psychosocial obstacles to students' performance and create appropriate support plans (DHET, 2020). According to Steinmann (2017), mentoring is a supervisory arrangement where one individual (the mentor) imparts their knowledge, skills and experiences to another individual (the mentee or student). The objective of mentorship is to help mentees in acquiring skills and information that will help them succeed in their careers. Mentors are there to provide support and serve as a resource to the mentee whenever the need arises. Mentoring extends beyond just sharing knowledge; mentors help mentees identify their goals, offer empowerment and encouragement, and guide them in achieving their goals or resolving any challenges they encounter. Mentors should not dictate

how things should be done; instead, they should offer understanding and support as their mentees navigate their career path.

3.3.6.2 Peer tutoring

This is an instruction method where students are employed as tutors for other students. This approach is utilised in academic, social, or even behavioural settings. Typically, a student who excels academically is frequently paired with one who is struggling academically (Burakova, 2023). Students who excel in a particular subject are encouraged to tutor their fellow students under the guidance and supervision of an academic support officer or a professor teaching that particular programme. Additionally, individuals who have excelled in a particular subject in the past can be asked to provide instruction to others (DHET, 2020). Burakova (2023) explains that peer tutoring encompasses a variety of methods in which students work in pairs or small groups to provide each other with specific instructional support. These methods include: 1. Fixed-role, cross-ability tutoring, where one student, often older, takes on the role of teacher and is paired with a younger tutee or tutees. 2. Reciprocal-role tutoring, whereby students switch between the role of tutor and tutee. The common element is that students share responsibility for teaching and assessing their progress. 3. Class-wide peer tutoring, where the entire class is divided into equal groups to collaborate on a work assignment. Students take turns teaching and learning. 4. Peer-assisted learning, where students are paired with peers of similar abilities for structured tasks. 5. Cross-age peer tutoring, where older and younger students are paired, with the older student taking on the role of tutor.

3.3.6.3 Extra lessons

Additional, or extra lessons are additional lessons arranged for college scholars outside of regular school hours to enhance their comprehension of the key concepts in their syllabi (Makwerere & Dube, 2019). Academic support staff and lecturers work together to create a schedule to help students outside of the normal timetable, focussing on topics where they may be struggling (DHET, 2020).

3.3.6.4 Catch-up classes

To prevent students from falling behind schedule, lecturers should arrange catch-up classes for students who have personal issues and cannot attend classes for legitimate reasons, or for students who may have been impacted by student or lecturer conflicts and community disputes (DHET, 2020). According to Accelerated Education Working Group (2021), a unique technique to support young people in returning to college is through accelerated learning programmes, sometimes referred to as 'catch-up' classes. Through scheduled corporation with

educational institutions and focussing on the essential fundamentals of the approved curriculum, these programmes aim to quickly cover education content that was missed over a prolonged period of time.

3.3.6.5 Academic development

This is achieved through one-on-one development sessions with a mentor and discussions with the SSS officer. The student should have access to a private, safe space to openly discuss any sensitive issues that may be affecting their academic performance. Additional academic support programmes or strategies could include mentoring, study materials, and a library with an experienced librarian who can assist students in navigating through the library or finding a quiet study area.

Researchers agree on the fundamentals of academic support. This researcher is of the view that academic support can encompass resources provided by the college. The researcher suggests that the college should offer resources such as laptops and data for students to complete their assignments and projects at home. Additionally, researchers also emphasise the importance of student support staff. This researcher concurs, and believes that the college should employ enough staff to assist students and promptly address their needs, as this is crucial for any college. Additionally, student support programmes should involve contributions by lecturers. This means that lecturers should be actively involved in the operations of student support officers, as they are the people who interact with students most frequently and are able to identify their students. The researcher agrees with previous studies that suggest lecturers should have strong connections with students in order to understand their issues. By fostering these relationships, students can also support each other, and lecturers can facilitate peer tutoring by grouping students effectively. Additionally, lecturers can go above and beyond by offering extra lessons for students who require additional support.

3.4 The Process of Teaching and Learning at TVET Colleges

In the vibrant tapestry of South African education, TVET colleges play a fundamental role in shaping the future of countless individuals. In particular, TVET colleges play a vital role in shaping South Africa's force. With a focus on hands-on training and real-world skills improvement, TVET colleges offer a wide range of fields, including engineering, construction, healthcare, business, hospitality, and information technology. This section will delve into the essence of TVET in South Africa and identify the colleges that are driving its improvement (Selane & Odeku, 2024). In Africa, TVET plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with

valuable workforce skills and promoting sustainable development. South Africa recognises TVET colleges as higher education providers, on par with universities. In Malawi, vocational training is offered through various institutions such as development centres, community technical colleges, national technical colleges, and commercial institutions. Training programmes are divided into three categories: formal, informal and non-formal. After two years of junior secondary school, pupils in Malawi have the option to pursue vocational education as part of the general education system.

According to Van der Bijl and Taylor (2018), the primary goal of vocational education is to prepare young people for the workforce, placing unique demands on instructors in vocational programmes. They need to be subject specialists, with in-depth knowledge and experience in their subject's application in relevant industries, as well as teaching proficiency. Over time, they are expected to bridge the gap between education and the workforce in their subject's instruction. The most crucial difference between school teachers and TVET college lecturers is the requirement for industry knowledge and proficiency, which significantly impacts the type of training needed to effectively teach in a college setting. The goal of what is now known as industry-based training for lecturers, as indicated in international and South African research is to enhance the vocational lecturers' teaching abilities by improving their industry knowledge and experience (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018). TVET lecturers enhance their proficiency in collaborative teaching of their subjects and prepare their students for the demands of the workplace (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018).

The researcher is of the view that colleges should employ lecturers who are qualified experts in their respective fields. These lecturers should possess both industry knowledge and a teaching qualification. By doing so, college can effectively bridge the gap between industry requirements and the curriculum offered at TVET colleges. Additionally, colleges can gather information on industry needs and make necessary adjustments to the curriculum in order to meet those demands. According to Advance HE (2020), the importance of teaching in higher education institutions has never been more crucial. This has created an opportunity to deeply reflect on various aspects of our current policy and practice. By celebrating best practices and recognising opportunities for further development, this will aid in the ultimate goal of achieving academic excellence in the various TVET courses on offer.

3.4.1. National Certificate (Vocational)

3.4.1.1 Qualification Requirement

Grade 9 passes or an ABET level 4 certificate are required. The NCV programme serves as an excellent starting point for those looking to enhance practical skills in a specific vocational field. It covers a wide range of subjects, from engineering and hospitality to art and design (Selane & Odeku, 2024).

NCV, recognised as an NCV, is a new qualification programme available at TVET colleges. It aims to prepare students with practical knowledge and skills for the labour force. The courses are accredited by the DHET of South Africa, providing students with the necessary abilities to pursue a career or business direction in business or engineering. The course is a three-year qualification presented in Levels 2, 3 and 4, with each level requiring a full year of study. It is specifically designed for students with a minimum of grade 9, and it admits students who have passed either grade 9, 10 or 11. Level 4 is equivalent to grade 12. Additionally, having an NCV qualification allows one to pursue further education programmes in the same study area. The NCV permits students to master a specific set of skills in preparation for the field of work and also provides students with more job opportunities in the labour market due to their expertise in a practical field.

Career Planet (2019) explains that the NCV is a high-skills, high-quality and high-knowledge programme that provides work experience and is intended to promptly meet the skills requirements of the current economy. SA. Students who excel with practical skills are more likely to follow a National Certificate in Vocational Studies. To earn an NCV, a student must attend the course for 36 months and pass all seven subjects (Human Resource Development Council of South Africa, 2014). The NCV curriculum includes both theoretical and practical elements. This curriculum aims to prepare students with the expertise, knowledge, principles and assertiveness required for lifelong learning. It encourages students to approach learning holistically and facilitates self-employment or eligibility for employment opportunities (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2015).

The researcher believes that TVET colleges should incorporate occupational skills training, as some students may not meet the qualifications for certain programmes currently offered. By introducing these programmes, lecturers will have the opportunity to better understand their students and recommend appropriate courses for them at TVET colleges.

3.4.2. Report 191 NATED

3.4.2.1 Qualification Requirement: Matric certificate or currently working towards it

If already in the possession of a matriculation certificate or in the process of completing it, one is eligible for Report 191 NATED courses. These courses delve into deep technical and vocational subjects, assuming one has a solid foundation for one's chosen career (Mouton, 2024).

According to DHET (2013) NATED programmes are as well-known as national qualification courses. The DHET designed each national qualification course to prepare students for the workplace. NATED courses incorporate both theoretical and practical components to offer students the best career-focused education. NATED courses are nationally recognised credentials designed to provide people with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in specific fields. The curriculums of these courses are designed to meet the standards of both students and employers, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for employment. NATED courses encompass a wide range of disciplines, including engineering, business, hospitality and more. This qualification is designed for students with a strong interest and aptitude in a particular profession or occupation and who wish to enhance their skills in that field. The student's technical and theoretical understanding, as well as the information and skills required in the industry for their desired occupation or profession, are established through this degree. It will provide them with the opportunity to either continue their education or secure entry-level or upper-level employment in the industry. The qualification is designed so that students can achieve it progressively by completing the related N4, N5 and N6 courses in a specific vocational or occupational sector, either separately with breaks in between or all at once over a year or 18 months. In order for the student to obtain the National N Diploma, Level 6, the theoretical component of the programme must be accompanied by a minimum of 18 months of practical application of knowledge in the workplace (DHET, 2013).

National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) programmes are offered under the auspices of the DHET. The programmes consist of 18 months of theoretical studies at colleges, followed by 18 months of practical application in workplaces. Engineering studies cover levels N1–N6, while Business and Utility Studies cover levels N4–N6 (PE TVET College, 2023).

3.5 The Lecturer as an Information Provider

A lecturer is defined as “any individual, who instils, instructs or trains other people or who offers proficient scholastic services at any college” (Kanyane, 2016). Other vocational and technical education systems in various countries also refer to a lecturer as an instructor (Kanyane, 2016). According to Todorescu, Popsce-Mitroi and Greculescu (2015), the lecturer as an information provider is responsible for several key tasks: implementing hands-on information (putting data into practice), effectively disseminating knowledge (presentations, arguments, etc.), providing access to relevant bibliography (i.e., information), and facilitating access to data resources. The most important responsibility of a lecturer is to impart knowledge through teaching. Teaching frequently involves following a specific curriculum and ensuring that the students understand what is being taught (Exeed College, 2023). An excellent lecturer is defined by their ability to encourage students to study. There are several methods through which they achieve this. The lecturer's primary responsibility extends far beyond merely imparting knowledge; they have several vital functions to fulfil in advancing education.

The role of the information provider stems from a relatively recent approach to educational reform and changing dynamics. This approach offers new teaching guidelines, as opposed to the traditional method of simply imparting specialised knowledge through lectures (Popsce-Mitroi, Greculescu & Todorescu, 2015). Therefore, this particular role will: boost students' confidence in their ability to be knowledgeable; start students on their quest for knowledge and creative changes; encourage an ongoing conversation; help students see the world as more than just a static reality, but rather as a dynamic reality that is constantly changing; emphasise the use of the information provided; and be focused on improving and updating content. It will also help students discover, organise and systematise their knowledge, guiding them to become self-taught individuals. Using didactic approaches, this role aims to encourage students, promote their independence and creativity, and strengthen their sense of responsibility. The role of information provider is associated with the lecturer's superior competencies and ability to: 1. become familiar with the didactic material; 2. establish connections between theory and practice; and 3. update the contents following discoveries in precise science, as well as related fields (Todorescu, Popsce-Mitroi & Greculescu, 2015).

Rowland, Forest, Vanstone, Leslie and Abelson (2023) suggest that lecturers strategically plan and deliver instruction on their areas of expertise to university students. This involves creating teaching materials, preparing for tutorials/seminars, grading students' work, and engaging in

direct instruction. They also conduct research into their fields, attend conferences, and write articles, books and other materials to disseminate their knowledge. They are supported by higher education administrators and work with other university staff, such as librarians, to ensure that students have access to the resources necessary for academic success. While imparting topic knowledge to students is a crucial component of a lecturer's work, this study's participants have emphasised that lecturers also have a wide range of additional duties. Many people believe that education should prioritise helping students develop their academic ideals and abilities over focusing solely on the topic matter (Rowland, Forest, Vanstone, Leslie & Abelson, 2023). Essentially, the goal is to pique students' curiosity and provide them with the necessary resources to research, analyse data, and develop their knowledge and understanding. At this point, students are seen as future scholars (Wong & Chiu, 2017). Being a lecturer goes beyond just teaching according to the curriculum; it is about preparing the youth. Lecturers do not only impart knowledge, as they also contribute to character-building (Exeed College, 2023).

Instructors should pay close attention and be self-aware, ensuring that their lesson planning and presentation facilitate students' engagement, understanding, and academic success. It is recognised that instructors are now required to upload their course materials to virtual learning platforms such as Moodle or Blackboard, which are widely utilised in British universities, prior to the commencement of classes; for example, the module handbook, assessment details, lecture/seminar notes, or PowerPoint presentations (Evans, Muij & Tomlinson, 2015). According to Gupta (2023), curriculum development and the lecturer's role are intricately connected. Lecturers play a vital role in curriculum development by bringing their expertise, experience and knowledge of their students to the table. They make valuable contributions in identifying learning objectives, selecting content, and designing appropriate instructional strategies for their students. In the classroom, they adhere to the curriculum, using their instructional skills to deliver lessons, facilitate discussions, and assess student progress. Lecturers connect the curriculum with the students, translating it into meaningful learning experiences and fostering the development of a positive and supportive learning environment. The lecturer's role is essential in ensuring that the curriculum is successfully implemented, meets the needs of the students, and supports their overall learning and development.

Lecturers also integrate their knowledge of effective teaching practices and educational methods to design engaging and meaningful learning experiences. They regularly reflect on

their teaching practices, collect student feedback, and modify the curriculum to improve its effectiveness. By actively participating in curriculum development, lecturers ensure that the curriculum is tailored to meet the specific needs of their students and promotes optimal learning outcomes (eLearning Industry, 2023). According to Alsubaie (2016), the most crucial individual in the curriculum implementation process is the lecturer. With their expertise, skills and proficiencies, lecturers are fundamental to any curriculum development effort. Experienced lecturers play a crucial role in enhancing learning as they possess extensive knowledge about teaching practice and are responsible for implementing the curriculum in the classroom. Lecturers should also remain updated on their subject matter, the education system within their own country, as well as globally. The lecturer should stay informed about new developments and research in the field of education. Lecturer enhance the general knowledge of their students. They also encourage students to participate in inter-school competitions such as essay writing, elocution, sports, and cultural events (Jagtap, 2016).

In the researcher's opinion, lecturers are responsible for enhancing students' academic performance. Lecturers should provide feedback to students after every assignment, provide constructive criticism, and always be honest with their students. This is why lecturers are referred to as information providers. Furthermore, lecturers should encourage students to participate in competitions, such as debates and book reviews, as well as entrepreneurship competitions. Essentially, lecturers should encourage college students to engage in all competitions and ensure that this information is readily available to students.

3.6 Broadening the Level of Accomplishment for Students

Research shows that we engage more effectively in learning when we experience a sense of achievement, make progress, and achieve goals repeatedly (Blue, 2022). Evidence indicates that there is a connection between achievement and academic motivation (Taylor et al., 2014). Lecturers play a significant role in engaging students in their education and learning. They have varying responsibilities on a daily basis to help create effective and stimulating learning environment (Rianti & Salsabilah, 2024). Blue (2023) emphasises a sense of accomplishment and providing students with regular opportunities to demonstrate their achievements; for example, by recognising their accomplishments through praise and positive feedback, using classroom displays to showcase students' work, and by encouraging learners to maintain portfolios of the work they create.

According to Bordia, Freeman, Kou and Culhane (2022), feedback is a powerful tool in the realm of education, playing an important role in determining students' learning experiences and nurturing their academic growth. Recognising the significance of feedback and applying effective feedback mechanisms can lead to improved learning outcomes, higher-quality performance, and increased motivation among students. Bordia et al. (2022) further state that feedback is a reciprocal communication method that provides students with valuable insight into their strengths and areas for improvement. It serves as a guiding light, helping students navigate their educational journey with clarity. Timely and constructive feedback not only supports learning but also instils a sense of accountability and responsibility in students, empowering them to take ownership of their development. Consistent feedback conversations between lecturers and students nurture trust and respect, generating an atmosphere where students feel comfortable seeking guidance and clarification. Ifarajimi (2023) asserts that curriculum evaluation and feedback are crucial in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Nigeria. The country's education sector faces various challenges, including low enrollment and retention rates, inadequate infrastructure and resources, teacher shortages and lack of motivation, curriculum mismatch, and irrelevance, among others. These issues have significant implications for the quality of education and human capital in Nigeria.

Feedback remains one of the most significant aspects of the teaching and learning process, as it directly influences both teaching and learning procedure and has an immediate impact on the process of acquiring knowledge. In education, feedback is a critical component of the system, as it helps students understand the subjects they are studying and provides them with clear guidance on how to improve their learning techniques. Feedback can help students develop confidence, self-awareness and a passion for learning the material being taught. Providing students with relevant feedback can aid them in improving their academic performance, whether it be in the classroom or fieldwork (Bordia et al., 2022). According to Kumar (2022), effective and relevant feedback supports students in reflecting on their learning and educational strategies so they can make improvements to achieve better outcomes. Feedback is fundamental to teaching in education. By providing applicable feedback, students understand that their lecturers are eager to assist them and genuinely care about their education, which leads to improved relations and collaboration between students and lecturers.

New teaching styles and approaches are constantly being developed, making it essential for lecturers to prioritise their own learning and professional growth by staying up to date with

emerging practices. By focusing on professional development, lecturers ensure their students have the best opportunity of success in their studies, while also increasing the likelihood of creating an effective and engaging learning environment. Staying up to date also provides access to new materials and teaching resources (Rianti & Salsabilah, 2024).

In the researcher's opinion, students need encouragement. Therefore, it is very important to create a positive atmosphere for students. Lecturers should also try to develop rewards for students in their classes, and provide feedback to all students. Lecturers should always adapt their lecturing techniques, as all students are different and cannot be treated the same as they have different needs.

3.7 The Lecturer as Implementer of Curriculum Delivery in TVET Colleges

The lessons and academic materials taught in a school, or a particular course or programme, are referred to as the curriculum. The term is rarely used broadly in colleges, but is frequently defined in dictionaries as the courses offered by a college. Lecturers frequently use the term when referring to the knowledge and skills that students should acquire. This includes the learning standards or objectives that students should achieve, the study units and lessons that instructors teach, the assignments and projects that students are assigned, the books, materials, videos, presentations and readings that are used in a course, and the tests, assessments and other methods used to measure students' learning (Great Schools Partnership, 2015). The specific learning standards, lessons, assignments, and resources utilised to develop and instruct a particular course would be an example of a unique lecturer's curriculum. The curriculum, on the other hand, is a planned and systematic bundling of competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills and attitudes that are reinforced by values) that students should acquire through structured learning experiences in both formal and informal settings, according to UNESCO (2023).

Implementing a curriculum involves carefully considered processes that require extensive planning and strategies for the programme's phase-in. At every level of the planning process for a new policy or an innovative change to an existing policy, the involvement of all interested parties – including the national department or ministry of education, administrators, the teaching staff, parents, students and interest groups – is essential. In order to consider the conceptualisation, design, improvement, distribution, implementation and assessment of the curriculum, the involvement of all stakeholders is crucial (Kanyane, 2016). Rudhumbu (2022) emphasises that the successful implementation of the TVET curriculum is crucial in enabling students to acquire the proper knowledge and skill sets that will enable them to be competitive

in the labour market. Kanyane (2016) emphasises that curriculum implementers should be thoroughly prepared for its successful implementation.

Brand, Muraca, Pineault, Sahakian, Schaffartzik, Novy, Streissler, Haberl, Asara, Dietz and Lang (2021) argue that the implementation of a curriculum is a reflection of lecturers' practices. The implementation, especially of a new curriculum, can present various challenges. The curriculum being used may be ineffective or outdated. It is also possible that the intended outcomes of the curriculum have not been fully understood, or that there is a discrepancy between the planned and actual curricula. The curriculum prescribed by policymakers is known as the expected or planned curriculum; the curriculum that is put into action in the classroom is known as the implemented curriculum; and the curriculum that reflects what the students are actually learning is known as the achieved curriculum.

Additionally, there may be discrepancies between the planned or envisioned courses, the courses that are implemented, and the courses that are successfully accomplished. However, according to Williams (2021), lecturers need to be both expert educators who fully understand the environment in which they are working and well-organised specialists. This involves ensuring that lecturers possess the necessary understanding of the material that must be taught and determining the best ways to teach and assess the subject matter in a manner that is suitable for the teaching environment. These considerations include meeting the educational requirements of different types of students. According to Kanyane (2016), there are several reasons why curricular changes are tolerated. He cites a few of these influences, including fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar, a sense of security that comes with the current curriculum, a lack of self-awareness regarding one's abilities, a lack of motivation, fear of criticism, insufficient support from educators, improper and unclear curriculum distribution, and a lack of clarity regarding the nature and extent of the anticipated change. These factors indicate that opposition to curriculum change in this setting is not due to the lecturers, who implement the curriculum. Ifarajimi (2023) asserts that there are numerous gaps and barriers that hinder the attainment of quality education for all in Nigeria, such as lecturer competence, curriculum relevance, community involvement, and security threats.

The researcher believes that lecturers should be involved in curriculum development because they know their students well. Additionally, some lecturers have industry experience and are aware of the industry needs. Therefore, it is important for all lecturers to be involved in the development of the curriculum.

3.8 Types of Support Offered by Lecturers to Students

Significant changes are occurring in higher education, with a primary emphasis on student learning and achievement (Haras, Taylor, Sorcinelli & von Hoene, 2017). Institutions can utilise a variety of strategies to promote student persistence and integration. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise that student support systems play a vital role in fostering student integration, persistence, and achievement in TVET colleges. Students have a higher likelihood of gaining access to tertiary education and succeeding in their chosen programmes when the college environment supports their achievements (Muchineripi, Arko-Achemfour & Quan-Baffour, 2022). The three main social support systems for college students are their peers, family and lecturers (Basson & Rothmann, 2018). Building relationships between students and lecturers is crucial for producing positive learning outcomes and increased satisfaction (Niamatullah, Dan Xu & Shafi, 2015). The formalised interpersonal association between an expert figure and a subordinate who interacts almost daily is the definition of the relationship between a lecturer and a student. The relationship that lecturers establish with their students is crucial to the academic progress of the students (Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021).

Building and maintaining excellent lecturer–student connections is the first step in helping a student become more interested and motivated, ultimately leading to academic productivity (Varga, 2017). According to Wanders et al. (2019), pupils who perceive their professors to be caring, attentive and compassionate are more capable and enthusiastic to engage in class activities. Varga (2017) raises the concern that in order for students to comprehend that their professors care about them and can offer the necessary structure and resources, they must have an emotional connection with them. The learning process consists of cognitive and social-psychological dimensions, and all stages need to be carefully considered in order to maximise academic success.

A study carried out by Dahri, Yusof and Chinedu (2018) in Malaysia indicates that understanding the perspective of students is essential for TVET lecturers when creating interactions with them. Empathy creates a deep connection between the professor and student, which leads to greater care. A compassionate, empathetic TVET instructor assists students emotionally, academically and socially by establishing a connection with them. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2019), students who have solid, supportive and comforting connections with their lecturers will achieve more than those who have tense interactions based on favouritism rather than academic merit. According to Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany and

Okoronka (2020), in order to boost students' motivation to study, it is important to consider their needs and perspectives. For optimal learning outcomes, students must be actively engaged and genuinely interested. According to Varga (2017), it is essential for professors to establish mutual respect with their students to foster and maintain more positive relationships. According to Sundani and Mamokhere (2021), enthusiastic instructors are recognised for their commitment to their students' success. In this context, it is further argued that lecturers who prioritise their profession and dedication to teaching and learning are essential to students' development. Olaya, Vásquez, Maldonado, Miranda and Verbeke (2020) state that on-course provision consists of additional periods, psychotherapy services, and student mentoring. It should be noted that the assimilation process differs between students. Comprehensive student support should cover an extensive spectrum of student needs. On-course provision is crucial, but it could be problematic to manage as it requires the integration and coordination of several forms of support (Maimane, 2016). Academic support focuses on the advancement of students' educational achievement. Olaya et al. (2020) are in accord that academic support is crucial in addressing any issue that may constrain students from succeeding in their studies. Adequate academic support can lead to improved adequate performance.

In their study, (2020) suggest providing academic guidance to students who are struggling. Student advising is a key component of academic support that helps improve students' achievement. An effective student support system should place a strong emphasis on academic support. Student advising is a strategy that can also help reduce student attrition rates (Longwell-Grice, Adsitt, Mullins & Serrata, 2016). Students who have positive experiences academically and socially are more likely to persevere in their studies (Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). In order to successfully complete their courses, students must feel a sense of belonging and be actively engaged in the college community (Muchineripi, Arko-Achemfour & Quan-Baffour, 2022; Eloff, O'Neil & Kanengoni, 2022). Furthermore, research focusing specifically on college students demonstrates that the connections and exchanges that students have with their instructors do have an impact. Students consider their relationships with lecturers to be "costly" when instructors behave aggressively, as they perceive them as unsociable. Positive interactions with professors can assist students in developing learning capacities that were previously believed to be unattainable, subsequently influencing their academic achievement (Bailey & Phillips, 2016). Regular interactions with professors outside of the lecture classroom, such as office visits, also contribute to a stronger sense of community. According to welfare research, positive connections that foster feelings of inclusion, being

cared for and supported by others can reduce depression, improve physical health, and encourage the adoption of healthier behaviours (Eloff, O'Neil & Kanengoni, 2022).

The researcher agrees with the consensus among researchers regarding student support. The researcher believes that effectively supporting students will enhance their performance, and that addressing students' psychosocial needs will lead to improved classroom performance and partially meet their educational needs.

3.9 Possible Causes of Student Dropout in TVET Colleges

In a speech by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training at the Garankuwa campus in July 2018, Mr Buti Kgwaridi Manamela showed great concern about the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse by TVET college students. A study conducted by McIntosh, Gidman and McLaughlin (2013) identified travelling intervals, financial constraints, workload challenges, and unrealistic expectations of the programme as some of the reasons for low academic achievement and high dropout rate among students Edwards (2023) agrees with the above statements and states that the increasing number of TVET college students who drop out during their first year of studies is a cause for concern. These high dropout rates are not only detrimental to the students, but also to the institutions they attend and the DHET. There are many influences that can increase the likelihood of students dropping out, including poor discipline and a lack of motivation. This lack of motivation in students can be attributed to various factors, such as academic pressure, emotional issues, adolescence, lack of support, unhealthy home environment, and sometimes even the indifferent attitude of lecturers. Other factors that can contribute to dropping include difficulties with the course work and workload, financial concerns, personal or family problems, choosing the wrong programme, and access to campus. Current studies on school dropout in Malawi primarily focus on analysing historical data to identify issues and causes post-dropout (Mudaniso, Taylor & Gawanani, 2023). This approach overlooks the opportunity to identify at-risk individuals by considering factors such as academic performance, course grades, demographics, and pre-admission records.

Higher Health's (2021) research has revealed that a significant number of tertiary education students, as well as staff employed by universities and colleges, abuse alcohol and drugs. The study found that 35% of students at universities admitted to being drunk or abusing alcohol on a regular basis, while 60% of TVET college students and 58% of TVET college staff consistently abuse alcohol. When college students are accustomed to alcohol, the quality of their schoolwork can suffer dramatically. Roughly one in four college students say they have

experienced academic consequences due to drinking; this includes missing class, performing poorly in exams or assignments, falling behind in the completion of assignments, and receiving lower grades in general (Manarang-Obsioma, 2019). Four out of every five college students try alcohol in college, with 40% of college students aged 18 to 22 being involved in binge drinking, and approximately 12% of college students aged 18 to 22 binge drinking on five or more occasions per month (Manarang-Obsioma, 2019). Stress is a significant factor that leads many people, including college students, to grow develop alcohol addiction. If college students are taught various ways to cope with stress, they are less likely to turn to alcohol for its mind-numbing effects, which only provide temporary relief from worries or troublesome thoughts. Another pressing concern, as stated by DHET and CHIETA Learning Programs (2020), is pregnancy. Some young women who have recently enrolled in tertiary institutions, are thrilled about their newfound freedom, as they are living on their own for the first time. They may soon become pregnant and be required to drop out for the duration of the pregnancy and the first three months after giving birth, as a result of their involvement in high-risk social behaviours such as drinking alcohol and abusing drugs. These students sometimes drop out of their education due to the cost or lack of childcare facilities, and even if they are available, they may struggle to afford them with their National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) study grant, as it only covers tuition.

According to the DHET (2020) and CHIETA Learning Programs (2020), high student dropout rates might also be attributed to the appeal of immediate job opportunities, especially for low-income households. Similar circumstances, characterised by widespread poverty among families along with tribal and ethnic divides, are prevalent in South Africa and many other parts of Africa. Access to high-quality education remains a challenge for many students due to organisational inequality. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack basic reading and numeracy skills, leading them to enrol in technicians and other higher education institutions without the required educational qualifications. The high unemployment rate in South Africa means that most students rely on financial assistance from their parents.

Approximately 90% of students rely on NSFAS financing, which is inadequate to cover their housing and transportation expenses, which indicates that the government does not provide them with enough financial support. Before receiving their first payment from NSFAS, students must complete and pass the first assignment, which is one of the requirements for funding awards. Due to the fact that some students who fail the initial assignment become

disillusioned and opt to deregister, or are left in a difficult position regarding fees if they want to rewrite the assignment to progress in studies, this inadvertently leads to violent protests on many campuses during the first semester of each academic year. These payment disruptions can escalate to strikes on multiple campuses, and amidst the ensuing chaos, some students lose faith in their prospects and drop out (DHET, 2020; CHIETA Learning Programs, 2020).

Another issue that contributes to student dropout is a lack of sufficient resources. Insufficient resources have a detrimental effect on the quality of training and education, as claimed by De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot and Van Den Brink (2013). These include: large class sizes that make teaching technical subjects challenging, a shortage of training resources, such as virtual training stations, a lack of industry-related skills among college instructors, and management teams that may not possess the necessary abilities to successfully run a technical college.

The lack of compassionate instructors, such as social workers or councillors, to provide psychosocial support to "at-risk" students leads to a shortage of college "social capital" in many institutions with challenging environments. Even when psychosocial services are available, the sheer volume of students on most college campuses and the complexity of the issues that social workers and counsellors must address frequently hinder their effectiveness (De Witte et al., 2013). The courses are taught in English and are backed by a national quality assurance guarantee.

Low language proficiency is one of the primary reasons why students struggle academically, according to Du Plessis and Gerber (2012), who examined the influence of students' competency in the medium of instruction. Furthermore, it is anticipated that students should demonstrate sufficient abilities in both academic and practical tasks. According to Spaul (2015), students who encounter difficulties are more likely to drop out. The majority of students who enrol in these institutions have limited academic backgrounds, which means they will struggle through their first year and beyond. Literature has extensively documented how poorly students perform when they first enrol in South Africa's higher education system (Spaul, 2015). According to Spaul (2015), young graduates, apprentices and interns who drop out of their studies find the programme's content difficult or sometimes irrelevant, its execution illogical, and the teaching quality mediocre, may view the programme as unprepared for postsecondary education, where the ability to learn independently is crucial.

Students' perceptions of their social position and sense of self-worth are additional factors that contribute to dropout rates. According to a 2007 study by Ostrove and Long, students' perceptions of their standing with their peers might be another factor contributing to the educational achievement gap and dropout rates. In a similar research, Johnson, Richeson and Finkel (2011) found that academic self-efficacy decreased due to several indicators of students' status, such as a lack of connection to a school or organisation.

According to Scott (2013), who drew on comparative deprivation theory – a broad approach to issues of social change and equity – first-generation college students and those from low-income families may suffer from culture shock and be more vulnerable to prejudice and exclusion both inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, Chemers, Hu and Garcia (2001) argue that a perceived decline in social standing might lead students to question their assessments of their academic ability, leading to significant psychological discomfort. They further suggest that students facing challenging circumstances, who may be outnumbered by their more privileged and resourceful peers, may become depressed, which could negatively affect their self-perception in relation to other college students. In comparison to their more advantaged counterparts, these students are more likely to perform poorly in college and ultimately drop out.

The researcher agrees with the points raised by the researchers above. The researcher also believes that selecting the wrong programme could be a contributing factor to student dropout rates. When students choose a programme that they are unprepared for, such as selecting engineering despite struggling with mathematics, then they may fail that subject and ultimately decide to drop out. Additionally, some students may initially choose a programme but later discover that they have a genuine interest in it, leading them to drop out in pursuit of a different field of study. That could also be a possible reason for students dropping out.

3.10 Strategies for the Improvement of Student Support

Support is defined as encouragement, assistance and help (Shabani & Maboe, 2021). Encouraging students to actively participate in the educational process by assigning them real-world tasks and activities is crucial. It is important to provide collaborative and project-based assignments to students in order to promote active and engaging group learning (Shabani & Maboe, 2021). Support services are designed to assist students in managing an array of academic demands and challenges to enhance their academic prospects, and to support them throughout their academic journey until they graduate (Netanda, Mamabolo & Themane,

2017). According to Muchineripi (2021), student support can be regarded as academic support and non-academic support. Institutions should recognise the challenges faced by students who require non-academic support. Munyaradzi and Addae (2019) suggest that more attention should be given to the needs of students that are indirectly related to learning activities in the provision of non-academic support. The issues may vary among students depending on their backgrounds and vulnerabilities. Students' mental health problems are attributed to psychological, biological and environmental factors (Mohd Shafiee & Mutalib, 2020). Therefore, institutions should be able to identify and distinguish the issues that impact students' mental well-being.

Research suggests that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit from more structured and specific homework tasks, particularly those focused on improving numeracy skills (Durden, 2008). This approach could be beneficial for all students. Additionally, implementing a homework centre or programme to help students with completing assessment tasks and regular homework, providing opportunities for lecturers to collaborate during the day, hiring additional staff with specialist expertise and considering permanent appointments if funding permits, enhancing lecturer and school leadership skills through scheduled release time to support professional development, collaboration and growth, and developing a sustainable workforce planning strategy to ensure consistent learning for students are additional strategies that can be employed to enhance the teaching and learning environment (Durden, 2008). On the other hand, Wistow (2023) suggests that colleges can enhance student support by employing enthusiastic student success advisors. These advisors should offer proactive, student-led support rather than waiting for students to encounter difficulties before providing assistance. Other recommendations include restructuring career advice, integrating workplace skills into each programme, and establishing peer support networks Wistow (2023).

Lecturers should be aware of how to incorporate linkages and instructional practices that have been proven to enhance the academic success of students in their daily classroom activities (Ndivhuwo, Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021). Demonstrating commitment and interest in students' education is a crucial part of inspiring them. Devoted instructors understand their obligations to their pupils and work hard to fulfil them (Mart, 2013). Additionally, lecturers must be given opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, assist one another in building and sustaining a good rapport with students, and consider the triumphs and setbacks of these endeavours (Ndivhuwo, Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021). Students should have the chance to

engage in debate and build a good rapport with their professors, according to Wanders et al. (2019). According to Ndivhuwo, Sundani and Mamokhere (2021), lecturers who prioritise their work and dedication to teaching and learning are essential to students' development. According to research, students who have close, supportive and positive relationships with their lecturers tend to achieve more than those who have tense relationships based on favouritism rather than academic merit (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2019).

In this researcher's opinion, former students should be invited to the college to share their experiences, as this can enhance student achievement and motivate them to do more. Ndivhuwo, Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) emphasised the importance of commitment, and suggested that if lecturers continue their studies and professional development, it will also inspire students to never cease studying or learning.

3.11 The Role of Education Stakeholders in TVET Colleges

The term "stakeholder" in education typically refers to anyone who has a vested interest in the success and well-being of a school and its students. This includes administrators, instructors, staff, students, parents, families, community affiliates, local business leaders and elected officials such as state representatives, school board members, and city council members. In addition to organisations that represent specific groups, such as parent-teacher organisations, school boards, or lecturers in particular academic disciplines, stakeholders may also include collective entities, such as local businesses, organisations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Stakeholders are individuals who have something at stake as a result of the system. This includes individuals who participate in it or who may be affected by it. They may have goals of helping a school or another group succeed. Lecturers, parents and students are all considered stakeholders, as are government executives, local legislative bodies, establishments, and the general public. These entities often play a crucial role in shaping the success or failure of a school and the educational system (Jain, 2023).

The concept of a "stakeholder" is connected to various school reform concepts and strategies, including leadership teams, shared leadership and voice, all of which aim to increase the involvement of individuals in important decisions about a school's structure, operations and academics (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). In this context, voice refers to how schools integrate and act on the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives and cultural backgrounds of the people in their community. Shared leadership, for example, offers opportunities for lecturers,

staff, students, parents, and community members to take on leadership roles and make decisions.

Stakeholders can participate in leadership teams, assume leadership responsibilities within a school, or express (provide a "voice" to) their ideas, viewpoints and opinions at school board or community meetings. Community-based learning connects what is taught in a school to its surrounding community, incorporating local history, literature and cultural heritage, and involving local experts, organisations and natural settings. This approach may also engage stakeholders who believe that all communities possess educational resources that lecturers can leverage to enrich students' learning experiences (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Kolesnikova and Kudenko (2022) explain that each invested party plays an integral role in a specific school or the entire educational system. Ultimately, all of them are crucial for the professional advancement of education, as they can either have a positive impact or, conversely, lead to failure. Diverse stakeholders, whether it be faculty, community members or family, can significantly enhance the education environment for students if they collaborate and share their ideas, goals and plans. Stakeholders in the education sector are under pressure to improve their career guidance to youth in order to increase enrolment in TVET institutions, which have been identified as essential for promoting economic and social development in the country (Selane & Odeku, 2024). On the other hand, Msibi (2021) specifies that stakeholder interactions will work in favour of the TVET sector, especially if these establishments can recognise and engage with their stakeholders. South African TVET colleges have the responsibility to engage with stakeholders in various initiatives to garner sufficient support for strengthening the core business of TVETs. According to Avci, Ring and Mitchelli (2015), "Learning how colleges and universities work requires viewing them as organisations, systems and, inventions". Another approach to understanding how colleges and universities operate involves understanding the stakeholders. Knowing who the stakeholders are and the reasons they are stakeholders can significantly assist higher education administrators in understanding and effectively performing their roles within the institution.

3.11.1 Parents and Students as Stakeholders

The growth of a college depends on its students. The success of a student's after graduation reflects positively on the institution where they received their education. Therefore, students and their parents are recognised as important stakeholders in higher education due to these reasons and outcomes (Avci, Ring & Mitchelli, 2015). Student government groups are one of

the main ways that students' opinions are heard, even though evaluation and student procedures are essential components of university life. The success of the entire student body relies on the establishment of an effective student government, especially when they have authority to make decisions or influence others. Parents are now more involved in the lives of their adult children due to advancements in technology, leading to increased involvement on college campuses. Parent participation is undeniably growing in popularity every year. Parents have always played a significant role in motivating their children, and they continue to have a greater influence on college campuses. Parental relationships also have a big impact on whether a student attends college and where they choose to go (Avci, Ring & Mitchell, 2015).

According to Neset (2023), parental participation in a child's learning process from the early years through high school remains one of the key influences that contribute to a child's success in school and life. It is closely linked with improved learning outcomes, school development, reduced risk of early dropout, and higher educational goals (Neset, 2023). Additionally, it fosters intellectual and social growth, creating a stimulating home learning environment for all families, and for disadvantaged families in particular. However, current levels of parental engagement vary among different groups of parents and across countries. According to Jain (2023), students are the most important stakeholders in higher education. Their role involves seeking education and knowledge to enhance their personal and professional growth, thereby actively contributing to their learning development by participating in classes, coursework and academic activities, and providing feedback on curriculum, teaching methods, and institutional policies to improve the overall student experience. They also contribute to campus life and community engagement activities.

Students are important stakeholders and should be a priority, in this researcher's opinion. The researcher believes that the college should collaborate closely with parents to effectively manage the students. When parents are in constant communication with the college, students will receive the support they need as all their problems will be known. This will greatly improve student attendance, as students will fear that their parents will be contacted by the college.

3.11.2 Presidents and Administrative Leadership as Stakeholders

Universities will fail without proper governance in place. Higher-ranking officials, such as presidents and vice presidents, must understand and guide the university's culture. Presidents and administrative leaders are viewed as key stakeholders, as universities cannot succeed

academically, financially or strategically without proper, strong, principled leadership and vision (Avci, Ring & Mitchell, 2015). According to Gayle and Shephard (2019), the role of administrators is to advance, implement and evaluate TVET programmes within the school. They also play a crucial role in ensuring that the system is functioning efficiently and effectively. Administrators must ensure that all colleges, lecturers and counsellors are working towards a common goal of improving standards and opportunities. They should work to eliminate barriers that separate technical and vocational education from general education, examine emerging issues and promote best practices and methods for the professional development of TVET instructors. According to Jain (2023), administrators are responsible for the overall management and direction of higher education institutions. Their role includes developing institutional policies, strategic plans and budgets, creating a conducive learning environment that supports students and faculty, and managing academic and administrative operations such as admissions, enrolment and student services. Administrators must ensure compliance with regulations and accreditation standards and cultivate relationships with external stakeholders, including government bodies, employers and the community.

3.11.3 Faculty and Staff as Stakeholders

The rigorous examination and competitive screening of job candidates is the single most important factor in maintaining the calibre of academic work, claim Avci, Ring and Mitchell (2015). According to these authors, "As institutions grow larger and more complex, knowledge of legal precedents, federal regulations, management information systems, student financial aid processes, grant and contract administration, and many other areas of precise ability is required to accomplish numerous administrative staff" (Avci, Ring & Mitchell, 2015). Students cannot be taught or educated without instructors. Professors and staff are essential to the operation of higher education institutions, so they will always be valuable resources and significant stakeholders. Employers are stakeholders who collaborate with higher education institutions to meet their labour force requirements. Their role comprises: providing input on the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed in the job market, working with institutions to enhance curricula that align with industry demands, offering internships, cooperative education programmes, and job placement opportunities for students, and participating in advisory boards or industry partnerships to provide guidance on developing trends and skills.

3.11.4 Communities as Stakeholders

Community stakeholders in a college are individuals or groups who are interested in the achievement of the school and its students (Smith & Williams, 2024). They consist of students,

lecturers, administrative staff, parents, alumni, school board members, nominated officials, non-profit organisations, religious leaders, local businesses, health and social service providers, and other community groups (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Community stakeholders can endorse a cause, avail support, or influence the school's policies and practices (Smith & Williams, 2024). According to Avci, Ring and Mitchelli (2015), higher education institutions have occasionally experienced issues with nearby communities throughout history, and if these community connections are neglected, the repercussions are typically severe and long-lasting. Institutions have been taught that in order to achieve their aims and objectives, they must develop positive relationships with and prioritise community engagement. This highlights the significance of philanthropic efforts in institutions' self-improvement and community involvement using the "good neighbour" metaphor. Additionally, institutions must address the needs of communities in terms of the economy, environment and society. The successful operation of institutions relies on community support, which can be achieved through positive initiatives and effective public relations. According to a study conducted in Malawi by Kufi (2013), quality education is a personal and societal priority that shapes people's present and future. Since individual learners are integral parts of society and society benefits from them, higher educational institutions and society must collaborate to ensure the quality of education for students and the services that society receives as a result.

No organisation can function effectively while being isolated from the population it serves (Avci, Ring & Mitchelli, 2015). Stakeholders gather information about a particular issue or problem to determine whether it warrants collaboration with the local school administration, law enforcement, and government officials. They assess the situation to ascertain whether a partnership is in place to address the problem. Once senior participants determine that the issue is worthy of a collaborative effort, they will engage all stakeholders who are participating (Gaines & Barnes, 2017).

The researcher believes that all stakeholders should be proactive, as without their involvement the college may be unsuccessful, student performance may suffer, and dropout rates may increase. The researcher emphasises the importance of all stakeholders being actively engaged.

3.12 The Strengths and Weaknesses of Student Support Services

Students face many difficulties when they begin a new school year or a new course/programme. Whether it is adjusting to the new environment or staying up to date with their courses and

assignments, academic support groups can be extremely helpful during these times (CrunchGrade, 2023).

3.12.1 Strengths

Academic planning and coaching – Students can familiarise themselves with the courses they have chosen with the help of an academic support group. If they are still unsure about which sessions to enrol in, they can ask the academic support staff for help. According to CrunchGrade (2023), students who receive coaching can confidently express themselves and actively participate in their academic careers.

Financial literacy and aid counselling – As students plan their future academic journey and subsequently progress through college, it is important to be prepared to understand budgeting, financial self-assessment, personal financial planning, and comprehensive financial aid preparation, as during their college years, many students seek and require financial assistance, for which academic support teams that offer counselling in this regard can be highly beneficial (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Catching up with the studies – Whether in college or university, many students struggle when studying topics from books. Since many students fear that they will not pass a module, academic support groups can be greatly beneficial, as through such support, they may quickly catch up on their academics and adopt a more effective learning strategy (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Complementing the schooling – By joining an academic support group to complement their education, students can schedule tutorials with their academic support team if they need help with their homework, essay writing, or other assignments, thereby assisting them with their studies (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Overcoming hesitation in class – In lecture halls, students are sometimes too shy or unsure to ask questions. An academic support tutor or group can help students better understand the material if they are struggling in class (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Attaining better grades in class – Students who receive academic assistance may experience an improvement in their grades. This is because academic support services assist students in various ways to succeed in college. Whether it is assisting them with assignments, research, or helping them understand challenging concepts, these services play a crucial role in students' academic success (CrunchGrade, 2023).

3.12.2 Weaknesses

Even if it may be small, studying in a group may provide some challenges, as students might find it easier to complete their studies with individual academic support, or even on their own, according to CrunchGrade (2023).

Every student has a different learning speed – When working with a team or academic support group, some students may grasp concepts more quickly than others. A learner with cognitive impairment may feel disoriented in such situations. Working in groups can sometimes lead to instances where a student finds the pace of the group too fast, causing tasks to be completed without ensuring that each member of the group understands what was conveyed or done (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Some students become the highlight – Every student has a different voice and aptitude towards learning, and as a result, those who answer questions quickly may dominate the entire group and command attention, thereby preventing others from sharing their expertise (CrunchGrade, 2023).

Quiet individuals may find it difficult to participate in academic support groups – Due to their introverted nature, some students find it difficult to speak in front of a group and/or struggle to collaborate with others. These students may feel overlooked by the group, which is a valid concern (CrunchGrade, 2023).

People may not pull their weight – Occasionally, one group member completes all of the tasks, assignments and homework while the others simply copy their work, ultimately leading to detrimental outcomes for those who fail to put in the effort because they are lazy. Furthermore, if any members of the group are eager to claim credit for the work but do not contribute much, the other students in the group frequently become frustrated (Crunch Grade, 2023).

You might not get all the answers – Peer groups might occasionally become unresponsive and only provide vague answers to any queries. As a result, academic support groups may not offer any genuine understanding. In addition, engaging in such groups may not benefit students, as they will only be repeating answers without truly understanding them (CrunchGrade, 2023).

It often leads to irrelevant discussions – Talking about unrelated subjects might occur if the academic support group is not overseen by a professor or if not assigned a tutor. The temptation

to discuss last weekend's events, or plans for the weekend, for example, can detract from the discussions at hand. When this behaviour is not addressed, it can lead to an excessive waste of time (CrunchGrade, 2023).

3.13 The Role of Campus Managers in Supporting Lecturers

Campus managers should conduct regular official visits, should have a thorough understanding of the curriculum to assist lecturers in implementing it, need to ensure that teaching and learning materials are delivered on time, and should hold regular meetings with the SRC, lecturers and education specialists to build connections and address the any problematic areas that affect each stakeholder, in order to minimise issues (Ajayi et al., 2021). Additionally, campus managers are responsible for overseeing the proper operation of their colleges, as noted by Ajayi et al. (2021). They are expected to develop strategies for the betterment of their colleges, coordinating people, curricula and activities in the process. Campus managers are expected to ensure that there are sufficient human resources for the tasks at hand and that adequate support is available to carry out activities.

While most institutions are responsible for providing opportunities for professors to pursue professional development, these opportunities are not always communicated effectively. Lecturers often find that professional development frequently lacks substance and is irrelevant (El Sherbiny et al., 2019). Campus management should be aware that strengthening the reputation of lecturers is considered to be an outcome of professional development. Accordingly, professional development must be planned and proactive, collaborative and participatory, knowledge-based, focused on student learning, ongoing, inquisitive, and perceptive (El Sherbiny et al., 2019). College culture creation may also be influenced by the personal values of campus managers. According to McLeod (2021), effective managers influence the academic culture of the institution by dedicating significant time to defining and communicating college objectives. Campus managers are also believed to assist instructors in enhancing student achievement, monitoring students' academic progress, reviewing student performance records, and providing feedback to instructors.

In addition, the campus managers' responsibilities include creating a collaborative organisational culture, promoting shared decision-making, establishing collaboration and consultation, pursuing ongoing improvement, supporting risk-taking, innovation and creativity, and caring for the greater college community. Instruction and learning are the primary concerns

of TVET colleges, and creating an organisational culture that supports student success is one of the manager's most important responsibilities (DHET, 2013). According to Ajayi et al. (2021), creating a positive organisational culture leads to the creation of a work environment that empowers employees to reach their full potential. Ajayi et al. (2021) also state that a well-structured TVET college campus culture is one where everyone recognises, understands and agrees upon defined limits and where norms and values encourage achievement for all students. When employees believe that the organisational culture is creating the best possible classroom environments to improve the quality of education, they are encouraged. To increase student achievement, the campus manager is responsible for creating, supporting and maintaining an academically demanding organisational culture for all parties involved (Stronge & Xu, 2021).

Campus managers at operational colleges actively participate in the education and instruction programmes of the college in order to understand the general and instructional challenges that students and instructors may encounter. The manager's work would include, among other things, providing guidance, resources and assistance to lecturers, as well as enhancing college instruction and learning to ensure that students perform well on tests. As an instructional leader, management must be aware of the general and instructional difficulties faced by instructors and students. They must also provide guidance and assistance to address these issues so that college education can proceed smoothly (Ajayi et al., 2021).

As instructional leaders, TVET college campus administrators must be qualified to provide direction and exert influence over staff members (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010). Some of the main objectives are to set the tone, develop individuals, reorganise the institution, and supervise the educational programme (Green & Tones, 2010). In their study on the connection between leadership and learning, Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom (2010) discovered that managers should employ specific tactics to enhance teaching. They need to ensure that their institutions are focused on student goals and expectations. Supervisors should oversee their instructors' professional growth, providing guidance and monitoring their attendance. Additionally, they should create guidelines and opportunities for lecturer collaboration, such as scheduled meeting hours (AligMielcarek, 2014). According to McLeod (2021), school administrators are believed to assist lecturers in improving student achievement. This study supports this idea, as lecturers would find it must easier to help students if they receive support from campus management and have all the necessary tools. Additionally, campus

administrators should provide lecturers with all the training they need for professional development, enabling them to deliver relevant material to their students.

3.14 The Role of HODs

The HOD is portrayed as a lecturer, a subject professional and expert, a mentor and a general college administrator who works closely with the campus manager. The academic and supportive roles of HODs, as specified by policy, include: synchronising assessment, homework, written assignments and other tasks of all subjects within the department, as well as being responsible for staying up to date on the latest ideas and methodologies in the fields relevant to their subjects, guiding inexperienced staff members, and overseeing the work of lecturers and students in their departments (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2018). The crucial responsibility of enabling instructors to achieve professional maturity falls on HODs, for which professional growth plays a central role, including for the college as a whole (Buthelezi, Mhlongo & Msweli, 2021). The HOD should focus on directing, supervising and assisting instructors, as well as overseeing the college's primary teaching and learning initiatives. The HODs must provide guidance to instructors on how to set up their classrooms to enhance learning and facilitate both individual and group discussions. Lecturers are more likely to fully commit to delivering their best efforts if HODs fulfil their managerial responsibilities of promoting the college culture, especially in relation to teaching and learning.

According to Whitworth and Chiu (2015), college culture affects both college procedures and the retention of lecturers. One of the main factors impacting lecturers' professional development is college culture. Professional development for lecturers is likely to be successful in institutions with a collegial culture. According to Whitworth and Chiu (2015), collegiality fosters an atmosphere in which lecturers can learn and collaborate to implement improvements in their methods, as well as where professionals can grow. For example, lecturers must be informed by the HOD of pertinent data and established guidelines for data interpretation. Conversely, instructors must be knowledgeable about college-related matters including student achievement and parental participation.

Lecturers should be able to receive guidance and instruction from the HOD, and must be knowledgeable about both the subject matter and the most effective teaching strategies (Tsetetsi & Mahlomaholo, 2013). According to Uzorka, Namara and Olaniyan (2023), lecturers should receive training on how to incorporate technology into their subject-matter instruction and use it for instructional goals. According to Foley, Warren and Archambault (2014), it is

imperative for lecturers to stay up to date with advancements in their field by receiving in-service training and ensuring that their professional development is inclusive. The knowledge and abilities of lecturers are likely to change as a result of their professional growth, which is based on what they have acquired as instructors. According to Buthelezi, Mhlongo and Msweli (2021), HODs can perform the following managerial functions: providing academic staff with pastoral care and holding frequent meetings with line managers; setting up sessions with instructors to discuss issues related to professional growth; creating a training programme that emphasises introspection and progress as a means of demonstrating effective professional development techniques, observing the lectures given by lecturers, providing feedback, understanding professional discourse, monitoring and recording the acquisition of subject knowledge, as well as reflection and feedback (Buthelezi, Mhlongo & Msweli, 2021).

In the researcher's opinion, HODs are the immediate supervisors to lecturers. HODs should provide support to lecturers and be aware of their needs in order to effectively support students. Additionally, HODs should provide constructive criticism during class visits.

3.15 Knowledge of the Students' Needs

Understanding students' knowledge also involves recognising their individual strengths and weaknesses. Students come from diverse backgrounds, bringing with them a variety of skills, abilities, knowledge, family and community characteristics, and experiences. These backgrounds shape students' strengths and needs in areas such as language, content, education and culture. Addressing students' strengths and needs can have an emotional impact on their learning of language and content. Lecturers can uncover their students' strengths and needs so that they can build on them to help their students succeed (Ernst-Slavit & Egbert, 2023).

One of the cardinal rules of effective teaching is to "know your students", as a deep understanding of the individuals we teach is important for creating positive relationships (Hinton & Cook, 2021). Distinguished lecturers make efforts to get to know their students well, developing a deep understanding of each child and, as Danielson (2007) writes, "Engage in ongoing efforts to understand the various factors that shape their world". Lecturers continuously collect and maintain information on each child's unique needs and interests, and then apply this knowledge through thoughtful instructional planning that considers students' needs, interests and prior knowledge. Lecturers are increasingly expected to adapt their teaching to meet students' needs (Geel et al., 2023).

The researcher believes that students should communicate their needs for support, and lecturers should be informed once students have done so. Lecturers should actively seek out ways to understand students' needs by implementing strategies such as maintaining an open-door policy and fostering relationships with their students. By doing so, lecturers will be able to better address the needs of their students.

3.16 Intervention Strategies to Mitigate Lecturer's Challenges

Colleges are revolutionising their approach to advancing student support by employing enthusiastic student success advisers. These advisers should take on the responsibility of providing proactive, student-led instead of waiting for students to encounter difficulties before offering assistance, as well as focusing on career advice, integrating workplace skills into each programme, and establishing peer support networks (Wistow, 2023).

To enhance the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure, lecturers should consider integrating connections and instructional strategies into their daily classroom practices (Ndivhuwo, Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021). A crucial element of inspiring students is demonstrating commitment and engagement with their studies. Devoted lecturers strive to meet their responsibilities to their students because they understand the importance of their role (Mart, 2013). Additionally, lecturers must be given opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, assist one another in building and sustaining a good rapport with students, and reflect on the successes and challenges of these efforts (Ndivhuwo, Sundani & Mamokhere, 2021). Students should also have the opportunity to engage in debates and develop a strong rapport with their professors, as suggested by Wanders et al. (2019).

In the researcher's view, the college should work towards finding solutions to mitigate lecturers' challenges. If lecturers are facing difficulties, they may not be able to effectively support students. It is important for lecturers to be in a positive environment so that they can pass on that positivity to their students.

3.17 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the experiences of lecturers in providing student support and discussed strategies to enhance such support. The main goal of this chapter was to gather theoretical data and identify the roles of lecturers in supporting student. It delved into the challenges faced by both lecturers and students, such as professional development, academic qualifications, absenteeism and the factors that result in dropping out. The chapter also detailed the types of

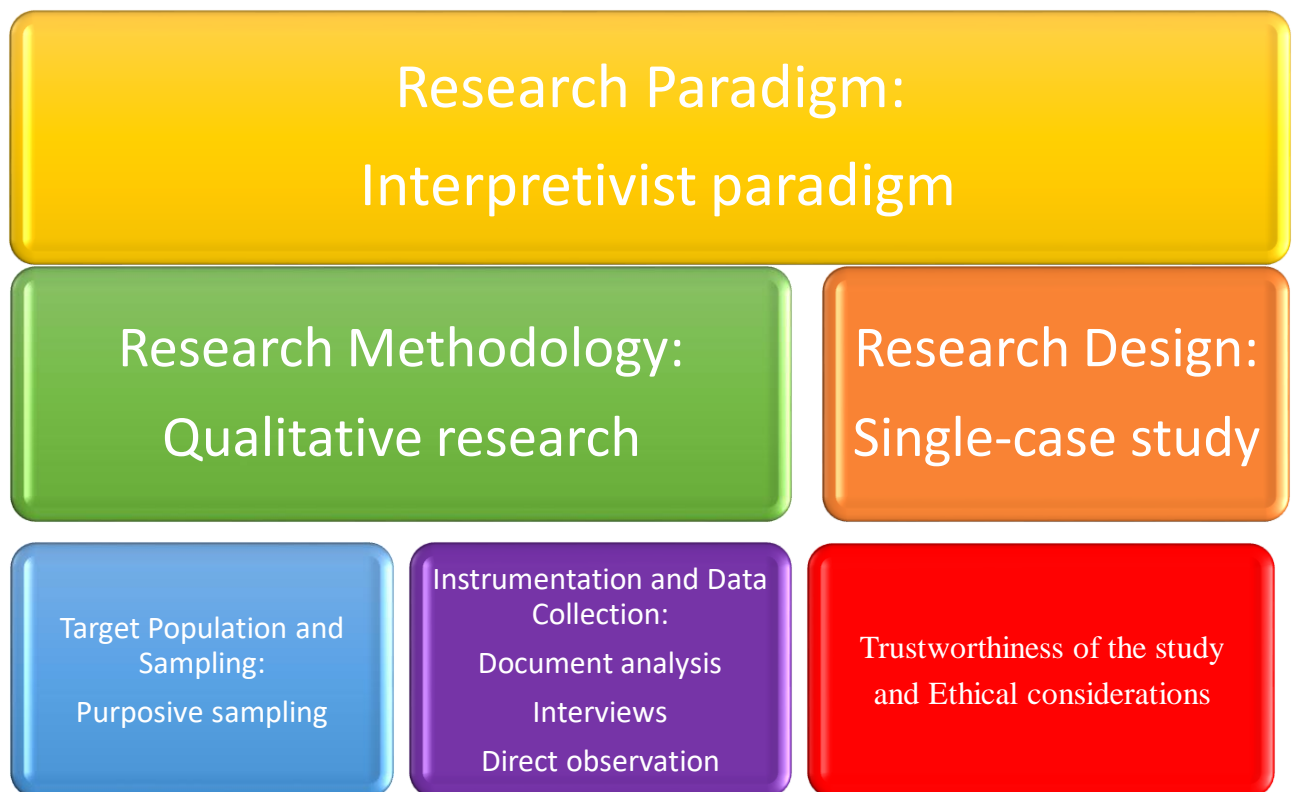
support that can be offered to students, emphasising the importance of building a strong connection between lecturers and students. The following chapter will discuss research methodologies, including the research design, paradigm, procedure, sampling, ethical processes, and participant selection technique.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates the literature regarding the roles of lecturers in student support. It discusses the experiences of lecturers in student support and explores approaches to enhance student support. In addition, the research paradigm, research design, methodology, research procedure, sampling and research ethical procedures are examined, and the process used for selecting participants is discussed. This chapter focuses on the aspects outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Chapter 4 mind-map



4.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is the framework within which the ideas and practices of one's discipline are integrated to form the research plan. This foundation drives all aspects of the research strategy, including the study's purpose, research question, instruments or measurements employed, and analysis procedures (Ulz, 2023). Once the research paradigm has been identified, a suitable study plan can be developed. The study's philosophical foundation determines the knowledge sought, how that knowledge is acquired, and how the collected information or data is transformed into the desired knowledge. The research paradigm clearly

defines the path for investigating the topic at hand, adding clarity to the research and increasing the quality of the methodology and findings. Paradigms are central to various descriptions of qualitative research, helping to clarify both what qualitative research is and how it should be carried out (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). For this study, an interpretivist paradigm was chosen.

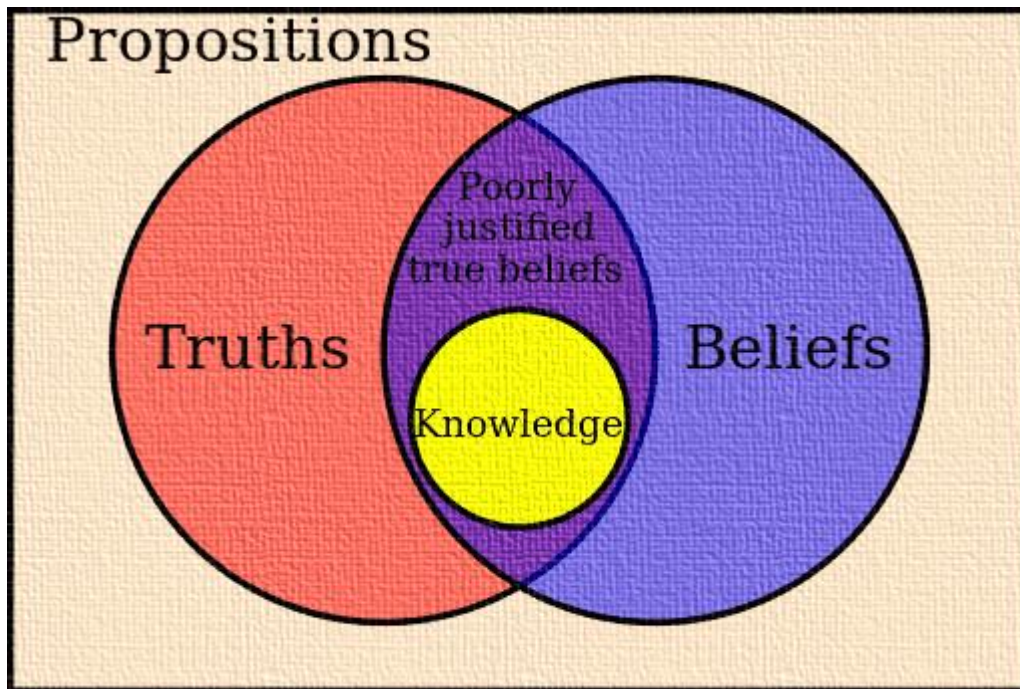


Figure 4.1: How knowledge is constructed by Alex Berezow (2019)

4.2.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivism paradigm is defined as a method in social science whereby understanding the principles, motivations and beliefs of individuals in a social situation is essential for interpreting the meaning of the information that can be gathered about a phenomenon (Nickerson, Fernandez, Cruz & Stanford, 2023). According to Lewis and Kuhfeld (2024), interpretivism is a research philosophy that centres on understanding and interpreting social phenomena and meanings from an individual standpoint. It emphasises the subjective experiences, beliefs and values of individuals, and the significance of context in shaping these interpretations. In light of this, interpretivist researchers need to understand that there may be multiple interpretations of the findings drawn from the data. As such, they must identify and understand the various ways that people experience problems and circumstances in different cultural contexts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Furthermore, according to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), one advantage of this paradigm is that interpretivism scholars can use their diverse perspectives on phenomena to not only identify things, people, or events, but also gain a deep understanding of them in

their sociocultural contexts, as they feel that the society they live in shares similar belief systems.

Furthermore, because they offer detailed life experiences of the narrators, namely, the social actors that make up their culture, studies under the interpretivist paradigm can employ a variety of approaches, including ethnography, case studies and story studies. Additionally, through the crucial technique of interactive interviews, researchers can evaluate and address issues that may not be immediately apparent. This method allows researchers to delve into an interviewee's ideas, values, prejudices, perceptions, viewpoints, emotions, and more. Researchers have the opportunity to question an interviewee's beliefs, values, biases, perceptions, emotions and viewpoints (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The three basic tenets of interpretivism are as follows: people construct and interpret the social world in their own subjective ways; humans are subjective beings with consciousness or a mind; knowledge of the social world, which only exists in relation to humans, influences human behaviours; the researcher is a part of what is being observed; and research is motivated by personal interests (Wisker, Exley, Antoniou & Ridley, 2008; Blumberg & Pontiggia, 2011).

4.2.2.1 Advantages of Interpretivist Paradigm in this Research

Nickerson (2024) defines interpretivism as a research approach that requires researchers to interpret various elements of the study, thus integrating human interest into their work. According to the interpretivist approach, it is important for the researcher, as a social actor, to understand the differences between people. This paradigm can be studied in great depth. Primary data generated through interpretivism studies may be associated with a high level of validity because the data in such studies is typically trustworthy and honest (Heimduo, 2020). According to Pham (2018), the advantage of interpretivism is that scholars can characterise things, people, or events, and gain a deep understanding of them within their social contexts by utilising a variety of perspectives to examine phenomena. Additionally, researchers can carry out these types of studies in natural settings by employing important methodologies such as case studies, grounded theory ethnography, or life histories to obtain first-hand knowledge of the research subjects and provide more authentic information about them. Furthermore, researchers can explore an interviewee's ideas, values, biases, perceptions, attitudes, sentiments and perspectives by employing essential interactive interview technique, which "allows researchers to explore and elicit things that we cannot observe" (Pham, 2018).

The interpretivist paradigm is considered appropriate for this study because it enables involvement with the phenomenon through the participants' world perspectives, which they share with the researchers. As a result, the research participants analyse the experiential data in order to gain knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The researcher sought to understand individuals' interpretations of the world; however, it is clear that when a study is interpretivist in nature, it seeks to understand the experiences of a diverse range of stakeholders and has the ability to interpret their experiences as an important methodological consideration. This paradigm also affects the data's trustworthiness and how it is analysed. This study acknowledges that reality is believed to exist in various forms, hence multiple points of view are recognised as the reality of the phenomenon under study.

4.2.2.2 Limitations of the Interpretivist Paradigm in this Research

One limitation of this paradigm, according to Pham (2018), is that interpretivists tend to focus on gaining a deeper understanding and knowledge of phenomena within their specific context rather than generalising these findings to other people and contexts. As a result, they may overlook the need to verify the validity and utility of research findings through scientific procedures. The second critique of interpretivism is its subjective rather than objective ontological stance. Therefore, it is undeniable that the researcher's interpretation, belief system, thought patterns or cultural preferences can influence study findings, leading to various biases. The final drawback of interpretivism is that it overlooks the influence of politics and ideology on social reality and knowledge. Instead of focusing on matters related to the empowerment of individuals and society, this paradigm seeks to understand current events. According to Pham (2018), this theoretical perspective subtly disregards the issues of agency and power that are intrinsic to modern society. It is worth noting that this specific limitation may have played a role in the effectiveness of critical inquiry in advancing the research feasibility.

4.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology is defined as “the systematic way to solve research problems” by Jeremiah, Abbey, Booth and Kashyap (2021). Research methodology, as defined by Jansen and Warren (2023), focuses only on the "how" of a research investigation. In other words, it pertains to the systemic approach that a researcher takes in planning a study to ensure accurate and reliable findings that address the goals, objectives and research questions. The research methodology elucidates the data collection and exploration methods utilised in a study. The methodology chapter, a crucial section of any thesis, dissertation, or research paper, explains

the “what” and “how” of the research conducted, allowing readers to assess the reliability and coherence of the research and dissertation subject (George, 2023). According to Batisai, Makhafola and Maoba (2022), a research technique can be seen as a way to approach a study issue methodically. It involves carefully analysing how research is carried out. Methodology involves examining the various steps a researcher takes to investigate their study topic and the rationale behind them. The assumptions one can make about phenomena depend on the specifics of the study methodology. It influences one’s ability to explain the origins and contributing factors of a phenomenon (Batisai, Makhafola & Maoba, 2023).

There are various categories of research methodology, namely: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. For this research, a qualitative research approach was employed.

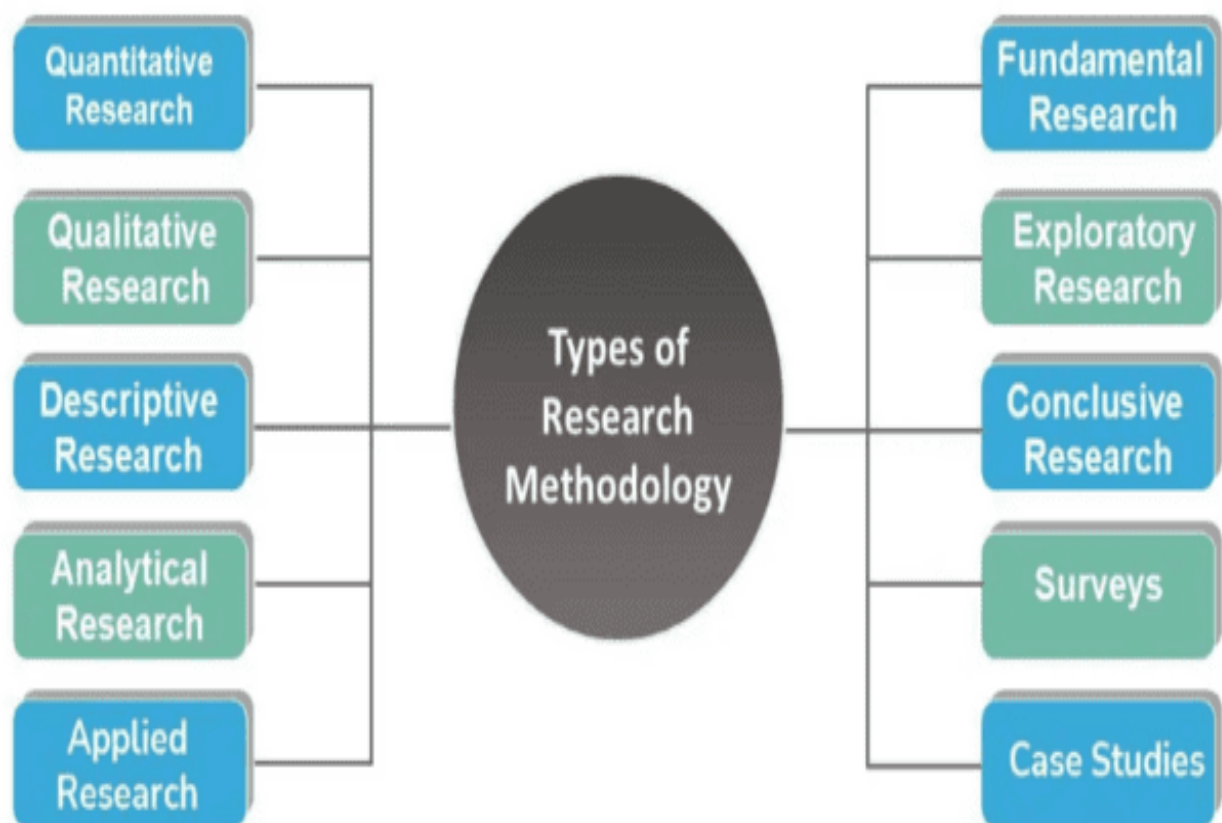


Figure 4.2: *Types of research methodology (Pedamkar, 2023)*

Table 4.2: Differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Adhikari et al., 2018)

	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	<p>Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena</p> <p>Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions</p> <p>Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observation</p>	<p>Seek to explore phenomena</p> <p>Instruments use more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions</p> <p>Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation</p>
Analytical objectives	<p>To quantify variation</p> <p>To predict causal relationships</p> <p>To describe characteristics of a population</p>	<p>To describe variation</p> <p>To describe and explain relationships</p> <p>To describe individual experiences</p> <p>To describe group norms</p>
Question format	Closed-ended	Open-ended
Data format	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes, and field notes)
Flexibility in study design	<p>Study design is stable from beginning to end</p> <p>Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next</p> <p>Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions</p>	<p>Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions)</p> <p>Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next</p> <p>Study design is iterative, that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned</p>

4.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Padamkar (2023) refers to the non-numerical aspects of research as qualitative research. When a researcher struggles to understand numerical data, qualitative research can assist. Qualitative research helps to better summarise the hypotheses within the data, however, it is not as trustworthy as quantitative research. Additionally, this type of study aims to identify the driving forces underlying human conduct, or the reasons behind particular actions or thoughts. Through qualitative research, insight can be acquired into the factors that influence people's behaviour and their preferences for a particular item can be determined.

Hassan (2024) defines qualitative research as a type of research approach that focuses on gathering and analysing non-numerical data to identify and understand people's values, assertiveness, behaviours and experiences. Through the examination of specific data, including focus groups, interviews, observations and textual analysis, it attempts to find answers to research questions. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research often uses a more adaptable and iterative approach to data collecting and analysis to determine the meaning and implications of social occurrences.

In disciplines including sociology, anthropology, psychology and education, qualitative research is frequently employed. By uncovering unique and significant differences that emerge as researchers delve deeper into the topic being examined, qualitative research becomes a continuous process that enhances understanding within the scientific community (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Furthermore, McLeod (2023) argues that meaning, bias and lived experience are the primary concerns of qualitative research. The goal is to comprehend the essence and intricacies of people's experiences, how they interpret them, and the implications for their lives. A variety of methods, including content analysis, grounded theory, theme analysis and discourse analysis, can be employed to interpret the data once qualitative data have been gathered (McLeod, 2023). Additionally, McCall (2024) asserts that the goal of qualitative research is to understand how participants interpret their experiences, either on their own or in social settings. It acknowledges that the social environment is interpreted and that there is no such thing as an objective reality. Qualitative research identifies and provides deeper insights into real-world issues. It is crucial for this study as it helps the researcher evaluate and comprehend human behaviour through data analysis. The findings of this study will contribute to bringing about positive changes in society.

This approach was chosen because it involves a case study that allows the researcher to follow up on answers given by respondents, generating valuable conversation around a subject or topic. This approach was selected because it involves a case study, allowing the researcher to follow up on respondents' answers and foster valuable discussions about a specific subject or topic. Instruments for qualitative research include field notes, open-ended questions, audio or video in-depth interviews, and observations to gather information from participants and elicit recall that helps with problem-solving. This is the reason why the researcher chose qualitative research.

4.3.1.1 Advantages of Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research affords numerous benefits over other research approaches. Some of these benefits are presented below.

Depth and detail: Through the collection of rich, diverse data, qualitative research enables scholars to gain a better comprehension of intricate social processes. Focus groups, in-depth interviews and observations allow researchers to compile detailed information about participants' viewpoints and experiences that other research techniques may overlook.

For this study, interviews were conducted with campus managers, instructors, students and HODs and were digitally recorded. This allowed the researcher to review the interviews and determine what additional research was needed. Organising field notes, observation plans, and interview transcripts were all part of the data processing process. The necessary time was spent listening to other people's interpretations of the same information, keeping in mind that interpretation necessitates impartial and cautious judgment. As the interpretative approach involves seeing social phenomena through the participants' eyes rather than the researcher's, the researcher made sure that data analyses were conducted impartially.

Flexibility: Qualitative research is an adaptable methodology that allows researchers to familiarise themselves with the setting and study subject. Researchers can quickly modify their study techniques to gather more information or investigate unexpected findings.

When using a qualitative technique, the researcher engaged with participants in informal interactions to minimise negative reactions such as nervousness and immediately address any critical clarifications. This was particularly important for this study, as it aimed to understand the experiences of those involved in student support.

Contextual understanding: Exploring the social and cultural environment in which people or groups are situated aligns with qualitative research. Researchers can integrate information regarding historical occurrences, societal structures and cultural norms that may impact participants' viewpoints and experiences.

Participant perspective: By organising participant perspectives, qualitative research enables researchers to uncover subjective experiences and comprehend the meanings that participants assign to their experiences.

Theory development: New hypotheses and insights on intricate social processes can be enhanced by qualitative research. By gathering comprehensive, rich data and using inductive data analysis, researchers have the ability to develop new ideas and explanations that may contradict pre-existing knowledge.

Validity: Purposeful and varied selection, researcher reflexivity, and a variety of data-gathering techniques can all contribute to the high validity of qualitative research. This can help ensure that conclusions are trustworthy.

This study focused on a smaller group, where a select few individuals from various social classes or subgroups were asked to discuss or share their thoughts on a certain topic. This approach encouraged spontaneity from participants, which boosted data collection efficiency. Since the current study focuses on a small group of 25 participants, this aligns with the study objectives.

4.4 Research Design

Thakur (2021) argues that research design crucial to a research project and works as a guiding light to steer the research activities. It serves as a series of signposts to keep the research headed in the right direction. The research design is necessary because it guarantees a better, systematic and organised plan for the research undertaken and enhances the effectiveness of the researcher in their implementation. Börü (2018) explains that a research design is a “set of techniques for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies”. Additionally, it is the comprehensive strategy for connecting the relevant (and feasible) empirical research to the conceptual research concerns. Stated differently, the study design establishes the process for gathering and analysing the necessary data, as well as how all of this will contribute to the resolution of the research question. Furthermore, according to Bhandari (2023), a research design is a strategy for using empirical evidence to address the research question. Developing a research design entails determining one’s objectives and methodology, choosing between primary or secondary sources, sampling techniques or criteria for participant selection, data gathering techniques, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

The benefits of a well-structured research design include ensuring that your techniques align with your goals and that you employ the appropriate type of data analysis. According to Khanam, Tarab and Khan (2023), a research design is a methodical strategy used by a researcher to provide valid answers to inquiries. It is both accurate and objective. Typically, a study design will determine the type of analysis needed to achieve the intended results. The quality of the design will ultimately determine whether one can obtain answers to the research questions. If the design is of poor quality, the research findings will also be unimpressive.

A single-case study research design was employed for this study. A research design is a researcher's chosen framework of procedures and strategies for combining different study components in a logical way to effectively tackle the research topic. It provides guidance on "how" to carry out research using a specific technique. Evaluating the researcher's grade of research questions can be achieved through study design. A research design may be used to

create a blueprint of the proper way to conduct research, and is a sensible and organised plan for leading a research project. It outlines the study's goals as well as the methods and strategies that must be utilised to attain those goals. It creates the framework for data collection, measurement and analysis.

It is the concept, framework and approach to research in order to obtain the answer to the research question. A research design is the plan for the entire setup or research programme that directs the researcher through the process of gathering, evaluating and interpreting observations. It provides a systematic plan of action for the study to adhere to (Khanam, Tarab & Khan, 2023). The study design provides insight into how to carry out research utilising a comprehensive approach. There are several research designs that the researcher may implement in directing the research, namely, exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, case study and experimental. In this study, the research design was based on a case study because the main objective of this research design is to measure any changes in existing norms and assumptions. For this study, a single-case study was used.

4.4.1 Single-Case Study Research Design

A case study is a detailed investigation of a specific topic, such as a person, group, location, event, organisation, or phenomenon. Research in the fields of social science, education, medicine and business typically involves the use of case studies. A case study is a useful research strategy for gaining detailed, contextual and tangible knowledge about a specific real-world topic. It encourages one to learn about the case's salient features, significance and ramifications (McCombes & George, 2023). A case study is a focused investigation of a single person, a group of individuals, or a unit in order to generalise findings to other units. It is also referred to as a rigorous, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or other unit in which the researcher analyses in-depth data related to various variables (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Researchers use a variety of data-gathering techniques over an extended period to compile thorough information about the case or cases, which are inevitable due to time and activity (Priya, 2021). There are different types of case studies, namely: single-case study, multiple-case study, exploratory case study, descriptive case study and instrumental case study. For this study, a single-case study was used.

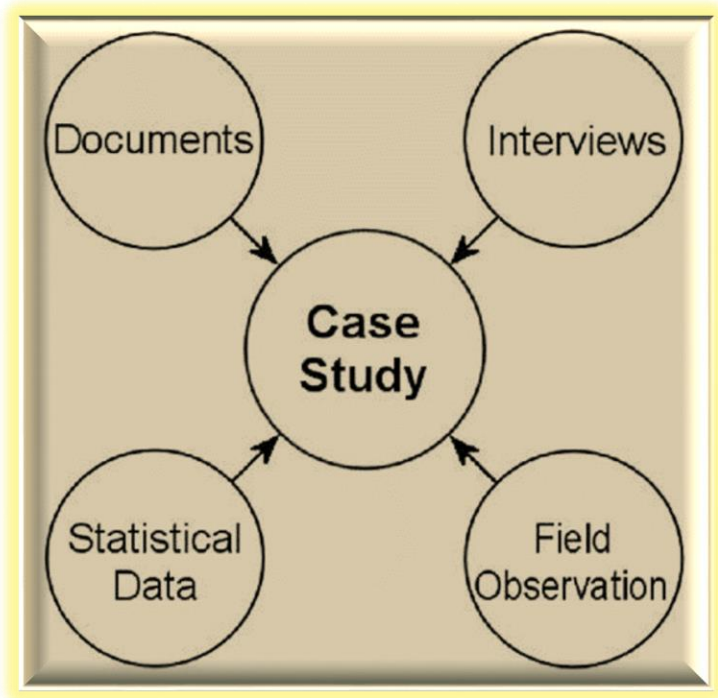


Figure 4.3: *Case study parameters*

According to Hassan (2024), a single-case study involves an in-depth analysis of a single case. The experiences of those involved in student support serve as the focus of this study. This serves as an example of how to support students in the field of student support. According to Chantal (2021), a single-case study is a research design that concentrates on a detailed real-world subject and discovers its key characteristics, meanings and implications. A single-case study is often used in practical fields such as psychology, education and human behaviour, where the subject acts as the control. In this particular instance, the study was implemented in the field of education. A single-case study may be included as part of a series of case studies or comparative research. The single-case study can also play a significant role in the methodical task of hypothesis generation; for example, it can provide evidence to support a hypothesis about a change mechanism in treatment or a novel intervention that can prompt replication studies and group studies. Single-case designs permit underlying (functional) relations to be established between environmental conditions and participant behaviours (Riley-Tillman, Burns & Kilgus, 2020). Single-case designs are distinguished by various characteristics, including: (a) a focus on behavioural changes within or between groups rather than within or between participants (i.e., the individual or case acts as their control), (b) repeated measurement over time in at least two conditions, and (c) adherence to predetermined guidelines for the introduction and/or withdrawal of conditions (Ledford et al., 2022).

4.5 Target Population and Sampling

4.5.1 Population

Bhandari (2023) defines population as the entire collection that one aims to investigate. According to Shukla and Dwivedi (2020), the population is the collection or group of all the entities that the study findings are intended to be applied to. When considering the concept of population, it can be defined as encompassing all entities that could potentially benefit from the study findings. Put differently, a population consists of all units that possess the variable feature being studied and to which research results may be applied. On the other hand, a sample represents a subset of the population. According to Thacker (2020), a population refers to a large group of people with measurable characteristics. While many people commonly associate a population with a specific physical location, it actually refers to a broader group with identifiable traits.

Other traits, however, define a population in a study. Clinical, demographic and historical traits, for instance, might constitute further distinguishing features. A research population, according to Hassan (2024), is typically a sizable collection of people or things that serve as the primary subject of a scientific investigation. Research is conducted for the benefit of the populace. However, because testing every member of a large community is too costly and time-consuming, researchers frequently are unable to do so. For this reason, sampling techniques are employed.

Another term for a study population is a distinct group of people or objects that are known to share similar traits. Within a given community, every person or object generally possess a common, unifying trait or characteristic. Additionally, according to Hassan (2024), the target audience refers to the larger group of people or objects that researchers aim to apply their findings to. The target population, sometimes referred to as the theoretical population, typically possesses various traits. The group of people from which an arithmetic sample is taken for research purposes is known as the population. Accordingly, any group of people that share a characteristic can be referred to as a population (Momoh & Itohan, 2023). The population for this study includes all campus managers, HODs, lecturers and students at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

PARTICIPANTS	SAMPLE SIZE
Campus Mangers	4
HODs	7
Lecturers	7
Students	7
TOTAL	25

4.5.2 Sampling

Thacker (2020) states that a sample is the specific group that one will collect data from. The size of the sample is always less than the total size of the population. A sample may also refer to a statistically important portion of a population, but not an entire population (Momoh & Itohan, 2023). According to Hassan (2024), a sample is a subcategory of the population. The concept of a sample arises as researchers are unable to test every member of a population. The sample needs to be representative of the population it was taken from and large enough to allow for statistical analysis. The primary purpose of the sample is to give researchers permission to study members of the population to draw conclusions that can be applied to the full population. The sample is "provided" by the population, from which researchers then "draw" inferences from the data gathered from the sample.

Before selecting a sample, the research population must be identified by creating a list known as a sampling frame. Each member of the sample frame is referred to as a sampling unit. The process of choosing a sample from a large population or an individual for a specific research objective is known as sampling, according to Bhardwaj and Banks (2019). Bhardwaj and Banks (2019) further state that there are different types of sampling, namely: 1. Probability sampling (simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling and multistage sampling), and 2. Non-probability sampling (purpose sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling). For this study, purposeful sampling was employed to select participants from the college for the study.

4.5.2.1 Purposeful Sampling

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method for attaining a sample in which researchers use their expertise to select specific participants who will assist in achieving the study objectives. These subjects possess specific characteristics that the researchers require to address their research question (Frost et al., 2024). In other words, the researchers select the

participants “on purpose”. Purposive sampling is used when one needs to gather a wealth of information from a small sample size and must have a strong understanding of the subject area to determine which subjects are crucial to one’s project. This method allows researchers to focus on a specific subpopulation, key people in a process, typical cases, or unique cases. Purposive sampling involves a variety of methodologies to address the research question (Frost et al., 2024). Purposeful sampling is a widely used procedure in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The researcher chose purposive sampling for this study because it allows for gathering in-depth information by targeting the right audience. Additionally, this method is most suitable for small sample sizes, such as the one used in this study. Purposeful sampling was also chosen because participants would provide information relevant to real-time situations, potentially leading to rich data on a budget. Consequently, the researcher identified individuals with the most experience in lecturing at the college who would best meet the study requirements, and contributors were carefully selected as a result. According to Bhandari (2023), a sample is a specific group from which data will be collected. The size of the sample is always smaller than the entire population.

The campus managers who participated in the study were selected from different campuses based on their academic achievements (high, average and underperforming campus) at Ehlanzeni TVET College. Two campus managers were from the top performing campus, one from the average performing campus, and one from the underperforming campus. Selection of the campuses based on academic performance assisted in the study, which assumed the experiences of stakeholders in student support. The HODs (seven from each campus) were chosen based on the number of years they have served as HODs at the campus, with preference given to those with the most years in that particular department in that campus. Additional selection criteria included their knowledge and experience working with students and the TVET college. Lecturers (seven from each campus) were selected based on their years of service and teaching experience and how long they have been at that particular campus. Their knowledge of student support operations provided valuable data for the research, as did their experiences with student support. Students (seven from each campus) were selected based on their enrolled programme and whether they were at the 2nd, 3rd or 4th level of study or NATED N4/5/6. Although Mpumalanga has multiple TVET colleges, this study concentrated on only

one of them, namely, is Ehlanzeni TVET College, which comprised the study population. This particular college has seven educational campuses. The sample included four campus managers, seven HODs (one per campus), seven lecturers and seven students, making a total of 25 participants.

The advantages of purposive sampling include being a cost-effective method for sample selection. In this approach, the researcher uses their knowledge to select participants who are best suited for the study. This method also helps save time and leads to valuable research outcomes. Additionally, it reduces the margin of error in the information collected because the data sources closely align with the research context (Palinkas et al., 2015). The disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it can result in numerous null and void or inferential statistical procedures. The contributors involved in purposive sampling have the ability to manipulate data, which can lead to invalid research outcomes. This method is not effective for collecting data from a large population (Palinkas et al., 2015).

4.6 Instrumentation and Data Collection

According to Wilson, Mikahere-Hall and Sherwood (2022), data instrumentation refers to the instruments and practices used in data collection. This term covers the selection, design, construction and administration of an instrument or procedure. An instrument's primary function is to gather data. However, altering the process or approach can lead to biased outcomes. Additionally, the device used determines the accuracy of the data collected. Improper instrumentation can affect the reliability and validity of data. To mitigate these risks, it is essential to select the appropriate instrument. Data instrumentation should encompass the entire research process utilising a variety of tools to gather data. Data collection relies not only on the method or techniques selected, but also on the sources from which the data will be acquired and the instruments selected or designed for this purpose. Adosi (2020) suggests that using the appropriate instrument or instruments is crucial to enhancing the quality of research findings. Qualitative researchers have access to a wide array of data collection tools, depending on the objectives of their study and their proficiency with them (Creswell, Hanson, Clark-Plano & Morales, 2007; Hamilton & Finley, 2019). For example, a researcher planning to conduct an interview could utilise an interview guide.

According to Adosi (2020), an interview guide is simply a list of the topics a researcher intends to cover during an interview, along with the questions that need to be asked for each topic. It is specifically designed to help gather pertinent data for a study by enabling a face-to-face

discussion between participants and the researcher. With a focus group discussion guide, a researcher can gather narrative data from a group of people. A focus group discussion guide consists of questions that researchers use to direct participants with comparable experiences or backgrounds to talk about a particular topic of interest (Guest, Namey & McKenna, 2017). Researchers can utilise an observation checklist, which is a list of the things an observer looks at when monitoring participants' activity while gathering data through observation (Howitt, 2019). The documentary analysis guide is a systematic approach that directs a researcher to analyse documentary evidence in order to answer specific research questions; it is an alternative data-gathering tool available for researchers who wish to collect data from existing documents (Adosi, 2020). Direct observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were all employed in this study. Utilising three instruments allowed the researcher to gather distinct and related data, which resulted in more precise and reliable observations. Additionally, by addressing the limitations of specific tools, this method enhanced the overall quality of the study results.

4.6.1 Document Analysis

This study used document analysis as one of the techniques for collecting data. According to Hassan (2024), documentary analysis, also known as document analysis, is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. This technique involves a comprehensive analysis of the documents to extract themes or patterns relevant to the research topic. Documents used in this type of analysis consist of a wide variety of resources, including text (words) and images that have been recorded without the researcher's interference. The field of document analysis therefore encompasses all types of texts such as books, newspapers, letters, study reports and diaries, as well as images such as maps, photographs and films (Hassan, 2024). According to Morgan (2022), piloting a document analysis can help minimise some of the ethical concerns associated with other qualitative methods. Given that document analysis is a valuable research method, one would expect to find a wide range of literature on this topic. However, the literature on documentary research is lacking (Tight, 2019). While document analysis is often used in conjunction with other methods, some researchers rely solely on it for their research. In specific cases, utilising pre-existing documents provides researchers with the most comprehensive data for their project. Analysing documents, such as books and journal articles, can be beneficial because of the stability of the data (Morgan, 2022). One way to determine the authenticity of a document is by identifying whether it is a primary source.

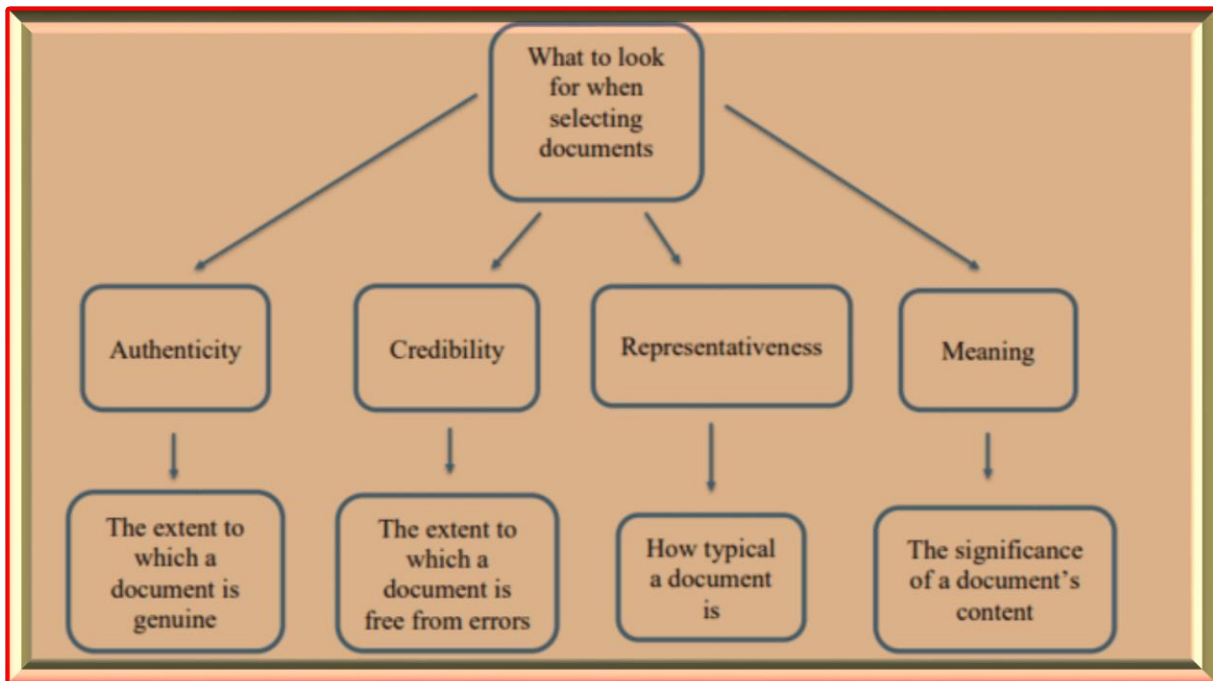


Figure 4.4: How to determine the authenticity of a document (Morgan, 2022)

The documents the researcher looked for at the college included lecturer lesson plans, lecturer annual teaching plans, and other documents related to student support. This included student support plans from the college or department, attendance registers, school journals, school policies, log books, information books, minutes of meetings, and agendas. These documents were used by the researcher to determine if the college keeps track of students' absenteeism and how it may affect student achievement. The researcher chose document analysis because documents can provide rich contextual information about the era, atmosphere, or principles under exploration. This can be particularly valuable for chronological research, where perspective is often crucial to understanding the events or trends being studied. Documents also offer qualitative data that can aid researchers in comprehending complex subjects in depth. For example, a policy document might reveal not only the details of the policy, but also the underlying beliefs and attitudes that shaped it (Hassan, 2024).

These documents provided the researcher with background information about the college and helped gain insights to understand specific issues that may also be under investigation. These materials also helped in formulating the interview questions, as the information they contained suggested specific inquiries to be made and circumstances to be monitored as part of the study. The college was requested to provide these documents by means of a written appeal to the campus manager for the identified documents. In the letter clarified, the researcher specified

which documents were necessary, why they were necessary, how they would be used and for what purpose. This researcher also emphasised the importance of confidentiality and highlighted the benefits of the study, particularly how it would assist lecturers in providing student support.

4.6.2 Interviews

An interview is defined as a formal and detail-oriented conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee. There are nine categories of interviews: the structured interview, unstructured interview, stress interview, one-to-one interview, panel interview, telephonic interview, video interview, depth interview, open call interview, and exit interview (Purbey, 2023). An interview is a formal conversation between an interviewer and interviewee where the former seeks answers from the latter to assess their suitability for the desired research. The interview is defined as a method of asking questions to gather both qualitative and quantitative data (Taherdoost, 2022).

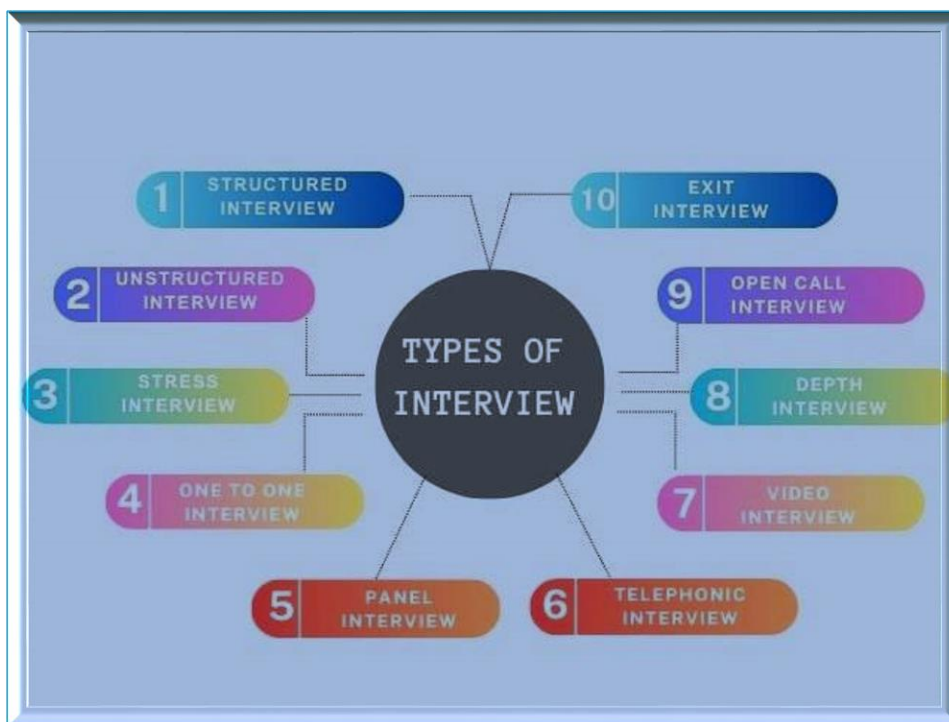


Figure 4.5: Types of interviews. Adapted from Purbey (2023)

The purpose of using interviews in this exploration is to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Motaung, 2020). While there are various methods for gathering qualitative data, such as text or document reviews, diaries, and participant observation, interviews are the most frequently used technique for primary qualitative data collection as they create a natural and

relaxed atmosphere for the participants (Taherdoost, 2022). According to Taherdoost (2022), interviews can be classified from two different viewpoints: the way in which an interview is conducted, and its format. Figure 4.6 displays the groupings, with these methods further detailed in the following sections.

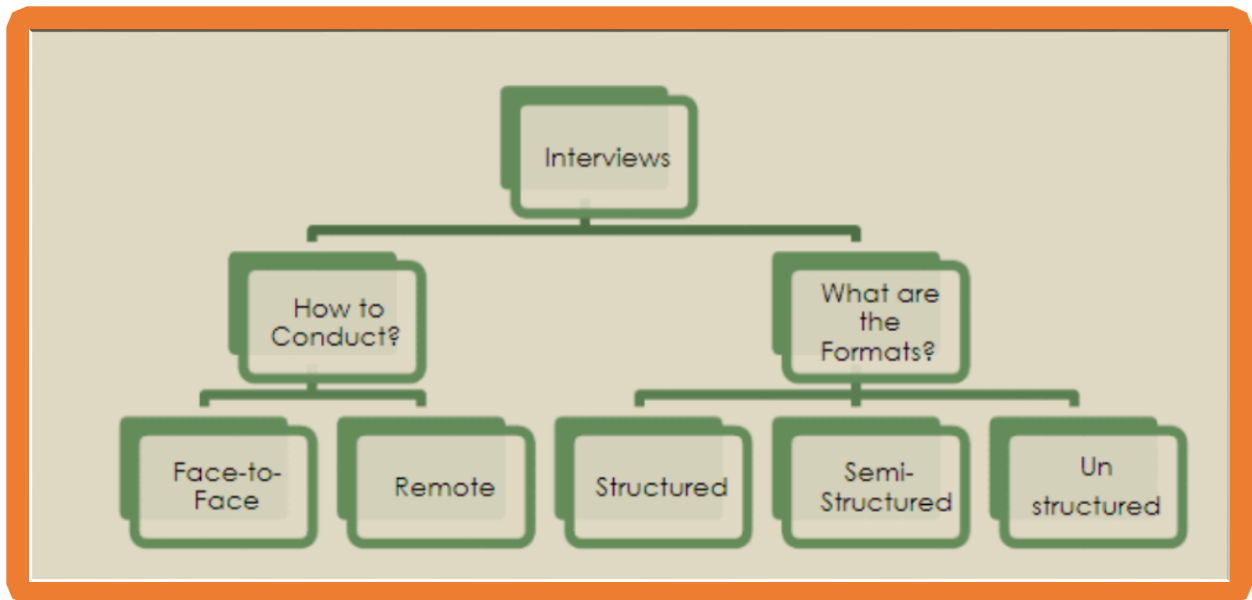


Figure 4.6: Interview techniques

4.6.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

For this study, semi-structured interviews were used. A semi-structured interview is considered to provide more insight than other types of interviews because it permits researchers to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees while keeping the focus of the study in mind (Ruslin et al., 2022). A semi-structured interview is a method of collecting data that relies on follow-up questions within a predetermined framework of themes. However, neither the sequence nor the language of the questions is predetermined. Semi-structured interviews are frequently used in qualitative research (George, 2023). A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that is used to acquire a thorough grasp of the respondent's thoughts and feelings on specific issues, according to Heath (2023). The interviewer can change the order, omit any questions that are unnecessary, or come up with new questions ahead of time. Additionally, the interviewer should be prepared to probe for additional information and ask follow-up questions. Semi-structured interviews are often conducted in person or by video conference, and they typically run from 30 to 60 minutes. If possible, the interviewer should be able to interpret the participants' nonverbal and vocal clues in real-time to adjust their

approach accordingly. The interviewer strives to maintain a conversational flow that fosters open discussion while staying focused on the main topics of the study.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen by the researcher because they allowed participants to easily provide justifications for their responses and encouraged them to provide more insightful information, such as their thoughts on sensitive subjects. This made it possible to objectively compare participants and provided an opportunity to spontaneously discuss topics that are relevant to that specific individual.

For this study, the interviewees included campus managers, lecturers, HODs and students. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and also telephonically or online, as some campus managers, lecturers and HODs were often busy. The one-on-one interviews took approximately 45 minutes per interview. All interviews took place on college premises during college hours. The interviews were scheduled when the lecturers being interviewed had free periods so as not to disrupt teaching activities at the college. All questions asked in the interview were written down, and participants had sight of the questions during the interview. Participation in the research study was voluntary. There was no coercion, and no one was forced to take part. No incentives were given to those who took part in the research. The participants' opinions and views were respected, and their views and comments will remain confidential. Audio recordings were made of all interviews for quality control and data verification purposes. Authorisation to record the interviews was attained from each participant. In keeping with the university data security policy, all information obtained during the research study has been stored in secure locations, with hard copies kept in a locked cupboard, and soft copies and all digital materials password-protected.

The benefits of semi-structured interviews include their inherent ability to adapt based on participant responses and emotions, which adds a great deal of flexibility. Semi-structured interviews encourage two-way dialogue and allow topics and ideas to emerge spontaneously. Compared to a traditional interview, the semi-structured format feels more relaxed and natural to the participants. This can help foster greater comprehension and deeper conversations. Because semi-structured interviews provide valuable, qualitative information on how people experience things, they cannot be compared to user experience research (Heath, 2023).

4.6.3 Observations

The observation method is defined as a technique used to observe and define the behaviour of a subject and involves simply watching the phenomena until some intuition or insight is gained. With this method, a person (usually trained) observes subjects or phenomena and records information about their characteristics (Kumar, 2022). The observational research methodology is best described as a research technique in which the researcher observes their sample population from a passive position. This involves observing the interactions of the sample without influencing their behaviour, however, the observer actively monitors the sample population to determine the frequency of specific behaviours or outcomes (Qaddo, 2019).

Observation: Planning and Process

The observer should carefully examine the following questions in advance in order to develop an effective plan of action. These questions are:

- ❖ What should be observed?
- ❖ How should the observation be recorded?
- ❖ What type of tools and techniques need to be used?
- ❖ How to ensure the accuracy of observation?
- ❖ What type of relationship should exist between the observer and the observed, and how should this desired relationship be established?

Observation involves three processes, as presented in Figure 4.7 below.

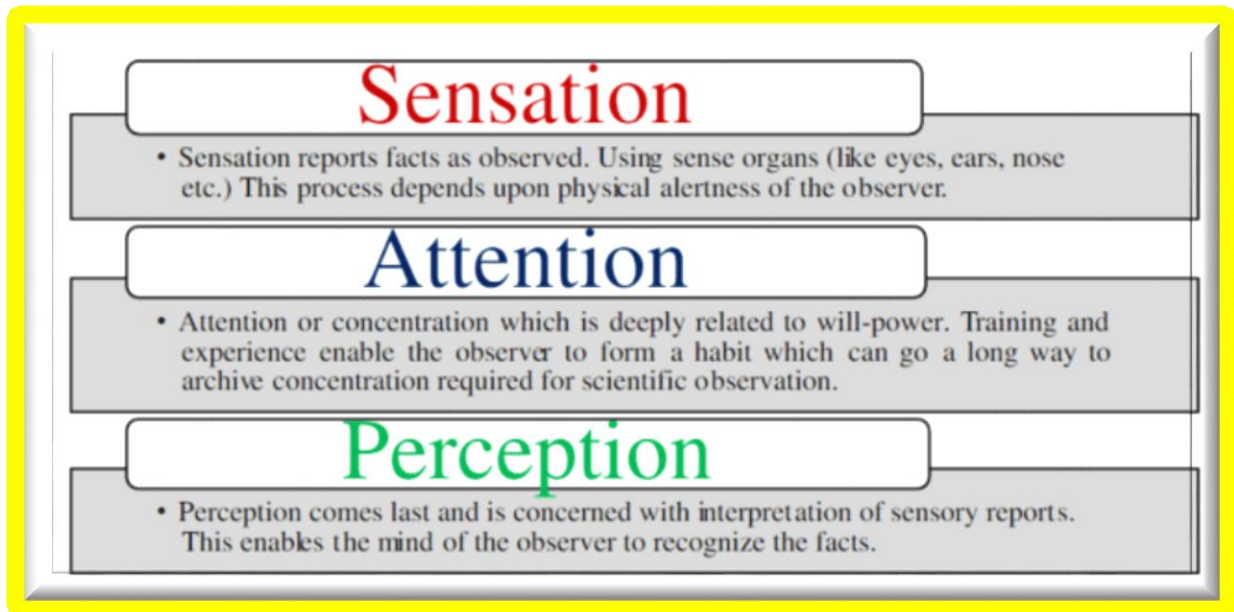


Figure 4.7: Observation processes. Adapted from Kumar (2023)

There are different types of observation, namely: participant observation, non-participant observation, direct observation, indirect observation, controlled observation and uncontrolled observation. For this research, direct observation was used.

4.6.3.1 Direct Observation

Direct observation was chosen for this research as the researcher wanted to observe the interaction between students and lecturers, the process of teaching and learning, and the behaviours of both lecturers and students at the college. The purpose of conducting observations was to gain insight into how things are done at the college. Researchers, using this method, aim to understand behaviours and dynamics by examining the individuals involved as well as their values, customs, symbols, beliefs and emotions. According to Stevens and Wurf (2020), direct observation techniques permit a more organised, structured process, using well-designed observation record forms. The main advantage of direct observation is that an event, institution, facility, or process can be studied in its natural setting, thereby providing a richer understanding of the subject. According to Senekane, Makhene and Oelofse (2021), direct observation, also known as an observational study, is a method of gathering evaluative information in which the evaluator observes the subject in their natural environment without making any changes to that environment. Direct observation is used when other data collection procedures, such as surveys or questionnaires, are not effective; when the goal is to evaluate an ongoing behaviour process, event, or situation; or when there are physical outcomes that can be readily seen. Direct observation can be overt, meaning the subject and individuals in the

environment are aware of the observation's purpose, or covert, when the subject and individuals are unaware of its purpose.

An observation technique was identified that focuses on events occurring at specific intervals during field visits. Detailed transcripts, snapshots and observations were noted down on the observation procedure with the date, time and location verified for each observation. As a researcher, before carrying out any observation, consent forms were provided requesting permission from the participants to observe their lecture halls and campus surroundings. The researcher observed lecturers during college hours, as they attempted to assist or support students both in and outside the classroom. The researcher observed any mistakes, and what lecturers were not doing to support students. The researcher observed the behaviour of both students and lecturers at each campus, as well as the attendance of the students at each campus. The communication between lecturers and students was also observed, along with whether the lecturers were well equipped and patient enough to assist challenged students.

4.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness is a critical concern, as it empowers investigators to clarify the intrinsic worth of qualitative data beyond the limitations that are normally used in quantitative research. The main goal of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to validate the argument that the investigation's findings are "worth paying attention to". Trustworthiness of a study refers to the level of confidence in data, interpretation and approaches used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). In each study, researchers should establish the modus operandi and techniques necessary for the study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). While most experts and researchers agree that trustworthiness is essential, discussions have been ongoing in the literature as to what constitutes trustworthiness (Leung, 2015). Trustworthiness is all about establishing four key elements, which are described in more detail in the sections below.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility determines whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and provide an accurate interpretation of the participants' original views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The strategies used to ensure credibility in this study included prolonged engagement, consistent observation, triangulation and member checking. These methods determine the level of confidence in the accuracy of the conclusions based on

the research design, informants and context. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) cite Guba and Lincoln (1989) and explain that the credibility of the study is established when key researchers are immersed in the experience and recognise it. In other words, credibility refers to how well the respondents' beliefs match the way researchers represent them. The researcher made sure there was no ambiguity in the information and its interpretation, maintaining constant communication with her supervisor for guidance.

As a researcher, it is crucial to build trust and relationships with participants over time, as this allows researchers to gain nuanced understandings of their experiences, behaviours and principles. This approach assisted in apprehending rich data that might not be immediately evident during brief interactions. The researcher engaged in a prolonged study, spending ample time in the field to establish relationships with participants and gain a thorough understanding of their perspectives. As a researcher, I made a conscious effort to acknowledge my own biases, allowing for me to set them aside and maintain a more objective approach during data collection, analysis and interpretation. This self-awareness contributed to minimising potential distortions in the findings. Triangulation was used, employing several data sources or methods (e.g., interviews, observations, documents) to cross-verify outcomes. By applying numerous data collection techniques or sources, information was corroborated from different angles, increasing the credibility of the interpretations and decreasing the impact of potential biases from a single method or data source.

4.7.2 Transferability

Transferability of the research findings is the benchmark for assessing the applicability of the research findings to other contexts, situations, or groups (Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016). Transferability refers to an inquiry's generalisability. In qualitative research, this concept only applies to case-to-case transfer. Transferability also includes the issues of application. The researcher's job is to provide a detailed description of the participants and the research procedure in order to determine whether the findings are transferable to their own environment (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). No claims were made about the generalisability of the study's results. Instead, the focus of the interviews, which were performed with carefully selected participants, was to acquire in-depth information rather than generalisability. However, the interview findings may be relevant in similar colleges.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is the consistency of data over time and in challenging settings (Elo et al., 2014). Dependability ensures that the research process is logical, traceable and documented (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). It is critical to specify the principles and criteria used to select participants, as well as the primary characteristics of the participants, in order to assess the transferability of the results to various contexts (Moretti et al., 2011). For this study, the researcher ensured that proper data processes and precise decision-making were followed. All records were retained so that any developments could be reviewed. All data were kept strictly confidential and maintained securely in a locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer.

4.7.4 Conformability

Conformability is focused on ensuring that the researchers' interpretations and findings are clearly drawn from the data, which requires the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations were reached (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Triangulation aims to improve the process of qualitative research by employing multiple methodologies. Methodological triangulation was utilised to collect data through a variety of methodologies, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, debates and field notes.

Furthermore, Botha (2011) suggests that the collection of reliable data in qualitative research requires an effective investigator who is knowledgeable about the subject, is clear, gentle and empathic, actively listens, and uses reliable data recording methods. In this study, the researcher ensured that the interviews were properly arranged. Questions were posed to confirm or obtain information, and the responses provided allowed for follow-up inquiries.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are critical for ensuring integrity, protecting participants, and preserving faith in research and professional practices. Letters of consent and ethical clearance must be accessible to the establishment where the investigation will be conducted. All participants must be up-to-date about the study. The researcher obtained consensus from all participants who were involved in the study (Motaung, 2020). Gay et al (2009) assert that the researcher should always maintain personal and professional ethical behaviour when interacting with participants in a research setting. According to Adhikari (2020), research ethics oversee the principles of behaviour for scientific researchers. It is essential to consistently conduct research ethically.

Any study involving the gathering of data or interaction with human subjects must address ethical considerations, as these are crucial for conducting professional research.

4.8.1 Approval

According to Imperial College London (2023), ethical approval is mandatory for any academic investigation. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of South Africa, and the clearance certificate was then used to acquire permission from the TVET College to investigate their campuses. The researcher then requested permission from the campus managers of all seven campuses in writing to conduct the research.

4.8.2 Informed Consent

Muchineripi (2021) states that informed consent involves sending a request letter to the potential participants inviting them to take part in the study. The invitation letter provides a brief overview of the research topic, the main objectives of the study, and the rationale for selecting a specific group of participants. Essentially, it is a signed document that outlines an individual's agreement to participate in a research study (Collis & Hussey, 2016). It is also essential to consider the researcher's details and contact information so that participants are able to contact the researcher should they have any inquiries about the research. Consent was obtained by asking participants to sign the consent forms to indicate their willingness to partake in the research. This allowed the participants to be fully informed of the nature of the research. After reading the information sheet and being mindful of the research, interviewees were then provided with the consent form to sign, demonstrating their preparedness to take part in the research.

4.8.3 No Harm or Risk to Participants

Muchineripi (2021) asserts that the most crucial ethical consideration is ensuring that participants are not exposed to any extent of harm. Additionally, it is essential to protect participants from harm and possible risks. Moreover, researcher should clearly communicate their intention to shield participants from harm for the duration of the research and even after the research concludes. The researcher made sure that participants were comfortable at all times. In the event that a participant was injured during the interview process or was not feeling well, the researcher would seek assistance from a healthcare professional. If a participant expressed emotional distress, the research questions would be rephrased to ease any discomfort.

4.8.4 Full Disclosure or Deception

The participants were provided with relevant information about the purpose of the study, the estimated duration of the interview session, and their rights. The interviewer is responsible for ensuring that any information obtained from the participant remains private and confidential, ensuring that no one else has access to the raw data unless the participant explicitly allows disclosure. The researcher informed all participants as to the reasons for conducting the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and assured them that their names would not be mentioned or included in the research findings.

4.8.5 Voluntary Participation

Leavy (2017) supports the concept that contribution should be voluntary and that this must also be clearly outlined in the consent form. The participants also have the right to review and withhold interview material if they feel it infringes on their rights. Participants are also granted the right to review their interviews before publication. The participants' rights were clearly outlined in the consent form. No one was forced or coerced to take part in the research exploration. Being forced to compel participants may indicate that they are not eager to contribute any information, and will likely lead to false or inaccurate information. On the other hand, those who voluntarily consent to participate acknowledge the research area and agree to be part of the data collection process (Mumford et al., 2021). The researcher ensured that participants knew that they could withdraw from the research process at any time if need be and that no one was forced to partake.

4.9 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

4.9.1 Limitations

Limitations in research refer to the factors that may affect the results, conclusions, and generalisability of a study (Hassan, 2024). Some interviews could not be conducted during college hours as some lecturers were working, so an alternative time was arranged for when they were available. For lecturers who were not available on the scheduled interview date, the researcher had to reschedule. Some lecturers preferred not to be recorded, so every piece of information that a participant shared had to be written down accurately. Another limitation of the study was financial difficulties; the solution was to apply for a UNISA Doctoral bursary. The researcher also experienced limitations in terms of time. The solution involved working

on the chapters during the night, with the researcher using her leave days as backup. Finally, the researcher's presence at the college during observations affected participants' responses and behaviour, as they did not express their true perceptions due to the observer's presence. To address this, participants were informed of the researcher's availability at the college and observation schedules were created to help them feel more at ease.

4.9.2 Delimitations

The study took place at a specific TVET college, in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. It is important to note that the study did not include all TVET colleges in Mpumalanga and around South Africa. The focus of this investigation was on the experiences of stakeholders in student support within this particular TVET college in Mpumalanga. Therefore, the findings may not be easily generalised to other TVET colleges, as the conclusions may not necessarily be applicable to a broader spectrum of TVET colleges. While similar outcomes may be observed in other colleges, it cannot be assumed that they are identical to those identified in this particular study. The campuses were located far apart, requiring the researcher to travel extensively. Additionally, the research design and methodology may have influenced the interpretations of the findings and introduced bias in data analysis. To mitigate this, the researcher employed triangulation, field notes, and recorded interviews to minimise bias.

4.10 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed the choice of research approach, the research design, data collection method, and provided a brief explanation of the theory that supported the methodology (qualitative research approach). The interpretivist paradigm, single-case study research design and methodology used in the study were also discussed in this chapter. Data collection methods (interviews, document analysis and direct observation), data analysis, reliability, ethical concerns, and constraints were also examined. Detailed coverage of data presentation, analysis and study findings will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, purposeful sampling was chosen because participants would provide information that is useful in real-time situations, potentially yielding rich data on a budget. As a result, the researcher recognised that individuals with the most experience in lecturing within the college would best meet the study's requirements and contributors were carefully chosen accordingly. In chapter four, the researcher deliberated on the research methodology used throughout the research process. The previous chapter reviewed the research methodology used to gather information for this study. This chapter now follows up by discussing the research paradigm, approach, and data collection techniques used for analysing the data as well as the analysis and interpretation of the findings related to the research questions. Chapter Five is dedicated to data presentation, analysis and interpretation. The data was collected using three instruments, namely: semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. The data was organised into themes and sub-themes derived from the semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents examined by the researcher. Throughout the presentation and discussions, participants' responses were presented as they were, with direct quotes and italics used to indicate participants' views.

Main research question: What are stakeholders' experiences in student support at a selected TVET in Mpumalanga Province?

This main research question is underpinned by six sub-questions:

- ❖ What are the roles of lecturers in supporting students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ How do lecturers provide support to students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ What are the challenges experienced by lecturers when supporting student?
- ❖ How do lecturers mitigate the challenges they experience in supporting students?
- ❖ What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at the TVET college?
- ❖ How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?

The objectives for the study were as follows:

- ❖ To discover the roles of lecturers in TVET colleges.
- ❖ To identify the type of support to be provided to students by lecturers.
- ❖ To identify challenges experienced by lecturers in student support.
- ❖ To discover how lecturers mitigate the challenges experienced.
- ❖ To explore the strengths and weaknesses of student support at the TVET college.
- ❖ To suggest strategies to help support lecturers in providing student support.

5.2 Population and Research Sample

The study was conducted at Ehlanzeni TVET College, one of the TVET colleges in Mpumalanga. The college has seven campuses located in various in rural areas, towns and townships. These locations may be contributing to the challenges faced by students. Many of the communities surrounding the campuses are still dealing with the effects of socio-economic issues caused by the apartheid government system. The researcher chose to focus on this population as someone who is dedicated to improving the quality of education in a supportive environment, and exploring how instructors can best assist students who are facing difficulties.

In order to maintain privacy, the campuses were named campuses A, B, C and D, and the participants' real names were not used. The participants included campus managers, HODs, lecturers and students. The campus managers who contributed to the study came from different campuses, and their nominations were determined based on their level of achievement at Ehlanzeni TVET College (high, average and underperforming campuses). Two campus managers from the top-performing campus, one campus manager from the average performing campus, and one campus manager from the underperforming campus were selected. The selection of campuses based on academic performance assisted in the study, which operated under the assumption that the effectiveness of lecturers plays a key role in student support. The HODs, seven from each campus, were selected based on their years of service in that role at the campus. Preference was given to those with the most years in a specific department in that campus. Additional selection criteria included knowledge and experience of working with students and TVET colleges. Lecturers (seven from each campus) were selected based on their years of service, teaching experience, and tenure at that particular campus. Their understanding of student support mechanisms and operations contributed valuable data to the research.

Students (seven from each campus) were selected based on their enrolled programme and study level, whether it be 2/3/4 or NATED N4/5/6.

5.2.1 Profiling of Participating Schools and Participants

Table 5.2.1: Campus managers' work experience in years

	Campus Manager A	Campus Manager B	Campus Manager C	Campus Manager D
Number of years as a campus manager	5 years	3 years	3 years	7 years
Number of years as a lecturer / HOD	23 years	20 years	15 years	10 years

The researcher has several years as a campus manager and as an HOD/lecturer at the campuses. The researcher believes that the work experience in terms of years as a campus manager may also affect campus performance.

Table 5.2.2: HODs' work experience in years

	HOD A	HOD B	HOD C	HOD D	HOD E	HOD F	HOD G
Number of years as an HOD	5 years	2 years	5 years	5 years	10 years	7 years	13 years
Number of years as a lecturer	32 years	27 years	16 years	14 years	20 years	25 years	21 years

The HODs were selected based on the total number of years they have served as the HODs on the campus, with preference given to those with the most experience in that specific department at that campus. Additional selection criteria included their knowledge and experience working with students and TVET colleges. Their familiarity with the student support functions

contributed to the research by providing rich data, as they have worked at the campus/college for the longest period of time compared to other colleagues.

Table 5.2.3: Lecturers' work experience in years

	Lecturer A	Lecturer B	Lecturer C	Lecturer D	Lecturer E	Lecturer F	Lecturer G
Number of years as a lecturer	4 years	12 years	9 years	32 years	20 years	6 years	1 ½ years

Lecturers were carefully selected based on their years of service and teaching experience, and their tenure at that particular campus. Their knowledge of how student support systems operate helped facilitate the research by providing valuable data. Additionally, their experiences with student support were valuable.

Table 5.2.4: Programme students are enrolled in at the college

	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F	Student G
Programme enrolled in	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	N4	N5	N6	Level 4

Students were selected based on their enrolled programmes and their level of study, either 2nd, 3rd or 4th year, or NATED N4, N5, N6.

In total, the study included 25 participants: four campus managers, seven lecturers, seven HODs and seven students.

5.3 Themes

In qualitative data analysis, it is necessary to anticipate the procedures and types of data that will likely be needed and collected. This insight then informs the categories of data analytic approaches that will need to be utilised (Saldaña, 2024). Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection instrument. Data was generated through interviews, direct observations and document analysis to align with the research questions and objectives of the study. Themes are at the core of any qualitative research approach. Themes cannot be observed directly, as they are insights, understandings, perspectives, principles and feelings that exist within the minds of research participants (Mishra & Dey, 2022). Furthermore, the identification of themes that are associated with the theories used in the study concludes the influence of research. The use of three theories guided the researcher in providing a structure for the entire research progression, aiding in informing the identified problem, the purpose and significance of the research. The theories also assisted in demonstrating how the research aligns with existing theory and research. Themes should not merely explain features of the context, but instead should be closely related to clarifying the endogenous paradigms of research. The fundamental meaning remains the same – themes are theoretical and elusive expressions, patterns, or processes that provide details to a phenomenon.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of obtaining data. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and direct observations. The researcher asked more or less the same set of questions depending on the designation. The interview questions were 10-14 questions. The researcher asked a similar set of questions to each participant, tailored to their specific role or designation. The diverse range of experiences shared during in the research was profound. Participants responded based on their individual experiences and knowledge. Interviews were scheduled according to participant availability, with timing arranged to suit their schedules. The data analysis process began with transcribing data from interviews. The data was recorded using an audio recorder and then transliterated into a Word document. The themes that emerged from the data were identified through a thematic data analysis approach. This method helped in identifying the main themes and sub-themes. The themes that were derived from the data collected from the participants in the interviews were as follows:

THEME 1: Experiences of lecturers in providing student support.

THEME 2: Roles of lecturers in addressing the academic and psychosocial needs and challenges of TVET college students.

THEME 3: Support strategies employed by lecturers for TVET college students.

THEME 4: Challenges experienced by lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges.

THEME 5: The strengths and weaknesses of lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges.

THEME 6: Support from college management and stakeholders for lecturers in providing student support services.

The themes have been sub-divided into sub-themes, as presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Themes derived from the data collected from participants

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. What are the stakeholders' experiences in student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?	THEME 1: Experiences of lecturers in providing student support	1.1 Roles of lecturers in providing student support 1.2 Factors contributing to inadequate student support 1.3 Professional development 1.4 Lack of qualification
2. What are the roles of lecturers at TVET colleges?	THEME 2: Roles of lecturers in addressing academic and psychosocial needs and challenges of TVET college students.	2.1 Academic challenges and psychosocial needs of students 2.2 Academic challenges 2.3 Students' backgrounds affect their academic achievement

		<p>2.4 Challenges faced by TVET college students</p> <p>2.5 Solutions to challenges encountered</p>
3. How are students supported by lecturers?	THEME 3: Support strategies employed by lecturers for TVET college students.	<p>3.1 Support that lecturers can effectively provide to students</p> <p>3.2 Understanding of student support</p> <p>3.3 Type of support students expect</p> <p>3.4 Campus providing support</p> <p>3.5 Lecturers' assistance in student support</p> <p>3.6 Lecturers' time and patience</p> <p>3.7 Differences that can be made</p>
4. What are the challenges experienced by lecturers in providing student support?	THEME 4: Challenges experienced by lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges	<p>4.1 Resources at the college</p> <p>4.2 Students' behaviour in class</p> <p>4.3 Mental health issues</p> <p>4.4 Absenteeism</p> <p>4.5 Student dropout</p>
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?	THEME 5: The strengths and weaknesses of lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges	5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of student support
6. How can the college management and stakeholders support the	THEME 6: Support of college management and	6.1 Support from college and stakeholders

lecturers in student support services?	stakeholders in student support services	6.2 Process of teaching and learning 6.3 Strategies for the improvement of student support 6.4 Support provided to lecturers by campus managers/HODs
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5.3.1 Theme 1: Experiences of Lecturers in Providing Student Support

The researcher posed the following question to the lecturers: **What are the roles of lecturers in providing student support? Are you doing enough as a lecturer to fulfil those roles?**

The purpose of this query was to determine if lecturers share a common understanding of their roles in student support and to encourage self-reflection on whether they are adequately supporting students or not.

Lecturers responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Lecturing, mentoring, advising and providing emotional support to students. I am doing my best, although we cannot reach all students, [so we] refer [them] to the student support officer.”*

Lecturer B: *“Is to teach and also assist in extramural activities, to be a peer mentor, to be secondary parents and provide emotional support, assist in career development. Yes, we are doing enough to fulfil those roles.”*

Lecturer C: *“Lecturers play a crucial role in supporting students during their academic journey. They help the students enhance their performance, which includes delivering knowledge to students, coaching and motivating them. Also, guide the student and help them become successful in life.”*

Lecturer D: *“The roles that I do as a lecturer in student support are assessing student understanding and providing constructive feedback. I use formative assessment such as quizzes or interactive pools during lectures, providing timely and specific feedback on assignments and exams, and offer opportunities for students to discuss their performance. By motivating and inspiring them to connect to real-world application and career goals.”*

Lecturer E: *“[My role] is to equip students with skills for their future through the delivery of outstanding education and training and inspire them to achieve their potential. To deliver excellent teaching to students so they achieve their goals.*

Yes, because all students get equal opportunities to practice their skills in different programmes.”

Lecturer F: *“Academic guidance: Clarifying course material to students, giving course assessments, providing feedback on assignments and exams.*

Mentorship: Helping students set and achieve academic goals by encouraging them to focus on their academic achievement. Being a role model to their students by displaying professionalism.

Emotional support: Being approachable and empathetic to students' concerns, providing a safe space for students to discuss personal issues that may affect their academic performance.

Resource referral: Directing students to appropriate campus resources (e.g., counselling services, tutoring centers, academic advisors). When you realise that a certain student is struggling academically you refer the student to a relevant office where he/she can get help. Informing students about extracurricular opportunities that can enhance their learning and career prospects.

Creating an inclusive learning environment: Ensuring that all students feel valued and respected. Making sure that all students are well catered to in the teaching and learning. Avoiding any form of discrimination in the lecturing room.

Facilitating engagement: As a lecturer, you encourage active participation and collaboration among students. You use various teaching methods to cater to different learning styles because students do not learn the same way.

I cannot say I as a lecturer I'm doing enough to fulfil these roles, but several factors can determine whether I'm doing enough or not. For an example, regularly seeking and responding to student feedback can help me understand their effectiveness in providing support, being genuinely committed to student success and willing to go beyond the minimum requirements.”

Lecturer G: *“As a lecturer, I think my role is to make sure all my students are moving in one place, although people are different and come from different backgrounds, some students find themselves failing to concentrate because of the bad background they are coming from at home, so as a lecturer I have to start there and make sure I give that child full support, sit down with the student, find out their problem and find a psychologist if there is a necessity.”*

The lecturers seem to have the same understanding of what their roles are in terms of student support. They all spoke about assisting students academically, assessing students, providing feedback and training them. The lecturers' responses are in line with the view of Rowland et al. (2023), who stated that lecturers should take into account the formation of teaching materials (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.4). The lecturers are also in agreement with Bordia et al. (2022), who emphasise the importance of feedback to students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.5). This demonstrates that the lecturers share a common understanding of student support. Some lecturers mentioned specific areas where students require the most support, such as mentorship and emotional support, and also indicated that they would refer students for additional help if needed. This indicates that they understand the needs of students and how to help them. Other lecturers share the same perspective as Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) regarding lecturer–student relationships (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7). The researcher believes that lecturers understand their roles and are capable of providing assistance or support to students. The job description for lecturers only mentions giving lessons and writing lesson plans, but it does not include student support. Their responsibilities are not structured to support students. It is the researcher’s view that student support should be included in the job description, and lecturers should receive formal training on how to support students. Providing academic, emotional and psychosocial support should be added to the roles of lecturers.

The researcher posed the same question to the campus managers: **What are the roles of lecturers in student support?** This question was repeated to ensure consistent comparisons and to gather relevant data.

Campus managers responded in a similar manner as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Lecturers should be taken as parents, if you want to support students (take your students as your children it makes supporting them easy, know the type of students, and backgrounds to access/know what their needs are. Student support is broad student support should be about academic support, monitoring his/her performance in class (how best*

to support students), social support (understand types of students so that we will be able to guide them, and are their challenges from home).

They have a big role to play, academic support lecturers must be involved during the application process so that they can guide students on the right path. On-course support must be able to assess the performance, also play a role after students have completed their studies, and help in placing students (that might be a pressure to lecturers, but it needs to be done). Lecturers must have a relationship with their students, they might help when students have challenges (home or personal). Lecturers must avail themselves to students.”

Campus Manager B: “The lecturers within the campus play a huge role. They are indeed the loco-parentis for the students. Their responsibilities include, amongst others, the following: marketing and recruitment, career guidance, registration, lecturing, academic support as well as moral support.”

Campus Manager C: “Is to encourage students to put more effort into their studies, ensure that students have enough/ adequate study materials or resources for them to enable to study without any difficulties. Provide students with proper (prepared lessons/lectures) as scheduled. Assist students to adhere, understand and benefit from the school lessons.”

Campus Manager D: “1. Simplifying the contents of the syllabus – The lecturer acts as a link between the content to be taught to the learners throughout the whole year, which includes, but is not limited to explaining and simplifying topics of the annual teaching plan, assessing what has been taught, giving feedback and giving remedial work, which helps the learners to understand how was the assessment expected to be completed, this is done to ensure that the learners are prepared and ready to write their exams at the end of the year. 2. Assessing the institution – as it is known, assessment is the most crucial part of teaching and learning, because it serves to check whether the content taught, has been grasped by the learners and also to check if the learners are ready to progress to the next grade or level. Therefore, there are procedures to be followed when an assessment is carried out in an institution. For this process to be carried out, there has to be the teaching of the content that has to be carried out throughout the year. After all content in the work schedule has been covered, an exam should follow. In the setting of the papers, exam guidelines are followed, nevertheless, the focus on this is on how the exams are carried out at an institution after the papers have been set. Firstly, a timetable is developed, where dates of the subjects to be written are the basis, followed by

the invigilators to monitor the assessment, relief invigilators are also put there, just in case the invigilators may need relief, together with the candidates assessed, and so forth. Secondly, centres for writing the assessment are prepared. The centres must have seating plans that indicate how many candidates will be accommodated per centre, and how many invigilators will be in the centre. Depending on the ratio used, but in most cases the ratio is simply 1:30, which means that the number of invigilators in the centre will highly depend on the capacity for the centre, which therefore means, if candidates are between 1-30, there shall be one invigilator, but if the candidates are more, say maybe 31 or more, but not more than 60, in such a case, the invigilators will be two in that particular centre, and so forth, Thirdly, there should an attendance register that is circulated for candidates to indicate if they were present when the assessment was carried out, those who might not be present will not mark or sign that particular attendance register. Fourth, each paper to be written is allocated a duration according to the National Protocol On Assessment, for example, other subjects may be allocated three full hours to be written, and others may be allocated less, say maybe two hours or so. In the process, a clock should be used in the centre and the particular invigilator assigned is responsible for monitoring the time and making sure that the candidates are fully aware of how the time lapses and how it should be followed, as explained in the examination instructions and guidelines of the institution. Fifth, once the candidates have finished writing, following the correct procedures, papers or answer scripts are therefore submitted to the invigilator, to the chief invigilator and lastly, to the teacher who is responsible for that particular subject.”

Campus managers agree on the roles of lecturers. They believe that lecturers should prioritise being parental figures to students first. They also emphasised the importance of academic and social support, and career guidance. These roles align with the guidelines set by DHET (2020) (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). Campus managers share the same sentiments regarding the roles of lecturers. They understand that lecturers are primarily focused on students’ studies, simplifying content, providing study materials, and encouraging students to study. This understanding aligns with the Great Schools Partnership (2014) and UNESCO (2023), both of which emphasise curriculum (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.6). Campus managers are knowledgeable about the roles of lecturers in student support, and should therefore be able to express their opinions regarding what lecturers should do to provide effective support to students. However, the researcher also believes that campus managers do not involve lecturers enough in terms of student support. Lecturers are not given a say in the decisions made at the

student support office, despite being the ones who spend the most time with students. The campus managers sometimes fail to provide resources to lecturers to effectively support students.

The HODs provided support for the posed question: **What are the roles of lecturers in student support?** Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“I’ll mention them in point form number one is academic support. This includes creating the objectives, providing web-structured material where a lecturer must be prepared before going to class, guiding them on how to do their work, and of course on assignments and exams. And they call. They can also assist students with critical thinking, research and writing skills as part of the skills that are offering students at the college which is academic support. Like can give a positive learning environment to students where students can feel free and comfortable to ask questions, participate, and engage in your lessons then you realise that maybe a student is not well or so and you can intervene on that using student support services. You can also identify struggles based on performance and the interaction in class, where a lecturer can identify the student is struggling there and there, and how we can support a student. And another thing is career guidance. They can provide guidance and career paths for student relating to their field. For example, I was once a lecturer in it. You can see how a student can follow the field of technical part or programming depending on the performance of the student. So we guide them according to the courses that they are doing. So what I can say is that overall lecturers do play a major role in determining the academics of the student. The journey overall is like a student from enrolment until they exit to be ready for employment.”*

HOD B: *“Generally, it is give academic support. The 2nd role is the student's well-being, counselling and guidance. Assist in career guidance, Identify student challenges.”*

HOD C: *“Teaching and Learning- Lecturers are responsible for delivering high-quality teaching, ensuring that students receive a positive learning experience. They design and deliver lectures, seminars, and practical sessions, fostering an engaging and effective learning environment. Assessing student performance through assignments, exams, and other assessments is also part of their role.”*

Pastoral Care- Lecturers provide pastoral support to students, addressing their well-being, mental health, and personal development. They listen to students' concerns, offer guidance, and refer them to appropriate support services when needed.

Administrative support- Lecturers handle administrative tasks related to their courses, such as managing attendance records, grading, and feedback. They assist with postgraduate applications, student satisfaction surveys, and interdisciplinary collaborations within their department.

Research and Scholarship- Lecturers contribute to their institution's research profile by conducting research in their field of expertise. Writing scholarly papers, attending conferences, and staying current with developments in their discipline are essential. Research informs their teaching and enhances the quality of education they provide.

Engagement and Outreach- Lecturers actively engage with students beyond the classroom. They participate in open days, career fairs, and recruitment initiatives. By interacting with prospective students, they contribute to the institution's growth and attract talented individuals.

Continuous Professional Development- Lecturers attend training opportunities and stay informed about educational trends and best practices. They continuously improve their teaching methods, adapt to changing students' needs and enhance their skills."

HOD D: *"Referring to normally provided, arrangements for hours/classes. Normally invite students in free time to assist them. At any time, they can have access to lecturers so they can study /check question papers."*

HOD E: *"Planning and delivering lectures to students. Developing and implementing innovative teaching methods to enhance learning. Preparing course materials such as syllabus, homework, assignments and handouts. Evaluating and grading students' classwork, assignments and papers. Guiding and mentoring students on individual or group projects."*

HOD F: *"To offer academic support, choice of courses, convey critical information, history and background of institution."*

HOD G: *"Lecturers should attentively listen to students, engage them and show a caring attitude. Identify students with learning problems emanating from socio-economic situations*

or personal issues affecting student academic performance and refer them to the student support officer.”

The HODs all share the same opinions regarding the roles of lecturers. They agree that lecturers should provide academic support, create a positive learning environment, offer guidance on career paths, and support professional development. Parsons (2022) also supports the HODs’ sentiments, stating that professional development can improve performance and productivity (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.3.2). Although they may explain these roles in different ways, they all share the same sentiments. The HODs will work together to provide student support based on their shared understanding, ensuring that students receive effective support without any conflicts over what needs to be done.

Campus managers were asked a second question: **What are the factors contributing to inadequate student support from lecturers?** This question was posed to gather insights from campus managers on the reasons why lecturers may not adequately support students, in order to identify and problems or issues.

Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“One of the things is the mentality of both lecturers and students that this is tertiary level because these are adults they need not the support (very big challenge). Tertiary is not like school in that people are not from the same surroundings, also lecturers do not know parents/family. Students are from different places, and lecturers and students do not have the feeling that they are from the same area. Students thought to be adults. Most lecturers do not have educational qualifications. Module on how to deal with students. They only have qualifications that are not educational.”*

Campus Manager B: *“I believe the number of students per group makes it difficult for lecturers to offer adequate support to the students in class. Another contributor may be that some of the lecturing staff do not have professional qualifications. They lack training on how to support students.”*

Campus Manager C: *“If lecturers are poorly paid, and lack proper resources to execute their duties as expected. Working under poor conditions, e.g. inadequate office space, and classrooms. Incompetent and less qualified lecturers.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Lack of parental or guardianship support – Lecturers may have a role to teach the learners, but the whole process of teaching and learning tends to be more reciprocal, than relying on one end. This therefore means that, as much as lecturers have a huge role in teaching learners, it is not their duty alone, these learners also require support from their parents or guardians, that is, somebody who will be checking their daily activities and progress on school-work. In this case, if the parent or guardian does not regularly check the progress and activities of the learner, either in person or via phone, it means that somehow that particular learner may end up losing interest in schoolwork and there will be no one to push or check the progress, which might later mean that if such a learner drops out, no one will notice immediately, unlike a situation when another learner has full support from the parents or guardian, it might be easier and quicker to notice that such a learner has dropped out. In essence, if a student lacks support from parents or guardians, it may end up affecting the lecturers in the institution, because productivity may not be possible. For example, throughout the year, contents of the work schedule are taught as items to be covered day by day, so if the learner is continuously absent from class and the parents and guardians are not aware, this might affect both the learners and the lecturers because the learners might not pass because they have not attended class where the content was taught, and even worse, the parent or guardian might not even have an idea of what had gone on.”*

Campus managers mentioned various issues that contribute to lecturers inadequately supporting students. These include educational qualifications or professional experience, as noted by David and Waghid (2019), who state that lecturers lack workplace experience and qualifications (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.1). Campus Manager C mentioned that resources can be a significant hindrance because lecturers cannot work effectively without them. Researchers such as Thomas and Autio (2019) and Shodeinde et al. (2020) have also noted that TVET colleges encounter numerous challenges, including lack of physical resources (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1.1). Campus managers also mentioned a lack of support from parents, leading to student absences from college or class. In line with this, Khan et al. (2023) state that absenteeism has become a common occurrence (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.4). The researcher strongly believes that campus managers should collaborate and share ideas and opinions. In the researcher’s opinion, certain aspects mentioned by campus managers can significantly impact the effectiveness of student support. The lack of professional development can result in lecturers who fail to enhance their skills, leading to a lack of empathy and patience when dealing with students. These lecturers may struggle to effectively support and guide their

students, ultimately hindering their academic progress. Poor working conditions can also be a significant problem, because if lecturers do not have their own offices, they will not be able to have one-on-one meetings with the students, which may make students uncomfortable to share their problems with other people listening. Some lecturers are not qualified educators; they come from industry and may not know how to effectively handle students. Therefore, the researcher believes that these challenges should be addressed in order to provide effective support to students.

HODs were posed the same question: **What are the factors contributing to inadequate student support from lecturers?** Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“I can mention the classroom size, for example, a larger classroom size, overcrowded classrooms are usually difficult to handle, and it can sometimes bring difficulties in disciplining the student if it is a lot. It is a large account.*

Research focus- We are a higher education institution. So before you go to class and present your lessons as a lecturer, they need to prioritise their research. Before going to teaching, how can you maximise the understanding of your students and so on? So if a lecturer cannot prepare what it means, they are not going to perform, can be inadequate for them to present that lesson. Another thing is teaching skills and experience- New Lecturers. Or those who do not have experience, I can say that they usually have problems with outlining their lessons and understanding the particle, should that they are bringing in class. So that is why I'm bringing up the experience part to say that when you experience it becomes easier to deal with your lessons. Yes, and so on. Unlimited availability- For example, the workload of a lecturer or maybe schedule conflicts usually is a lecturer. You have to go to class, you have to prepare files like. Your availability is not even there for the students to come and consult when they are struggling, so it seems like you are no longer there for them. But the problem is that you have a heavy workload to deal with, but you do want an artist. OK, another thing is communication skills. Sometimes as a lecturer, you can become approachable for example. You can find difficulties in associating with you. They find difficulties like coming and -stating their problems like it is kind of like you lack empathy just because your communication skills are poor. I remember every day we have to engage with the students as one of like a person at leadership levels. When you go to classes and check the lecture you'll find that if the communication is not OK you'll find that. Are struggling and they are not. It's not easy for them to approach the lecturer and stay their problem, and sometimes the lecturer will assume that

the students, maybe they do not know, communicate and so on, but do not find that the lecturer will dismiss the students concerned like you become a little bit harsh trying to be straight. Those are the things that usually the students will face. Only like other factors that I can look at, we can look at the institution itself. Limited resources, for example. Yeah, when we have limited resources, it means we are limited in even offering the classes your teaching methods will be limited. Another thing is looking at quantity over quality, so we need to focus much on the enrolment of students the number and we forget about the quality that we need to provide the student. For example, the quality of student support. So we take a bigger number for getting that. We'll need to also go and support the student in their vast numbers as much as we have enrolled them. So those are some of the challenges that you might have. As an institution, something that contributes to inadequate student support, we take more students at the end. They cannot get like financial support.”

HOD B: *“The first one, is lack of training, lecturers not really trained to deal with students’ challenges. Timing, located 5 hours to be in class, no time to attend to students.”*

HOD C: *“Lack of awareness and communication- Both students and lecturers may not be fully aware of the available support services or how to access them. Clear communication about support programmes is essential. Under-Preparedness for college learning- some students may struggle with the transition from high school to college. They might lack essential study skills, time management or self-discipline, leading to academic challenges. Socio-Economic Background- students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional barriers. Financial constraints, lack of resources, and family responsibilities can impact their ability to succeed. Ineffective time management- poor time management can lead to stress and hinder academic performance. Students need guidance on managing their time effectively. Inadequate study techniques- students might not know how to study efficiently. Lecturers can play a crucial role in teaching effective study. Lack of self-motivation and discipline- some students struggle to stay motivated or maintain discipline. Encouragement and mentorship can help address this. Models of Teaching- Lecturers’ teaching styles and methods can influence student engagement and understanding. A variety of teaching approaches can cater to different learning preferences. Mental Health Challenges- Academic stress, anxiety, and depression can affect students’ ability to seek help or engage with support systems. Addressing mental health is crucial. Intuitional Support Systems- colleges must invest in robust support systems. These include academic advising, tutoring, counselling, and mentorship programmes. Faculty*

Attitudes- Lecturers' attitudes toward student support play a significant role. Encouraging a positive and supportive environment is essential.”

HOD D: *“Resources, we do not have enough resources/ infrastructure. We do not have classes to attend students have a negative impact. Time (lecturers might have time and students do not and vice versa).”*

HOD E: *“Well preparedness for college learning – some students may lack the necessary skills or knowledge to succeed in higher education, leading to inadequate support. Socio-economic background- students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges that affect their academic performance. Gender and culture- cultural differences and gender-related experiences can impact how students perceive and receive support. Teaching methods- lecturers teaching methods and approaches play a crucial role in student engagement and success. Post-exam preparation- insufficient preparation for exams can hinder students' performance. Lack of self-motivation and discipline- students who struggle with motivation and discipline may not seek or utilise available support. Time management issues- balancing study and social commitments can be challenging affecting academic progress. Depth to understanding- some students may struggle to reach the required depth of understanding at the tertiary level. Study techniques and listening thinking skills- ineffective study techniques and limited critical thinking skills can hinder success.”*

HOD F: *“Offering skeletal outlines during instruction/ teaching. Always making reference to outline research.”*

HOD G: *“They are mostly inaccessible, unavailable to listen and have personal interaction with students, poor communication and misunderstanding of the role/ scope of student support officer resulting in non-related in the inability to identify students with challenges (lecturer– student ratio).”*

All of the HODs shared similar views regarding the factors contributing to inadequate support from lecturers. The most commonly cited factors by the HODs include limited availability, poor time management, lack of motivation, insufficient training, and lack of support from the college. Lecturers who are unapproachable, lack the time, or fail to build relationships with students are also seen as contributing to the issue. Varga (2017) emphasises the importance of being actively involved in supporting students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7). Academic support from the college is crucial for lecturers to effectively help students. The DHET (2020)

recognises that colleges must integrate work management, academics and student support (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). The researcher suggests that the HODs can provide training to all lecturers to enhance their ability to provide support.

Campus managers were asked: **In your opinion, what is professional development, and is it vital for lecturers to take part in professional development?**

Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Professional development is very important; this is where you develop yourself professionally. Modules that talk on how to deal with students.”*

Campus Manager B: *“It refers to the training or education done within an institution of employment. Yes, lecturers are mostly hired through their academic qualifications. For them to effectively support students they must professionally develop.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Professional development refers to a process taken by an individual to enhance his/ her career after being employed by a certain institution. This assists the professional to be up to date with the recent trends and to develop new skills, become more competent and more career orientated according to the field of study.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Professional development is when one continues with education and career training. Yes, it is very vital for lecturers to part-time in professional development because they enhance their knowledge and can also give good/ improved content to students”*

All campus managers share a common understanding and believe that professional development is vital for any institution. They stated that professional development entails training and advancing one’s career. Researchers such as Ofosua and Sarpong (2022) emphasise the significance of professional development in any organisation (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.2). Professional development is highly valued as it allows individuals to share and impart updated information or content to students.

Lecturers were posed this question: **Are you enrolled in any programme or institution? If yes, what is the reason for your enrolment?**

Their responses were as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Yes, I am. I am enrolled in BED HONOURS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION. Our education system is boxed, and students are not the same (we have little knowledge of inclusive education, giving divided attention to students.”*

Lecturer B: *“Yes, to get knowledge and to equip myself.”*

Lecturer C: *“Yes, to enhance my knowledge as a lecturer in order to be a better source of information for my students. Also to better understand the 4th industrial revolution we are heading towards as a nation.”*

Lecturer D: *“I am enrolled with the University of South Africa in an online course, which implies I am participating in the programme or activity.”*

Lecturer E: *“Yes, the reason for my enrolment is to further my studies and to learn new skills in other programmes.”*

Lecturer F: *“No, because of financial constraints.”*

Lecturer G: *“Yes, to gain more knowledge and be relevant to what I am teaching, so that I produce good graduates.”*

Most of the lecturers are currently pursuing further studies, indicating their understanding of the importance of professional development. The majority of them are focusing on education, demonstrating their commitment to continuous learning (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.2). This is reassuring, as it indicates that the students are in capable hands, as all lecturers strive to enhance their knowledge and skills. It is the researcher’s opinion that bursaries should be provided to lecturers who are unable to enroll in further studies due to financial constraints.

HODs were asked: **In your opinion what is professional development, and is it vital for lecturers to take part in professional development?** Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“I can then say that professional development is an ongoing procedure of attaining new knowledge, skills and practises to improve performance in class, especially in our field of education. So lecturers need to participate in professional development. One, we are looking at or monocyte of it. We are looking at evolving technologies. With the relevant or with all the programmes we are offering, we are looking at evolving fields, so when looking at discovering new methodologies before we used to study class and teach them, now they are giving you a*

technology to say, use this to teach student. So is then that we need to develop our lecturers professionally on how they can engage the students in these new methodologies and technologies. So development will allow the lecturers to have that confidence before going to class and they will be up to date with information. Another thing, it does improve teaching methods. So looking at the research that has been done, most lecturers, seem to be shy when it comes to classes. If you know that yes, I have 10 years' experience, but only to realise that you are irrelevant. So improved teaching methods will assist you to be relevant with the academic part to be relevant with the subject that you are giving the student to be relevant with the skills that are needed currently in industry. So to do that we need people to be improved professionals, they need to be developed.

By the leaders of the College, of course. So Looking at adapting to student needs, like I said, there is this ongoing now to say that we need to offer skills in TVET colleges, so in other ways we are adapting to the needs of the student. So without lecturers professionally developing that area, they will still offer those skills using the old way or the traditional way. And if they are developed they become relevant to provide them with relevant strategies for offering those skills and it will also help support diverse learners. So professional development also assists with reflective practises. Usually, when you are taught a new thing, you stand and wonder what was I doing wrong. So after getting this information, you tend to stand and reflect to say oh, it means I had challenges on this part during my teaching practises. Now I have this opportunity to grow. I have this opportunity to improve in the areas that I'm being taught, I said. So what you want is to be professionally developed, they have that reflective mind to say that from now on I need to do things differently because I've acquired new skills. I have acquired new knowledge that I can put into my practice. So to me, professional development is vital for lecturers so that they can be effective. Two, they can be dynamic in their teaching and it also allows them to be relevant and current in their field, which they are offering.”

HOD B: *“Professional development- move about upskilling yourself, gaining new knowledge. Curriculum development, lecturers need new skills in presenting a lesson, lecturers should be updated.”*

HOD C: *“Continuous Learning- professional development fosters continuous learning, allowing lecturers to stay updated with the latest teaching methodologies, research, and industry trends. Career Advancement- by enhancing their skills, lecturers improve their chances of career progression and job satisfaction. Innovation- Exposure to new ideas and*

practices encourages innovation in teaching methods and curriculum design. Compliance- staying informed about educational regulations and standards ensures compliance with institutional requirements. Quality education- well-trained lecturers contribute to the delivery of high-quality education, benefiting both students and institutions.”

HOD D: *“Professional development – when one/ person equips/does something that changes his professional mindset or thinking. Yes, it is vital for lecturers to take part in professional development because my work will be of good quality/ services provided will be of good quality.”*

HOD E: *“Improving teaching skills- Professional development helps leaders refer their teaching methods, explore teaching approaches and stay up to date with education. Research and motivation- gain self-confidence and acquire relevant skills for conducting research. Career advancement- equip leaders to qualify for promotions and appointments. Student support- provide pastoral care and foster a positive learning environment.”*

HOD F: *“Improving yourself through learning and training to advance your career. Yes, lecturers need to advance their careers.”*

HOD G: *“Lecturers undergoing training to improve and advance their skills and abilities concerning the programme they are offering. This will help them to increase teaching knowledge, acquire new teaching and facilitation skills and adapt to changing circumstances in the teaching environment.”*

HODs are in agreement regarding the definition of professional development and its importance in any organisation. They believe that lecturers should undergo training to advance and enhance their skills. Parsons (2022) also agrees with HODs that professional development is highly beneficial for employees (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.2).

This question was posed to campus managers: **Can lecturers’ qualifications or lack of qualifications affect student performance?**

Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Yes, if you are qualified it will affect student performance. Confidence of the lecturer is affected because you cannot stand in front of students if you do not have content.”*

Campus Manager B: *“Yes, the vocational institution necessitates that lecturers be subject experts in their field of study.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Yes, relevant qualifications and professional development play important role in lecturer support to the students. Incompetent and less qualified lecturers lack proper information and content relevant to support students”*

Campus Manager D: *“Yes, lecturers must specialise in the subject/ field, lecturers cannot teach something he/she does not know. One must also have education qualification to improve”*

All campus managers unanimously agreed with the question and supported its premise. They agreed that all lecturers must be qualified and trained in their respective fields. Makamu (2022) suggests that colleges should hire specialised lecturers (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.1). The researcher believes that if campus managers agree, they will be able to incorporate this requirement into the college policy, ensuring that all lecturers are trained and qualified in their field of work.

The following question was posed to HODs: **Can lecturers’ qualifications or lack of qualifications affect student performance?**

Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“The qualification of a lecturer, plays a positive impact in subject offering.*

So, a lecturer needs to have strong subject knowledge. You can be like, what can I say? You cannot be like normal. Like the student. You need to have that strong background in order. Like deep understanding to offer the subject matter. So without that, it will be a serious challenge. Your lecturer's qualification gives them effective teaching methods. To bring understanding to the student to bring enjoyment in class. How can I make them engage? If like a lecturer is not really qualified, it will be difficult to offer that. So we are looking for assessment expertise. You can be a lecturer, but if you are not an assessor it will be difficult for them to offer quality assessment. It's not about assessing the students in which the student has passed or so on. There is part of feedback. There is part of evaluation which can help improve students and their performance so expertise is required. Motivation -Usually, Qualified lecturers need to provide motivation and inspiration. You can imagine. They say that the lecturer that is teaching you is only having and six do not even have a diploma. You have

already failed the subject by merely looking at the lecture. We are no longer interested. So qualified lecturers motivate students. When you stand in class to say that you know I have a degree in this subject, they are like, oh, this one is a subject. Expect they already they are already motivated. They inspire me to do that subject. And with that said, I last did my diploma in 2007. And they're like, oh, this is going to be an irrelevant course for us. So qualifications to bring that that, that that motivation to our students. So yeah, I can say that that is very important. And of course, with ongoing professional development improving our qualifications will help a lecturer stay up to date. There is no way you can say that you are not going to be updated professionally. Until you've reached, I deliver to say that no, this person can stand to say that no, I'm here and I'm ready. I can offer I'm relevant. So we need students actually to be qualified.”

HOD B: *“Yes, if you do not have a qualification or right qualification, you will not have an idea of controlling the classroom, or presenting a lesson. Students will not perform. If lecturers do not know the content taught, students will not understand. Strategies of presenting a lesson.”*

HOD C: *“Yes, it can lead to poor performance. If the lecturer is without the knowledge students will fail because the lecturer does not know the content.”*

HOD D: *“Yes, it can because if a lecturer does not have relevant qualifications, it is very difficult to deliver lessons to study but if they have qualifications they deliver with confidence.”*

HOD E: *“Teaching quality and satisfaction. Competences and student satisfaction. Academic performance.”*

HOD F: *“True, negatively so.”*

HOD G: *“Yes.”*

All HODs were all in agreement with the question posed. They all believe that a lack of qualifications can affect students’ performance. Davids and Waghid (2019) also agree that previous research indicates that some lecturers lack workplace experience and qualifications (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.1). The researcher believes that if HODs agree they will be able to recommend that all lecturers be qualified and request training for them.

The researcher posed this question to the lecturers: **“What are your experiences in student support?”** Lecturers responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“We as lecturers are not fully involved in student support because we do not know what we must and how so most of the time I chose not to do anything.”*

Lecturer B: *“I do not have the time to support students, I have many other things to do like marking scripts, setting tasks, attending meetings, and also teaching my subjects, where will I have the time to support students.”*

Lecturer C: *“My experience is good; I support students where I can.”*

Lecturer D: *“Bad experiences, due to the lack of facilities at the college, and sometimes we refer students but nothing is done.”*

Lecturer E: *“We sometimes have high enrolment and I attend students from morning until afternoon, I have so much pressure on marking and giving individual attention.”*

Lecturer F: *“I do not think we have funding for professional development in the area of student support, so sometimes I do not know what I am doing.”*

Lecturer G: *“My roles and responsibilities as to how to support students are not clearly identified. Sometimes students lack discipline and commitment to their studies.”*

The lecturers have varying experiences with student support. Some lecturers mentioned that they are not actively involved in student support due to time constraints. However, the researcher believes that lecturers should be involved from the initial step during the application or recruitment process. This early involvement would allow lecturers to get to know the students and their needs and how best to support them. The college should ensure that all lecturers have their own offices in order to attend to students should they have anything to discuss with them, as the lecturers complain about the lack of such facilities at the college. Lecturers spoke about the importance of professional development. The college should provide training for student support or offer bursaries for lecturers to enrol in further studies. Lecturers also mentioned their responsibilities; the college should include student support as a core responsibility for all lecturers to avoid any confusion about their roles in supporting students. The researcher believes that lecturers should have one or two free periods during a day to allow time for other tasks, especially supporting students.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Roles of Lecturers in Addressing Academic and Psychosocial Needs and Challenges of TVET College Students

5.3.2.1 Academic challenges and psychosocial needs of students

Lecturers were asked: **What are the academic and psychosocial needs of the students in TVET colleges?**

Lecturer A: *“Understanding learning goals and prioritising their time for studies Self-efficacy, motivation and test anxiety. Understanding their academic goals/needs.”*

Lecturer B: *“Laptop and unlimited data, well-equipped classrooms with adequate technology tools. Psychosocial needs- help them to believe in their selves and have confidence and a positive self-image, assist in boosting their self-esteem by providing guidance.”*

Lecturer C: *“Most students in TVET colleges prefer hands-on –learning rather than theoretical learning. They learn better by doing practical, associating what they are learning with the real world and acquiring relevant skills based on their career of choice.”*

Lecturer D: *“TVET have students with unique set of academic and psychosocial needs, some common academic needs may include access to quality instructions, hands-on training opportunities, up-to-date technology and resources, and support service for academic success. On the other hand, psychosocial needs may include mental health support, career counselling, stress management resources, and a supportive learning environment that promotes well-being and positive social interactions. It is important for TVET colleges to address both the academic and psychosocial needs of their students to ensure holistic development and success in their educational journeys.”*

Lecturer E: *“Student academic needs are feeling important and secure in the learning environment, understanding learning goals, having time to integrate learning, understanding the learning process and receiving feedback. Psychosocial needs include- Academic, financial needs, family support needs, friend support needs, practical needs and emotional support needs.”*

Lecturer F: *“Academic needs include:*

Practical Skills Training, Industry-Relevant Curriculum, Qualified Instructors, Internship and Apprenticeship Opportunities, Career Guidance and Counseling, Access to Learning Resources, Soft Skills Development

Psychosocial Needs

Mental Health Support, Peer Support Network, Financial Assistance, Mentorship Programmes, Safe and Inclusive Environment, Work-Life Balance Support, Community Engagement and Life Skills Education.”

Lecturer G: *“Is to find maybe laptops or tablets for the ones who are doing computer to practice at home.”*

Lecturers expressed different challenges that students may face, Lecturers shared the same sentiments they both mentioned understanding their academic goals and understanding their needs. Whereas other lecturers spoke more on resources (laptops, and data) and helping students believe in themselves. Lecturers have the same views that most students prefer hands-on learning/ opportunities and the importance that college address both academic and psychosocial needs. Lecturers provided examples of what academic needs are namely: career guidance, and qualified instructors, and also mentioned psychosocial needs namely: mental health support, peer support and mentorship. Researchers agree with what some of the lecturers have said, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2023) share that students from poor backgrounds have fewer resources (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1.2). The researcher is of the view that all that the lecturers have pointed out are almost all the challenges faced by TVET students, all the challenges must be addressed to provide support to TVET students.

Campus managers were asked the following question: **What are the academic and psychosocial needs of the students in TVET colleges?**

Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Academic needs- we need to understand that most of our students are registered at an institution (a subject matrix that students are exposed to at school, has a role in what they're exposed to.) Do not have the correct background, that will help them academically in enrolled programmes. As a TVET college, we need to expose students in this field (enrol in pre-programmes before they enrol in any programme at TVET college).*

Psychosocial needs- we are in rural areas, lot of challenges that our students face, most students do not have the finances to come to campus, most of the students have child-headed

homes, and drug abuse plays a role. Alcohol is an issue for students. Pregnancy in female students. Issues of prostitution in students is a huge problem.”

Campus Manager B: *“The TVET college accepts students with a minimum qualification of NQF Level 1 equivalent to grade 9. Some of these students were previously dropouts and they are now trying to rectify their pasts. The academic support that can be provided to them may be in the method of additional sessions and providing a safe space for teaching and learning. The conversion from home or secondary school to a tertiary institution is sometimes difficult to manoeuvre. There is also the case of peer pressure. Students need a counsellor stationed at campuses.”*

Campus Manager C: *“As the society is moving to the 4th industrial revolution, students in TVET colleges need to be more advanced with technology, that is for example the students must have access to free WI-FI within the campuses, access to printers/ copiers, and computers.*

Students in TVET colleges in most cases develop psychosocial problems like fear, anxiety, isolation, low self-esteem, peer pressure and depression in later stages, especially in the first year and or during the examination period. Early recognition of signs and prompt management of these problems is more crucial as these may lead to suicide, dropouts and high rate of poor performance by the students.”

Campus Manager D: *“Academic needs- students often want to feel important, and have a healthy environment for teaching and learning. It is very pivotal to provide such to students. Providing feedback to students is one of the academic needs.*

Psychosocial needs- students tend to have low self-esteem, so one must try to boost this student. Lack of concentration, so they need to be attended / or called out most of the time. Lack of academic performance- try and find out what the issues might be for the students. Poor family background- so this is where the NSFAS comes in.”

Campus managers have similar perspectives when discussing their understanding of the subjects the students were previously exposed to and the fact that they may have been dropouts in their previous schools and are now working to rectify their pasts. The academic support that can be provided to them may come in the form of extra classes and creating a safe space for teaching and learning. Campus managers indicated that students need to feel valued and supported, especially considering the prevalence of anxiety and depression among them. It is

essential that students have access to Wi-Fi for their college work. According to the DHET (2020), colleges are required to build more meaningful and compassionate interactions between lecturers and students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). The issues and requirements highlighted by the campus managers are valid and accurately reflect what the students need at TVET colleges.

HODs were asked the same question as that posed to campus managers: **What are the academic and psychosocial needs of the students in TVET colleges?**

Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“You know, dealing with different students, you tend to see different needs in different levels for, for example, on the academic needs, they need a strong foundation on technical skills. What I can say is that depending on the programmes that we are offering, for example, we tend to say that those who are supposed to do engineering, need to have a background in mathematics. So those are the needs, is something that actually if a student does not have, you're not going to take that student, so they need to have that solid ground too.*

To cope with the programmes that they'll be doing. I'm still on the academic needs application of theory. TVET students. Like I said, this is vocational education. They need to learn to bridge between the theory and the practical application. That is why it is college. We have assignments and also practicals, so they need to learn how to apply their theory in their practical skills. Learning from class after they take to go into railway simulation projects. For example, in the electrical student.

Will have to learn how to, for example, administer switches and everything, create a line for the lights and everything with plumbing students, they have to plumb, for example, a toilet. So in other words, whatever they are learning is not only theoretical, they must be able to bring it practical. Another thing under academic exposure to industry trends, it will be very dangerous for the students to give that old knowledge, while when they go to the field to find out they are no longer relevant. So we need to expose them to industry trains. Now that in the older days, they were using this, but now we are in this. Our curriculum needs to be updated.

To meet the industry needs. Another thing is academic support. Even students, like most of the time, require academic support in areas like study skills, is they will look for tutors to keep them like on their toes. To say that you do not need to relax, they need to learn how to manage

their time, and how to write. For example, in English writing skills they need that support because it's not. Sometimes it's not part of the syllabus, but they need those skills so that they can use them in the industry.

Looking at psychosocial needs, students need to be guided career-wise like career guidance and development. Assisting them on how to focus on entering the workforce quickly. Sometimes they'll get those irrelevant skills not looking at how am I going to be hired. For example, how do I write a relevant resume? How? How do I gain interview skills and job search strategies? Those are the things that we can guide our students into.

Another thing which is very important for TVET students is financial aid. In our case, we use the NSFAS Pass, so TVET students come from diverse backgrounds. They do have financial challenges, so the NSFAS is helping them a lot. So as a college, we may also assist with grants to those who are not getting the NSFAS scholarship programmes that will assist them financially. So we have a serious problem that we are usually not facing.

Mental health and well-being. Is not only based on the student, even the lecturers, so we need healthy people mentally and a healthy body to work and study. So from a form from a high school to a TVET college to cope with that transition, students need to be supported because usually they get that academic pressure like not copying, still adjusting to the environment and some have personal challenges. That impacts their student performance and their mental well-being. So providing access to counselling services, creating support groups, for example, promoting healthy coping just to give them those opportunities where they can unwind and relax where they can speak out for the sake of their mental health because a healthy mind can learn. But in mind that is clogged with many things, will have challenges in learning.

Looking at social connection. Students who usually move alone, seem to have a little bit of a problem. They need to learn to engage with other students, engage with peers, build friendships, and develop a sense of belonging within the college community where we assist them, like, OK, this is a grouped lab. These are games you need to join in order like to engage with other students. It's like a TVET college is not about learning only. It has to do with the like social health. Students need to engage with other students learning life generally because, at the end in the work area, they're going to labour with diverse people coming from different backgrounds. So if they are not able to socialise, they might have a problem even going ahead.”

HOD B: *“Academic needs- academic support tutors then they can perform. Access to resources helps to improve their studies/ performance.*

Social- we do not see people from higher health to assist the students.

Induction not properly done, they do not know where to go when they have challenges.”

HOD C: *“Academic needs- Quality education- students require access to high-quality education that equips them with relevant skills and knowledge for the chosen fields. Effective teaching and learning- well-trained lecturers, engaging teaching methods, and practical training are essential. Support for academic challenges- students may need assistance with coursework, understanding concepts, and exam preparation. Access to resources- availability of textbooks, study materials, and well-equipped facilities is crucial. Career guidance- guidance on career paths, job prospects, and industry trends helps students make informed decisions.*

Psychosocial needs. Self-esteem and confidence- building students’ self-esteem fosters a positive learning environment. Resilience – coping with challenges, setbacks, and stress is vital for student success. Stress management- strategies to handle academic pressure, personal issues and life stressors. Peer support- encouraging peer counselling and collaboration among students. Emotional well-being- addressing emotional needs, anxiety, and mental health. Reducing Absenteeism- identifying reasons for absenteeism and providing necessary support. Counselling services- offering professional counselling for personal and academic concerns.”

HOD D: *“Academically- read without understanding. E.g., question papers given and not explained students will not understand, you need to explain. They are not present in academic affairs, here because of NSFAS.*

Psychosocial- After classes they go, do not engage in social services unless it involves money.”

HOD E: *“Academic needs: Pre-entry academic support- identify students with academic challenges before they start their courses. On-course academic support – assisting with their studies such as tutoring and skills development. Start academic support- supporting students as they transition out of the college. Self-study- enhancing effective self-directed learning. Psychosocial needs. Low self-esteem- identify students with academic challenges before they start their courses. Stressful students- helping with stress related to academic demands,*

personal issues and socio-economic challenges. Peer support- lack of peer tutoring and peer counselling. Emotional support- insufficient provision of social and emotional support.”

HOD F: *“Academic needs – select content based on the career path that students follow.*

Psychosocial refers to the interrelation of social factors and individual thoughts and behaviour.”

HOD G: *“Most students come from poor economic backgrounds. Most of their academic and psychosocial problems emanate from their lack of financial support that ends up affecting them academically.”*

The HODs expressed various viewpoints, all of which were valid. They all agreed on the importance of addressing student’s needs. HODs discussed the significance of offering career guidance, providing quality education, meeting industry needs, and offering pre-entry academic support. Additionally, they highlighted issues such as students’ low self-esteem, peer pressure, and the need for emotional support. According to the DHET (2020), lecturers, with the assistance of career guidance experts, should have access to student summaries to help them identify the psychosocial and socio-economic challenges that students may face, allowing them to provide the necessary support (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). Additionally, the HODs stated that tutors should be available. According to Burakova (2023), student with exceptional results are often paired with those who are underperforming, so that the lower-performing students can receive help (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). HODs expressed that students often read question papers without understanding them. They also noted that students are often not in college to study; they just want to earn money.

Additionally, HODs spoke about coping with programmes, noting that students often have a hard time bridging the gap between practical and theoretical learning. They are unsure of how to utilise the information they have learned in theory when it comes to applying it in their practical work at the college. For instance, even though they are taught how to conduct themselves in an interview, they sometimes struggle to apply the information effectively. Students must be able to meet industry needs; however, sometimes students do not know how to apply their knowledge in the industry because they still struggle to bridge the gap between theory and practice. To address this issue, the college or subject lecturer should arrange for students to participate in practical work in the field or industry for two or three weeks during

the college break each year. This hands-on experience will help bridge the gap and better prepare students for real-world applications.

Students must be guided on the days of application because they might choose the wrong programme, and when college opens and classes start, they realise the programme is not suited for them and then they drop out. Therefore, career guidance must be done as early as possible. Additionally, it is essential for the college to offer counselling services, including having a campus psychologist available to attend to students promptly. Each campus should have its own psychologist instead of waiting for referrals, as the process takes too long and students suffer as a result. This delay can lead to serious consequences such as students committing suicide or engaging in substance abuse.

Another point raised is that students look for social connections, and that those who keep to themselves often experience challenges as a consequence. They need to learn how to engage with their peers, build friendships, and develop a sense of belonging within the college community. In the researcher's opinion, the college should offer various groups tailored to different interests, such as a book club for avid readers, debate classes, and netball and soccer teams. That way, all students can find a group that suits them and feel included.

HODs also spoke of access to resources, noting that students do not have the necessary tools to complete their assessments at home, such as laptops and access to data or Wi-Fi. They only have access to these resources at the college. In the researcher's view, the college should purchase laptops to lend to students for use throughout the year, which they can then return at the end of the academic year. Alternatively, the college can establish a computer centre where students can go to work on their assignments without any restrictions.

5.3.2.2 Academic challenges experienced by students

Lecturers were asked the follows question: **What are the academic challenges that your students face? How do you as a lecturer support the student?**

Their responses were as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Time management, motivation, academic difficulties, stress and anxiety. Try by all means to motivate them to make time for their studies.”*

Lecturer B: *“Students are failing to cope during teaching and learning because the time allocated for classes is not enough which leads them to be unsuccessful at the finish of the year.”*

As a lecturer provide extra classes to support my students and also create a WhatsApp group chat for them to get help and assist each other after hours.”

Lecturer C: *“Students in TVET colleges face several challenges. To mention a few:*

Time management – as a lecturer, I will provide strategies students can use to manage time such as creating a study table to use while studying for their tests and exams.

Understanding the content – as a lecturer I will provide a clear explanation of the content, and provide additional resources that may support their learning such as videos based on the content. Provide tutorials and extra classes to help them understand the content.

Lack of motivation – constantly giving motivation to students is of the utmost importance. I will highlight their strength and motivate them to overcome their weaknesses.”

Lecturer D: *“The challenges faced by the students include time management and difficulty with specific subject matter. Lack of effective study strategies and stress related to deadlines and exams, then to support students I offer additional resources such as study guides, extra practice questions, one-on-one sessions for clarifications, and crafting a supportive and open atmosphere for students to ask questions and seek help. Additionally, I might recommend time management techniques, encourage participation in study groups and provide feedback on assignments to help students gauge their progress and understand academically often involves a mix of personal attention, resources and guidance tailored to the individual needs of each student.”*

Lecturer E: *“Academic challenges that students face are learning differences where they have mental health conditions which will lead them not to practice time management skills, failing on completing the task. Discrimination is a serious factor. Balancing school work with other responsibilities such as home duties. Test anxiety. Academic transitions. Bullying.*

I can support these students by teaching them with personal development plan on how to have personal skills such as skills to manage time effectively. Teach them to prioritise their task to start with the most important and end with the least important task.”

Lecturer F: *“Students often face a variety of academic challenges during their studies. Some of the common challenges include:*

Time Management: Balancing coursework, assignments, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities can be difficult for students and it causes them to abscond some of their work. Exam Preparation: The pressure of performing well in exams can be overwhelming, leading to stress and anxiety. Writing and Research Skills: Writing essays, and research papers, and understanding proper citation methods can be challenging for many students. Language Barriers: since we accommodate students from different provinces sometimes students find it difficult to understand language that is frequently used. Access to Resources: Limited access to textbooks, computers or even labs to do their academic, or online resources can impede learning. As a lecturer, supporting students in overcoming these challenges involves several strategies: I ensure clear communication to students, allow flexible office hours ensuring that students get help when they need it, students are offered additional resources such as reading materials to practice. Students have access to e-learning where they interact with their lecturers online, and access learning materials.”

Lecturer G: *“We face the challenges of PPEs to our students where by you need to teach them practically you cannot because they still have to receive or have not received their safety boots and personal protective equipment and they face the challenge of not being able to get in the workshop.”*

In response to the question posed, lecturers mentioned time allocation and time management, indicating a serious challenge for students. They also share an understanding of academic challenges, mentioning the importance of understanding content and motivation. Loveless (2022) indicates that motivation is not the same as commitment (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1). Lecturers also point out that resources are a challenge for students, citing a lack of safety boots, personal protective equipment and academic transition strategies, as well as anxiety and language barriers. Muzindutsi and Nhlapho (2017) agree that resources are not being utilised as effectively as they should be (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1).

5.3.2.3 Students' backgrounds affect their academic achievement

Lecturers were asked: **In your opinion, can the students' background affect their academic achievement? If yes, what can you do as a lecturer to provide support?** They responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Yes, it can. I can encourage them to focus on their studies as that will be the key to changing their background. It can if you come from a poor background, focus both studies/home. Refer to the student support office, focus on them more.”*

Lecturer B: *“Yes, the student’s background affects their academic achievement if at home they do not offer financial help and also emotional help, students can end up doing wrong things to get money and to be loved.*

As a lecturer, I can assist them to apply for financial aid, and give them emotional support.”

Lecturer C: *“Yes, it does, students with a poor background of education turn to see education as less important. They lack motivation from family members and they end up accepting and making it a culture that education is of less importance. So in such cases as a lecturer, I will have a duty to play the role of a motivator, a mentor, a coach and a guide towards such students. Try all the best to show them the importance of education to each individual and society as a whole.”*

Lecturer D: *“As a lecturer, I can create an inclusive learning environment, and foster a classroom atmosphere where all students feel welcome and valued, regardless of their background. Offer extra support provide additional resources or support sessions for students who may need it, such as tutoring study groups or office hours. Differentiate instructions recognise and accommodate different learning styles and backgrounds in my teaching approach. Encourage cultural diversity incorporate diverse perspectives into my school curriculum and encourage open discussions about different backgrounds and experiences. Provide feedback and encourage and offer constructive feedback and praise to help boost students’ confidence and motivation. It can help me as a lecturer with these steps to the equitable learning environment and support all students in achieving their academic goals regardless of their backgrounds.”*

Lecturer E: *“Yes, because when a student lacks financial, physical, emotional and social support, this can affect his/her academic achievement. I can provide support by getting to know the students individually to discover their family backgrounds. Assist students in getting financial support from the National Students’ Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), bursaries and scholarships by doing applications for them. I can support them by requesting donations from different companies for funds or money to pay their fees.”*

Lecturer F: *“Yes, students' background affects performance, if the students do not get support from home, the students do not come to college, do not attend because of money/ financial constraints. If I find out that students have a problem, it depends on the type of problem at home, if he/she does not have food, you can refer to a student support officer, who can see what*

they can do/ assist in NSFAS and accommodation. The NSFAS can assist with funds. If it is abusive, the student support can work with social workers.”

Lecturer G: *“The student's background can affect their academic achievement because if you are a student coming from a poor background where there's nothing to eat, they will not be able to concentrate in class with an empty stomach, if also a student is from an abusive family, they can be affected because like when they always watch their parents fight, they can fail to concentrate at school or in class.”*

All lecturers agreed that students' backgrounds can affect their academic achievement. The lecturers also came up with various strategies for providing support based on the needs of their students. Some spoke of utilising the student support referral system available at each college. They addressed issues such as lack of motivation, suggesting ways on how to provide motivation or be the support system that students require. Additionally, they discussed the importance of providing financial, physical and emotional support. Nortje (2017) recognises that poverty is a key indicator of academic achievement (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1.2). The SSS must collaborate with the lecturers to identify students from disadvantaged backgrounds and provide them with assistance. Lecturers should utilise the referral forms given by the SSS.

5.3.2.4 Challenges TVET students face

Students were asked: **What are your challenges as a student at TVET college?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“Challenges that we have at TVET college is financial situation which is NSFAS and pending results.”*

Student B: *“It is the fact that TVET college students do not have enough funds and only depend on NSFAS and TVET college offers a limited range of courses to choose from.”*

Student C: *“Balancing theoretical knowledge with practical skills.”*

Student D: *“As a student at TVET college, some of my challenges include limited access to resources, insufficient academic guidance and difficulty balancing work and studies.”*

Student E: *“The challenges of a TVET college student are limited resources, time management, and limited support service.”*

Student F: *“Time management. Balancing theory and practical.”*

Student G: *“Empty promises from the college. Lack of lecturers- they are not enough. Lack of furniture in our college.”*

Students have different challenges, and they expressed the most serious challenges they face. Students indicated that funds are an issue for them and stated that they depend on NSFAS. They also spoke of balancing theory and practical aspects of their studies. Roman, Titus and Dison (2016) allude to the fact that universities have an insufficient curriculum strategy (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.5). Students shared that a lack of resources is a significant issue. Beil, Proft, Van Heerden, Sviri and Van Heerden (2019) indicate that TVET colleges face numerous challenges, with resources being one of them (Refer to Chapter 3 Section 3.1). It is essential that the challenges faced by students take priority, as TVET students are the most important stakeholders.

The same question was posed to lecturers: **What types of challenges do TVET college students face? What are the possible solutions for the challenges encountered?**

Lecturer A: *“Lack of funding and fixed curriculum. Curriculum in TVET college (fixed not flexible for all students) based on test/question and answer not on occupational skills.”*

Lecturer B: *“Lack of infrastructure, lack of lecturers and lack of financial support.*

Solution- build more classes, the college should hire more lecturers that will assist in teaching and learning, and provide more bursaries.”

Lecturer C: *“Lack of infrastructure- Most colleges have a shortage of classes and that affects teaching and learning. Since we have two programmes in colleges which are NCV and NATED, one of the programmes has to start late with classes since there is a shortage of classes. DHET has a responsibility to ensure that TVET colleges have enough classes so that no programme will start classes late as it happens in some of the campuses at Ehlanzeni TVET college.*

Insufficient funding- in most TVET colleges, learners depend only on NSFAS as a stream of funding, there are no bursaries. That alone also hinders students from learning. Colleges should provide learners with bursaries as well.

Lecturers who are not well trained- lecturers who are not well-trained lack information and that means they will not be able to give students enough knowledge that will make them perform and become the best achievers in the academic. Therefore, DHET should constantly organise

training for lecturers to enhance their knowledge based on their specialisation so that they can be able to pass that knowledge to students.”

Lecturer D: *“Financial constraints many students entering college come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. High tuition fees, learning materials expenses, and living costs can become overwhelming barriers to pursuing education.*

They can collaborate with organisations, government, and NGOs to provide scholarships, grants and financial aid to deserving students. Limited resources and facilities outdated equipment, insufficient learning materials, and inadequate facilities can hinder students' practical training, impacting their skill development. They can seek partnerships with industries to secure funding for updated equipment and resources. Engaging in fundraising campaigns and advocating for better funding from relevant authorities can help provide students with the tools they need to succeed.”

Lecturer E: *“TVET college students face that challenges impact their ability to study e.g. lack of access to textbooks and class allocation challenges due to over enrolment. TVET college students face challenges such as lack of lecturers, not enough resources of learning, e.g., computers and load shedding, strikes due to financial issues, pending of results and also lack of proper infrastructure to facilitate teaching and learning.”*

Lecturer F: *“They are heads of the families, everything depends on them. Sometimes they are wives/ husbands, and it affects their academic performance.*

Student pregnancy- because they will be on maternity / give birth – they should arrange higher health campaigns to provide condoms/ prevention pills-raise awareness/ or train them about pregnancy.”

Lecturer G: *“They sometimes face the challenge of NSFAS, they sometimes receive the money late, then cannot buy themselves food, cannot have money for transport or lunch at school.”*

Lecturers alluded to the same issues, namely: funds and infrastructure, a fixed curriculum, financial constraints, and a lack of trained lecturers, which is a major issue at TVET colleges. TVET colleges cannot hire trainers from the industry because the salaries they require are too excessive due to their experience. Additionally, the lecturers are within their rights to declare that they cannot work if they are not provided with proper classes or have no classes at all.

Oosthuizen, Spencer and Chigano (2022) argue that TVET colleges are responsible for education and training (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.1). Two lecturers have a different perspective from the rest. They indicated that many students are married and struggle to balance their academic work with home life because they are heads of families. They also stated that students depend on NSFAS for funds. The researcher believes that there should be communication among lecturers so that they can assist each other with various challenges and develop common strategies for all campuses.

Campus managers and HODs were asked: **What types of challenges do TVET college students face?** They responded as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Issues of finances, late benefits is a challenge. We are in rural areas, lot of challenges that our students face, most students do not have the finances to come to campus, and most of the students have child-headed homes, drug abuse plays a role. Alcohol is an issue for students. Pregnancy in female students. Issues of prostitution in students are a huge problem.”*

Campus Manager B: *“The challenges students face include; finances, peer pressure, self-esteem, academics, and homesickness.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Late provision of funding by NSFAS to needy students seems to be a major problem because they struggle to finances to sustain themselves during the studying period which later forces some of them to drop out of school due to financial challenges. Non-provision of enough student accommodation for all registered students is another disturbing factor because students have to arrange for their accommodation which is not adequate for studying purposes and sometimes they are not well secured for their safety. Lack of arranged transport to carry students to and from campus, which sometimes leads to absenteeism during rainy and cold weathers.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Majority of the students depend on NSFAS, if NSFAS is delayed they drop out. Some of these TVET campuses are based in rural areas, we only attract the locals, so they are often absent at the college. Lack of employment, no direction after completing their studies.”*

All campus managers mentioned the issue of finances or funds, specifically NSFAS, as all students, in their understanding, depend on NSFAS. With that being said, if they do not have

finances, it leads to dropouts and absenteeism at the colleges, which is a major issue. A study done by McIntosh, Gidman and McLaughlin (2013) shows that finances are one of the reasons students drop out (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.8). Campus managers further added that alcohol is a huge issue with TVET students. Higher Health (2021) also states that the abuse of alcohol and drugs is significant among university students. The researcher believes that NSFAS offices must be contacted as early as possible by the college to avoid issues, and that Higher Health must be involved to help with alcohol abuse.

Campus managers discussed the impact of peer pressure. In the researcher's view, peer pressure is a major issue because some college students, upon experiencing newfound freedom, may be influenced by their peers to engage in behaviours they would not typically participate in, such as drug and alcohol use. Therefore, the college should organise awareness campaigns to educate students about this type of pressure that they may encounter. In some cases, students may also become involved in sexual relationships, leading to unplanned pregnancies and financial hardships. This can result in students either missing classes or dropping out of college altogether.

With financial problems becoming more prevalent, some students turn to prostitution in order to afford college tuition, rent and groceries. This leads to a decrease in academic performance, and frequent absences from classes. The strain of this lifestyle can also contribute to the development of mental health problems. It is crucial for NSFAS to address these financial struggles as early as possible to prevent students from resorting to such extreme measures.

Some students come from child-headed families, where there are no rules and the students do as they please. These students often face academic challenges. Therefore, the college should make an effort to find sponsors or involve social workers to provide food parcels to these students to minimise the stress they may experience due to food insecurity.

HODs were asked: **What types of challenges do TVET college students face?** HODs responded as follows:

HOD A: *"I can start with the main one, which usually is a problem with financial challenges.*

Most should not come with the idea to say that you are going to get in this fast. If you look at the affordability part, it makes sense to say that most cannot afford tuition fees. The cost of material books and everything. So they are forecast is to say that we are going to be financially

supported. So finance is a challenge for most students. Limited resources. For example, you find a student is expecting to have a laptop so that they can study further. In some programmes like it, they can not only learn computers and stop in class, they need to have other resources that can support them at home. So shortage or limited resources can hinder that. Balancing work and studies. Some students are working part-time and they are students. You'll find that when they are licking behind, they will give you that reason to say. I am also an awakened student. I have to balance my work and also my studies so that some of the challenges that you are looking at. So another challenge is the perception of TVET education. Most students will register in a TVET college, even if they might have said I do not want to stay home. I just want to come and learn, not thinking that it's part of learning and this can take them to get a better job. But they have that thing to say that better education comes from university. So they do have a negative perception of TVET colleges while they are registered on TVET to be part of our student. They are still having a challenge understanding that this is part of my learning. The perception they have just, but like learning at home around home is also activated. It's just a negative stigma that has been plotted from communities and so on. So another challenge, I can say is looking at academic challenges balancing between theory and practice. With limited resources we have is very difficult to give them the practical parts still theoretically meaning you give them theory, but you cannot give them that practical much it becomes a problem for students because they are they struggle to connect between the classroom and real-world application, bridge the gap between theory and practical. Truth outdated curriculum. So they repeat the repeat pace of change in industries. It leaves our curriculum behind, which makes students like being unprepared to fit into the workforce that we're currently producing. One we are having an old curriculum industry already upgraded to a certain level. We are bringing them all the technologies. Industries are already ahead, so the outdated curriculum does give a challenge. To achieve a student, those are some of the challenges they are facing because you find them when they finish, you ask them how is work, they said. We are not copying because of some of the things we see for the first time. So yes, there are challenges that they are facing. So another thing it's a bit like a large class group. So if you're having a large class group it's difficult for them to engage with the lecturer one-on-one because they are more they do not. You do not know which one to help which one not to help. So it becomes a challenge even on their side to say. How can I approach the lecture that we mainly need to help all of us it seems like I'm kind of special if I'm going to look at those possible problems that I'm having, so it becomes also a problem for the students?"

HOD B: *“Financial challenges (funding), they do not have access to funding, they depend on NSFAS.*

Lack of employment affects performance (those in college will not be motivated). The stigma associated with TVET college, dumpsite for bad performers.”

HOD C: *“Relevance and Industry Alignment- TVET programmes must align with industry needs and employers’ demands. However, sometimes there’s a disconnect between what TVET offers and what employers require. Advocacy is crucial to raising awareness among parents and students about the significance of TVET and skills development. Financial Constraints- Resources for TVET are often limited, affecting infrastructure, equipment, and teaching quality. Lack of financial aid for disadvantaged students can hinder access to education. Perceived status and recognition- developing countries tend to prioritise university or college education over TVET, leading to less esteem for vocational pathways. Advocacy and awareness campaigns can help change perceptions. Transfer across streams- Challenges exist in transferring between different education streams (e.g.: from TVET to university) due to varying curricula and recognition. Access to Technology and Remote Learning- Lack of access to electricity, internet connectivity, devices, and prepared instructors limits effective remote learning in TVET during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Infrastructure and campus conditions- remote locations often lack proper infrastructure and resources, affecting the overall learning experience. Staff turnover and policies- High staff turnover can disrupt continuity and quality of education. Inadequate policies may hinder the effective management and growth of TVET institutions. Quality assurance and dropouts- Ensuring quality education and preventing high dropout rates are ongoing challenges.”*

HOD D: *“Transport challenges- they do not have funds for transport, they hitchhike to come to college.*

NSFAS- they are not funded some of them have financial challenges. After completing their studies, they do not get employment. Courses done, they do not have market/ Job opportunities.”

HOD E: *“Remote learning constraints- no connectivity and devices. Practical skills- lack of workshops, and labs in the workplace. Inequality. Occupational variation.”*

HOD F: *“Inadequate supply of infrastructure, ineffective vocational education and practical skill training, Mismatch between supply and demand.”*

HOD G: *“Financial reliance on NSFAS, peer pressure, health and wellness issues, drugs and alcohol abuse.”*

All HODs identified the common issue of financial constraints. With financial constraints come various problems, including transportation issues. If this funding is addressed, many issues can be resolved among TVET students. According to Majumder (2019), the stress related to housing uncertainty and food insecurity negatively impacts the daily life of low-income college students (Refer to Chapter 3 Section 3.2.2.1).

5.3.2.5 Alternative solutions to student challenges

Students were asked: **What can be done to assist you with the above challenges?** Their responses were as follows:

Student A: *“Academic support, we need a study skills workshop. Financial assistance we need scholarships, bursaries and financial counselling.”*

Student B: *“They can increase the range of courses that students can choose from and provide bursaries.”*

Student C: *“By establishing partnerships with industries to provide internships, apprenticeships and job placement opportunities. Bridging the gap between education and employment.”*

Student D: *“To address these challenges, implementing programmes for free affordable resources, offering workshops or tutoring and providing personalised academic advising.”*

Student E: *“With financial assistance- scholarships and bursaries should be provided. Time management- study skills workshops should be done. Support services- counselling service, career guidance and planning- peer support groups.”*

Student F: *“Time management- set goals and deadlines- create a schedule and prioritise tasks. Balancing theory and practical- apply theoretical knowledge to practical projects.”*

Student G: *“To have meetings with the management and talk about the issues.”*

Students shared various strategies that could assist with these issues, all of which have the potential to greatly benefit TVET colleges, as they come from important stakeholders, which are the students themselves. Wanders et al. (2019) suggest that students should be given the opportunity to communicate and exchange ideas in order to foster positive relationships. When these relationships are established, positive strategies will emerge.

Students spoke of time management, and the researcher agrees with them because most students seem to struggle with it. They find it difficult to balance their social and educational lives, leading to late submissions of assessments and missed exams due to poor time management. Students should learn to balance their lives and attend to their social life when college closes, with an understanding that their education is crucial for their future success. Former students can play a significant role in motivating and speaking to current students about this, as they have first-hand experience attending the same college, and students are most likely to listen and relate to them because of it.

Students shared similar concerns and discussed the need for financial assistance. Financial issues are a major problem among TVET students, as most come from low-income backgrounds. Another issue is that most of the students are adults with children, leading to financial strain, as they struggle to afford rent, buy food, and have money for transportation to attend college and classes. The college should first identify those students, then try to assist them by requesting sponsorships from nearby businesses. In addition, involving social development to provide food parcels can greatly help these students. Furthermore, NSFAS funding should be readily available for these students at the beginning of the year. A major challenge is that NSFAS funds are typically disbursed in the second half of the year, leading to students dropping out or missing classes.

Students made valid points and discussed the variety of courses the college should offer. The researcher believes that the college should provide occupational skills to students so they can explore alternative career paths. It is important for the college to cater for all types of students. Therefore, academic support should be provided to students who are struggling with their studies due to social or psychosocial challenges. Peer tutoring, one-on-one sessions with lecturers, and additional classes should be available to students if need be.

Students shared their opinions and expressed the need for skills workshops and counselling services. It is important to inform students about the programmes available at the college, what

they can expect after completing their studies, and what skills they will acquire. Some students may require counselling to address issues from home that may be affecting their ability to study. It is crucial for them to address these issues so that they can fully engage in their academic pursuits.

Campus managers and HODs were posed the same question: **What are the possible solutions for the challenges encountered?** Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Creating awareness campaigns for the challenges. Have public/private partnerships (to assist students in getting findings). Getting placement for students (private/public partnership) will encourage students to perform academically, which will encourage them for placement (Job employment).”*

Campus Manager B: *“By supporting the students through an orientation where every stakeholder (Financial Aid, counsellors, peer educators, peer tutors, and academic support) within the student support services explains their function and accessibility.”*

Campus Manager C: *“The support staff through the assistance of the campus managers, should fast-track the NSFAS funding process to the students. The campus managers together with other relevant stakeholders should address the issue of proper, secured student accommodation with reliable school transport or buses.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Implement res for students to monitor student attendance. Find placement for students after completing their studies. NSFAS must try and complete capturing for students early so that the money may come early to students.”*

Campus managers often came up with similar solutions that have the potential to positively impact all TVET colleges. It is crucial for campus managers to collaborate and share their ideas and solutions in order to help improve the colleges. By working together in this way, students will greatly benefit.

HODs responded to the same question as follows:

HOD A: *“We need to understand the problems that they are facing. So looking at financial challenges, we need to look at other means of financial covering. For example, looking at scholarships, and bursary loans that colleges can have to assist students where student, instead*

of being stressed about how they can manage their learning, college may assist them with the financial Aid that they have.

With finances like, for example, financial problems from the background, we can also reach out to other departments to assist students with like personal requirements, cosmetics and everything we do have organisations that can assist with that. If a college can reach out to that OK with balancing theory and practice.

It starts with the lecture, and the professional development to be ahead in understanding what are the requirements of my class. If I do not have this as a practical, how can I bridge that? So we can upgrade our lectures through development to say that there are other means of doing practicals. We can help them virtually and let them expose the railway even if it's not physical. But getting technology can take us through that.

OK, outdated curriculum. It requires us to have that relationship with industries that are offering the like you, which are linked to the programmes that we are offering so that whenever we need upgrades, they can be that constant, they can be that constant development. That caused a development in their programmes.

Unlimited resources. Our colleges have the budget, but I think in the budget planning they need to include lecturers because they know better what they need in classes. Leaders deciding on the resources that lecturers need will end up buying loads of unnecessary resources, while lecturers know what they need, they have to engage them, not on buying their resources but during budget so that it can be able to cover everything that they need throughout the year, which will assist.

Student to lend on that so. Who is balancing work and studies? What I can say is that. Students just need support groups to tell them that they are not the only ones who are working and studying. They need to learn time management to make sure that everything falls into place. Of course, as lecturers and leaders, we are also studying while we are working, but we try to balance that life. So I think that just support groups to assist them to understand what they need to do because sometimes you might not know that one student will register to say that I need to get. A better job while I'm studying, not knowing how to handle that so support groups can assist them.”

HOD B: *“Marketing of the TVET college (what is it that is offered at the college, avoid the stigma of being called failures). Increase in funding- have or develop relationships with companies for employment. Support in general from the college.”*

HOD C: *“TVET raise awareness among parents and students about the significance of TVET and skills development. TVET programmes must align with industry needs and employers’ demands, and provide proper infrastructure and resources.”*

HOD D: *“Transport- college accommodation for students so they do not have to travel. NSFAS- can review their policies, can be accessible to all students. Occupational skills can be a solution for unemployment, relevant skills.”*

HOD E: *“Market relevance and industry alignment*

Challenge: TVET programmes often do not align with industry needs, leading to a mismatch between graduates’ skills and market demand.

Solutions- Strengthen collaboration between TVET mismatches and industry. Involve industry experts in curriculum development, internships and apprenticeship, and regularly update programmes to reflect technological advancement and market trends.

1. Perceptions and values

Challenge- TVET is often undervalued compared to industry education. Parents and students may want it as a less prestigious option.

Solution- Raise awareness about the importance of TVET and showcase success stories of TVET Graduates who have excelled in their career. Highlight the practical skills and job opportunities TVET provides.

2. Limited resources

Challenge- TVET college faces resource constraints, mainly outdated equipment and insufficient funding.

Solution- advocate for increased funding from the government and private sectors. Encourage donations of modern equipment, prioritise machines and repair of existing resources.”

HOD F: *“Authorities must rationalise demand and supply in the sense of making available opportunities for students’ employability.”*

HOD G: *“Making use of higher health services, Partnering with relevant stakeholders, conducting awareness campaigns and timeous payment of allowance.”*

The HODs discussed financial issues and emphasised the importance of providing bursaries to students who may not have the means to travel to and from the college. The HODs expressed support for funding this initiative and also highlighted the need for professional development opportunities, allocation of resources, and proper budgeting. They emphasised the importance of updating of curriculum and mentioned the significance of marketing the TVET programme to raise awareness. Additionally, HODs made a valid point about making use of Higher Health and spoke of the relevance of aligning with industry standards.

The HODs presented a potentially highly beneficial solution by suggesting that there should be stronger collaboration between TVET institutions and industry. This can be achieved by involving industry experts in curriculum development, offering internships and apprenticeships, and consisting updating programmes to align with technological advancements and market trends. The researcher believes that the TVET sector should hire part-time lecturers from the industry to come and teach at TVET colleges. This way, these part-time lecturers will have a better understanding of what the industry needs, keeping the TVET sector updated and avoiding any mismatch between the TVET sector and the industry. Therefore, these lecturers or the TVET sector should be given the opportunity to develop or update their curriculum to align with industry needs.

The HODs also mentioned limited resources, which is a significant issue in the TVET sector. The researcher suggests that lecturers should be involved in resource decision-making since they are aware of what they want and need. Wiesbaden (2021) supports these statements and states that resources for TVET colleges are usually limited (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.1). If lecturers are not involved, the department or the college will end up purchasing unnecessary items that will never be used. Additionally, HODs spoke of providing transport and college accommodation for students so they do not have to travel. The researcher believes that TVET colleges should create or build their own campus residences so that TVET students do not have to travel, especially if they do not have money for transport, as students end up missing classes because of this.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Support Strategies Employed by Lecturers for TVET College Students

5.3.3.1 Support that lecturers can effectively provide to students

This question was posed to lecturers, campus managers and HODs: **How can lecturers effectively support students at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?** Lecturers responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Having compassion and empathy, listen to your students without judgement and acknowledging their emotions. We should not box our students.”*

Lecturer B: *“By teaching them and providing them with relevant resources and also using remote learning.”*

Lecturer C: *“By providing academic support, go the extra mile in helping students who struggle with their academics. Give support to students with special needs. Practise inclusive teaching in the classroom. Give guidance to students where necessary, helping them to become best in their academic streams.”*

Lecturer D: *“By actively engaging with students using techniques like group discussion, problem-solving sessions and interactive questions and answers to keep students engaged and involved in the learning process.”*

Lecturer E: *“By supporting students through their emotional, social, physical and academic needs related to their learning activities. By equipping students with studies such as prioritising their daily task that includes: academic work and maintaining the correct mindset.”*

Lecturer F: *“Make sure that you communicate clearly as a lecturer Provide clear detailed expectations and deadlines for a course. Ensure all materials are accessible and are well organised. Use a variety of teaching methods to cater to different learning styles, including group work, and hands-on activities. Provide regular feedback to students.”*

Lecturer G: *“Then in my class sometimes you find students underperforming because maybe they do not hear when you are talking as a lecturer, so in case of problems like those you must make sure everything you say, you write on the board with bigger font and make sure you speak loudly because some students have hearing problems and some have to read lips when they want to hear and understand what you saying. Then at the end of a lesson give them a short class work and homework to see where each student lacks.”*

All lecturers made valid points, indicating their understanding of their roles and ability to effectively support students. Their ideas were similar, demonstrating their potential to assist students. Some lecturers discussed the importance of engaging with students and providing social and emotional support. Basson and Rothman (2018) agree that for college students, it is crucial for lecturers to be engaged with their students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7).

Lecturers emphasized the importance of having compassion and empathy. The researcher strongly believes that it is crucial for lecturers to listen to their students and make time for their concerns. Sometimes, students may struggle with their academic work not because they are unwilling, but because they are facing personal challenges. In these situations, lecturers should listen attentively and offer support to help their students succeed. Lecturers discussed the importance of teaching, providing students with relevant resources, and utilising remote learning. In the researcher's opinion, lecturers should participate in all classes and consider creating WhatsApp groups to assist students with their studies whilst they are at home. Additionally, colleges should implement a learning management system where lecturers can record video lessons for students to watch at their convenience and ask questions if need be.

Lecturers emphasised the importance of clear communication and providing detailed expectations and deadlines for their courses. The researcher believes that students should not have to guess what is required of them, but rather that instructions from the lecturer should be clear in order to enhance academic performance.

Campus managers were asked: **How can lecturers effectively support students at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?** Their responses were as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Lecturers must see their students as children, lecturers see themselves as coaches to students (have a relationship, parent-ship).”*

Campus Manager B: *“Lecturers need to understand the students coming to the college. They must be able to put themselves in the shoes of students making it easy to mentor them and always keep in mind their socio-economic background. They must also develop themselves professionally.”*

Campus Manager C: *“First lecturers should identify the students' area of competencies, their potential in each subject, identify weak and strong points of their students and ensure that students are enrolling for the correct career path according to their level of intelligence.”*

Campus Manager D: *“You must be their parents, you get to understand their frustrations, and you will be able to assist and also refer the students to get help. As a lecturer, you must find ways to make lessons interesting to make students look forward to coming to your class. Create a relationship with their parents, especially with students who are facing challenges.”*

Campus managers agree with each other that lecturers must act as mentors to the students and find ways to make lessons engaging. They also agree that it is crucial to understand the type of students enrolling in college and ensure they are placed in suitable programmes. According to Slavik and Egbert (2023), lecturers can identify students’ strengths and weaknesses in order to support their growth and development (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.14).

The researcher believes that lecturers must know their students. This can be achieved if lecturers are involved from the recruitment stage, allowing them to build relationships with students. Sometimes, it is very difficult to do so during busy times of the year if they were not initially involved. If the lecturer gets to know their students, they will understand what strategies to use to keep lessons interesting. The researcher believes that if lecturers are parents, they will have the compassion and empathy needed to listen and care for their students. Therefore, the researcher suggests that lecturers should strive to embody parental qualities.

HODs were asked the same question: **How can lecturers effectively support students at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?** Their responses were as follows:

HOD A: *“Lecturers can engage the student like on a practical part we are in. We are a technical vocational college, so we need to give the name to say that lecturers need to support students. Practically when our students leave our college, they must be able to do their work in the fields that they have studied.*

Two, we look at trips like academic trips. So lecturers can organise visits to companies where students can be exposed to the industry, allowing students to observe the first-hand practices that are done in industries with theory the student can understand. They can learn and pass, but they need to have that exposure to how am I going to apply this theory that I've already learned.

Another thing that can encourage them by inviting professional guest speakers. For example, in that gathering to come and share real-world experiences. Because when they are within the college they are not exposed. So if someone from outside comes in to say that is what is

happening, what we are learning is going to assist you in this field and we are going to be employable in these areas. I was once a student of that kind of guest speaker. This can build them and make them feel that they are relevant for what they are doing.

So another thing is hands-on learning. We need to prioritise activities where students are going to be engaged. We take them to the workshop. So with the college, we are likely we have a fire centre where students can access everything virtually. We have that technology that makes them to be relevant in the firearms we are living in. So another thing that we can support is mentorship programmes. We need to develop mentorships where students where students can connect.

With the industry and guidance by those people outside, just come mentoring them, like looking at the industries around the departments around, they can come and assist our student, mentoring them, guiding them through supporting them on what they're doing. So another thing is hands-on learning. We need to prioritise activities where students are going to be engaged. We take them to the workshop. So with the college, we are likely we have a fire centre where students can access everything virtually. We have that technology that makes them to be relevant in the firearms we are living in. So another thing that we can support is mentorship programmes. We need to develop mentorships where students where students can connect. With the industry and guidance by those people outside, just come mentoring them, like looking at the industries around the departments around, they can come and assist our student, mentoring them, guiding them through supporting them on what they're doing.

Another thing that I can look at, we need to look at personalised learning considering offer offering like those programmes that will cater for students with different styles and paces or you know. With the experience that we have, we do have students who are coming from high school believing that in a team college, they are going to do skills only without writing any assessment. So we need to design those programmes that personally engage them and also cater for that kind of students. Another thing that you can promote, is formative assessment. It can be weekly also where we can constantly give feedback to students. To monitor their progress and understand the need for improvement that they will need at the student because giving them a test once off in 1/4 that is formative, does not give them that understanding to say that now I am here where they need me actually to assess them to what they have learned up to so far, not giving them enough information to say that where can I improve before I write my assessment which will form a case. So those are the things that you can offer us

today. Finally, I can say a positive learning environment. We live in a community where we have different kinds of students. We need to foster a respectful, inclusive classroom environment where students will be comfortable to ask questions, to participate, to work with other students freely, implementing strategies to empower them so that they can help that self-confidence when they are in class.”

HOD B: *“Lecturers help in referrals, and work hand in hand with student support services. Lecturers can also assist in work placement/ opening for training. A bridge between students and representatives.”*

HOD C: *“Student Support Services- the student support services unit at Ehlanzeni College provides a range of services to all students. These services aim to help students become effective, functioning individuals equipped with personal and social skills.*

The support is divided into three stages. The first stage- Pre-entry support- before students even begin with courses, they can receive guidance and assistance. This might include information about the college, programme requirements, and career pathways. In the second stage- Course support- during their studies, students can benefit from ongoing support. This includes academic guidance, counselling, and resources to help them adapt to college life and succeed in their courses. Lastly, the exit level support- as students approach graduation, the college continues to offer support. This might involve career counselling, job placement assistance, and preparation for the transition to the workplace. E-Learning Opportunities- Lecturers can leverage e-learning to enhance student support. This includes providing self-guided materials for self-study, preparation work, and self-testing. Additionally, e-learning platforms allow for consultations through forums and webinars, fostering interaction between lecturers and students. Effective Study Tips- lecturers can encourage students to adopt effective study habits. For instance: 1. Breaks- encourage students to divide their study sessions with short breaks (15-30 mins) every hour or two. These breaks help the mind absorb information better. 2. Mental preparation- Before each study session, students can mentally prepare themselves. A short walk, a cup of tea, or a quick shower can help reset their minds. 3. Individual approach- recognise that each student is unique, and their study needs may vary. Be flexible and adapt to their learning styles. Bursary assistance- Ehlanzeni TVET College offers student support services to guide students in applying for bursaries. These financial aid opportunities can significantly alleviate students’ financial burdens and enhance their educational experience.”

HOD D: *“Resources, have enough resources (gadgets) connectivity for both lecturers and students, remote learning can be done.”*

HOD E: *“Holistic competencies, e.g., communication skills, and problem-solving skills.*

TVET Knowledge- leaders must stay updated with industry trends and technology advancement. Encourage work updates, learning experiences can bridge the gap between theory and practice. Mediation with skills ecosystem- facilitate corrections with industry partners, invite graduates to share their experiences and express effective partnership models. Technology Integration- simulates, within learning tools, outline communication to engage students. Student-centred approach- providing timely feedback and creating a supportive learning environment that fosters student success.”

HOD F: *“By making students participate in knowledge extraction. Planning properly. Have a backup plan.”*

HOD G: *“They should be enthusiastic and passionate about their own work. They should teach well and explain complex concepts in articulate ways. They should have a flexible teaching approach, e.g., WhatsApp and online teaching. They should have an open-door policy and regular consultation hours. They should listen and engage students at all times in an emphatic way, create a positive learning environment/ and provide personalised feedback.”*

All HODs have varying methods as to how to effectively support students. Motivation is a key factor, which can be achieved by engaging with students, organising academic trips, providing referrals to SSS, offering effective study tips, assisting with bursaries, providing e-learning opportunities, and making resources available. All of these support systems are crucial and can greatly benefit students. Regarding motivation, this is reflected in students' commitment and engagement in the learning environment, as well as their interest in the learning process (Souders, 2020). Motivation differs to commitment, which pertains to how actively engaged and committed a student appears to be (Loveless, 2022) (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1). The researcher believes that motivation is a vital factor in students' achievement. The college can organise motivational days where they invite people from different fields to come and share their stories. The researcher also understands the importance of using referral forms. If a lecturer feels that students need more help, they can use the referral form so that students can receive assistance. Additionally, lecturers can follow up to see if the student has been assisted.

5.3.3.2 Understanding of Student Support

This question was posed to students: **In your understanding, what is student support?** The responses were as follows:

Student A: *“Student support refers to the resources and services provided by educational institutions to help students succeed academically, socially and personally.”*

Student B: *“Student support is the academic and non-academic assistance given to students towards their learning, health, curriculum, extra curriculum activities and a successful graduation from the programme.”*

Student C: *“Student support is a service to help students succeed academically, emotionally and socially, which can include tutoring, counselling, academic advising and career guidance.”*

Student D: *“Student support to me, encompasses various services and resources provided by the college to help students succeed academically, emotionally and personally.”*

Student E: *“It is a service aimed at fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, enabling students to overcome challenges to achieve their goals.”*

Student F: *“It refers to the resource and services provided to students to help them succeed academically, personally and professionally.”*

Student G: *“The resources and services provided to students to them to succeed academically, personally and professionally.”*

Students seem to understand what student support entails. If students understand what student support is, they will be able to know what kind of support they should expect or require from the college. Students generally have a similar understanding of the term; they spoke of resources and services provided to help them academically achieve. Students mentioned that academic and non-academic support given to them. Some students differ slightly in the way they explain student support. One student explained that student support is a service aimed at fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, enabling students to overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

In the researcher’s opinion, the students are correct. Students should receive academic support as well as non-academic support, as without it, they may perform poorly in their subjects. Olaya

et al. (2020) are in accord that academic support helps address issues that hinder students from performing well in their studies. Improved academic performance can be attained through adequate academic support (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.12).

5.3.3.3 Type of support students expect

The students were asked this question: **What kind of support do you expect from your lecturers?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“The support we need from lecturers as students, we need academic guidance, clarification on course material, assignments guidance and feedback on our performance.”*

Student B: *“I expect academic support by providing more examples and guidance on the lesson plans.”*

Student C: *“We expect support to enhance our learning experience. A clear explanation of course materials and sometimes assistance with career and academic planning.”*

Student D: *“Expected support from lecturers is guidance in understanding course material, assistance with academic challenges, feedback on assignments and mentorship or advice.”*

Student E: *“Lecturers can help students to achieve their goals to study and have personal growth.”*

Student F: *“By showing respect and creating positive forms of support. Lecturers can create a positive and productive learning environment for their students.”*

Student G: *“Lecturers can provide guidance on course material assignments and projects, and support our learning journey, and we can also talk to them if we are facing problems.”*

All students expect academic support from their lecturers. Muchineripi (2021) states that such support can be both academic and non-academic Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) further elaborate that instructors who prioritise their work and duty to teach and learn significantly influence students' growth. (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.9). Therefore, it is essential for lecturers to support students on their academic journey.

The researcher is in concurrence that lecturers should provide support to students. Additionally, lecturers should make an effort to understand their students, which involves having conversations and being attentive if need be. Lecturers should be mindful that students are not

the same and should have strategies for handling different students and their various needs. The researcher also emphasises the importance of patience on behalf of lecturers when working with diverse students, as this will assist them to offer tailored support that meets each student's individual needs.

5.3.3.4 Support provided by the campus to students

Students were asked: **Based on your answer to the first question, do you feel as if the campus provides support to you as a college student?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“Yes, because they provide us with everything that we need as students e.g. Textbooks, computers.”*

Student B: *“Yes, they try to provide students with the best support they can offer.”*

Student C: *“Yes, because there are student support services at the college.”*

Student D: *“In my opinion, the campus does offer some support to students but there is room for improvement, especially in terms of accessibility and availability of support services.”*

Student E: *“Yes, the student support services or office helps us with pads and personal problems.”*

Student F: *“Yes, support is given to students.”*

Student G: *“No, because sometimes when we need help as students they do not help us, and they promise us things they cannot keep.”*

Students generally agree that campuses provide support to students. However, some students disagree, stating that the campus does not help them. In the researchers' opinion, the college does make an effort to support students, but there is room for improvement.

Regarding the student's statement about strikes related to financial issues, the researcher believes there is some truth to it. However, there are also other factors that lead students to protest on campus, although this generally only applies to a few students. Pending results, for example, can sometimes prompt students to protest and go on strike. Campuses also struggle with late payments and lack of support for students thereafter. The researcher suggests that the college should consider hiring more staff in SSS so prevent issues such as delays in NSFAS

payments. Additionally, having an onsite psychologist could help address and resolve problems in a timely manner.

Students also expressed concerns about accessibility. In the researcher's opinion, lecturers should adopt an open-door policy to make themselves more accessible to students. While it might be challenging due to workload, taking the time to see one or two students can make a difference. It is better to attend to some students than to ignore them completely.

5.3.3.5 Lecturers assistance in student support

The researcher posed this question to participants: **Do lecturers assist with student support?**

They responded as follows:

Student A: *“Yes, lecturers can play a significant role in supporting students. Academic support, lecturers can provide clarification on complex topics, offer additional explanations and answers to questions.”*

Student B: *“Yes, most of our lecturers assist students, the only problem is that they have little or less time.”*

Student C: *“Yes, they do but not all of them.”*

Student D: *“Yes, some lecturers do assist by being approachable, offering extra help and providing resources.”*

Student E: *“Yes, lecturers assist students with many things like mentorship, personal support and counselling.”*

Student F: *“Yes, lecturers can play a significant role in supporting students beyond academic teaching.”*

Student G: *“Yes, lecturers can assist students in various ways, lecturers can provide emotional support, listen to concerns, and encourage students to prioritise their well-being.”*

It is evident from the students' responses that they agree that lecturers provide support, which indicates that lecturers are trying their best to support students on all campuses. In his research, Tsakpornu (2019) explains that many lecturers believe that students' discussions with them should primarily focus on academic issues, emphasising that any problems relating to social or career counselling should be directed to the appropriate professionals on campus. The

reluctance to take on this responsibility, as reported by the lecturers, stems from a lack of time to address the needs of the constantly increasing student population (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3). Students expressed that lecturers do provide student support, but the issue is that they do not have enough time. The researcher agrees with this sentiment because lecturers have numerous responsibilities such as teaching, preparing lesson plan, grading assignments, and more. This leaves them with limited time for other tasks, as they are constantly in class or occupied with grading. Some students also mentioned that not all lecturers offer assistance, and the researcher believes this could be due to some lecturers lacking the patience to help students, possibly due to their heavy workload or work pressures.

5.3.3.6 Lecturers' time and patience for assisting students

The researcher posed this question to participants: **Do you think your lecturers have the time and patience to assist you?** Students responded as follows:

Student A: *“Not all of them. Some have the time and patience but some of them do not even care about their work and students.”*

Student B: *“Yes, even though they do not have enough or a lot of time on their hands they play a vital role in shaping our future.”*

Student C: *“Some of them do have time.”*

Student D: *“While some lecturers do make an effort to assist students, it's clear that their time and availability can be limited due to their workload. More support staff or resources could help alleviate this issue and ensure that students receive the attention and guidance they need.”*

Student E: *“Yes, some of them have the time and patience to assist students.”*

Student F: *“Yes, they do.”*

Student G: *“Yes, because our lecturers are busy professionals with various responsibilities, including teaching, research and administrative tasks and they have limited time. Our lecturers are very committed to supporting us as students and they also make time to assist us.”*

While students generally feel that lecturers do have the time and patience to assist them, concerns were raised regarding excessive workload impacting their ability to do so. Bailey and Phillips (2016) believe that establishing positive relationships with lecturers can help students develop skills that were previously thought to be unattainable (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7).

In the researcher's opinion, lecturers may not have sufficient time or patience to attend to students because of their heavy workloads and deadlines for submitting documents. Lecturers must prioritise making time to support their students and have the patience to listen to their challenges and problems. In doing so, they can effectively assist students and achieve better results from them. However, it is the researcher's opinion that lecturers often struggle to find time due to their busy schedule. The college timetable does not allow for flexibility, as lecturers are constantly in class with little or no free periods. This can be exhausting for lecturers, leading them to have less patience with students.

5.3.3.7 Differences that students could make if appointed as lecturer

Students were asked: **If you could be appointed as lecturer, what do you think you could do to provide better support to the students?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *"I can help students financially but not all of them, the few that I can help."*

Student B: *"I would assist with lesson planning, enhance student engagement and also support them emotionally."*

Student C: *"By encouraging and motivating students to overcome challenges, preserve their studies and reach their potential."*

Student D: *"If appointed as a lecturer, I would strive to support students by being approachable and available for consultation, providing clear explanations of course material, offering additional resources or supplementary materials and creating a supportive learning environment where students feel encouraged to ask questions and seek help when needed."*

Student E: *"As a lecturer, I would focus on creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, regular feedback, mentorship, and wellness support."*

Student F: *"Parent and family involvement – colleges can create a supportive environment that encourages student success and persistence."*

Provide resources and support for students struggling with mental health or personal issues."

Student G: *"I can assist students financially where I can also give them clothes."*

Students presented various perspectives on ways to support students as lecturers. Students A and G share the belief that providing financial support is crucial. Students B to E emphasise

the importance of offering emotional and academic support, as well as being approachable as a lecturer. Student F suggested that creating a supportive environment is key. These viewpoints highlight areas where students believe their lecturers can enhance their support, which could greatly benefit them.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Challenges Experienced by Lecturers in Providing Student Support at TVET Colleges

Lecturers were asked: **Are there enough resources in the college to assist lecturers with teaching and learning? Substantiate your answers and please provide possible solutions to any challenges.** They shared their views and responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“No, there are not enough resources. Students do not have access to computers as there is a limited number of computer centres. A new subject was introduced yet there are no resources. The college must ask lecturers what they need (lecturers can always use what we have, write notes).”*

Lecturer B: *“NO, the resources are not enough, the college can provide E-books.”*

Lecturer C: *“No, the college still needs to provide more resources to enhance learning, this can include giving laptops and educational data to students so that they can be able to embrace the 4th industrial revolution and attend classes through e-learning.”*

Lecturer D: *“There must be a relationship between students, DHET, as well as the community and all parties to play roles together to create pleasant learning experiences to support students in achieving their academic and professional goals. The college must look at the challenges for the school like poor infrastructure, poor timetable management relating to teaching practices and training of lecturers in inclusive practice. Training of underqualified lecturers is the responsibility of the management team at TVET college so that they can have effective teaching practices known to be determined by lecturers’ competencies and qualifications. Teaching and academic and workplace qualifications as these skills and abilities may equip the lecturers with necessary knowledge and skills to engage students in the teaching and learning processes.”*

Lecturer E: *“Yes, there are enough resources, because every year the college produces good results.”*

Lecturer F: *“We have resources to assist in teaching and learning because our college has a 4IR centre, where lecturers record their lessons even if students are not on campus, they still have lessons. We have a learning management system, where they can send lessons and tasks to students.”*

Lecturer G: *“No, we are suffering especially in the computer labs, we do not have enough projectors, we have old computers it takes time to run up. The college can provide us with learning resources so that teaching and learning can easily continue and be able as lecturers to produce good results and to put the college name on the map.”*

Most of the lecturers feel that the college lacks sufficient resources. They explain that the current resources are inadequate to support both themselves and the students and believe the college should provide e-books, computers/laptops, textbooks, and data to assist students in their learning, even when they are not on campus. Lecturers also share the same sentiments that the college does not have enough resources. They state that projectors are insufficient, infrastructure is poor, and the timetable is not well organised. Van Rensburg (2020) agrees that TVET colleges lack resources (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2). However, some lecturers believe that the college has sufficient resources because of good results and a learning management system to send lessons to students. The researcher believes that there can never be enough resources; colleges should have more than what is needed. Additionally, the campuses lack libraries for the students to conduct research.

Students were also asked: **Do you have enough resources at the college?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“Not really, because we do not have enough computers in classes, and we do not have a library.”*

Student B: *“To be honest I cannot say we have enough, but I can say we do have resources.”*

Student C: *“We do not have enough resources, because we are using old textbooks, unequipped labs and outdated infrastructure.”*

Student D: *“No, certain resources are lacking, for example: the library might have a good selection of textbooks, but access to technology or academic support services could be improved.”*

Student E: *“No we do not have resources”*

Student F: *“No. We do not have computers.”*

Student G: *“No we do not have resources because we are struggling with computers and furniture.”*

All the students agreed that the college does not have enough resources. They mentioned that they struggle with computer labs because most of the computers do not work, making it a challenge. The also stated that there is no library on any of the college campuses. (Wiesbaden, 2021) agrees that resources for TVET are highly limited (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1). In the researcher’s opinion, the institution seems unsure of how to manage its finances, as even though it offers computer courses, it cannot afford to rectify the scarcity of computers or broken computers. According to Mbatha (2021), certain TVET institutions in South Africa are not immune to issues with poor administration, resource scarcity, and underutilisation (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1).

In the researcher’s opinion, students should take care of their textbooks and return them at the end of the year. Students tend to neglect textbooks. It is also the colleges’ responsibility to order new textbooks if they notice that the current textbooks are old or insufficient. The college or campus can order a few books that students do not have and create a mini-library for the students so they can complete their assignments and projects. The college must address the student's concerns and resolve all challenges.

5.3.4.1 Students behaviour in class

Lecturers were asked: **How do you deal with students who behave badly in and outside the lecture rooms?** They responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Call them out on the side and speak to them, do not call out bad behaviour in front of other students.”*

Lecturer B: *“I sit them down have one-on-one sessions with the students, teach the students good behaviour, and set rules.”*

Lecturer C: *“Inside lecture classroom: I will set clear expectations, and establish class rules to be followed at the beginning of the year. If a student misbehaves or breaks the rule, I will*

call upon that student and talk with him or her in private away from his/her classmates and call his/her to order.

Outside the lecture classroom: I will call the student in order, take the student to the student support team if the behaviour continues, and last I will involve the parents to try to put the student in order.”

Lecturer D: *“I will reward those students who are doing the right things. Giving them positive attention can help behaviour problem students see that they can still get the attention they seeking when they too listen and follow the expectations. Will set clear expectations for my students and stick to them. Make sure students know what the rules are and be consistent with enforcing them.”*

Lecturer E: *“By assigning him/her to clean the classroom after the lecturing process or to ask him/her to call parents to discuss the matter or dismiss him/her from the lecture rooms. Outside the lecture room, I will let him/her to the yard of the campus by cutting grass or cleaning windows or assign him/her to clean students’ toilets outside.”*

Lecturer F: *“Since we are dealing with adults, the students must leave my class, if he/ she does not want to leave, I will refer the students to my senior manager because I can exchange words with students.”*

Lecturer G: *“Get to the root of the matter, and reach out to colleagues for support, no matter how difficult someone is being, it should never escalate the situation with verbal or physical violence, use open communication and kindness towards your students when handling challenging student behaviour.”*

Lecturers devised various approaches for addressing students with behavioural issues, all of which were understandable and achievable. One lecturer mentioned the importance of addressing the root of the problem, as highlighted by researchers Hinton and Cook (2021), who emphasised the significance of knowing one’s students in order to develop a deeper understanding and foster positive relationships (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.14).

In the researcher’s opinion, students may be acting out due to family issues, frustrations, or financial problems. Therefore, the lecturer can always talk to the student outside of class, ask what the issue might be, and offer help if needed. If the student feels that the lecturer does not

like them, they may end up dropping out or failing the subject. Jansen and Warren (2023) state that students raised in poverty are particularly susceptible to stressors that undermine school behaviour and performance. For instance, girls exposed to abuse tend to experience mood swings in school, while boys experience a decrease in curiosity, learning and memory (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1.2).

5.3.4.2 Dealing with mental health issues

Lecturers were asked: **How can lecturers deal with students who have mental health issues (depression, anxiety), and are you equipped as a lecturer to deal with such?** They responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“No, I am not equipped. I think they can be referred to the student support office whereby they can be referred back to psychologists or therapists.”*

Lecturer B: *“As lecturers, we are not equipped to deal with students who have mental issues. The only thing that we can do is to refer them to the relevant people.”*

Lecturer C: *“I will take the student to the student support team where the student will get a professional assistant since the team is trained for such a situation.”*

Lecturer D: *“I will approach students with empathy and active listening is key to building trust will create an open dialogue where students feel comfortable sharing their concerns. Engaging parents and guardians in the process creates a more comprehensive support system. Open communication and collaboration with families are key to effectively addressing students’ mental health needs.”*

Lecturer E: *“Yes, because I studied inclusive education. I can deal with such students by teaching them to communicate if he/she has personal problems with people they trust or I can refer a social worker or psychologist to assist them.”*

Lecturer F: *“No, we are not equipped, what we say cannot be enough, we are not trained professionals, refer students to the student support services because they deal with psychology, only student support.”*

Lecturer G: *“Yes, I can offer support and encouragement to the students, give him/her extra time to complete assignments, and refer them to the student support officer so that they can arrange a psychologist to help them to cope with the situation.”*

Lecturers believe they are capable of handling mental health issues and often suggest that students seek help from professionals. They also believe they can support students by showing empathy, actively listening, communicating effectively, and providing encouragement. Eloff, O’Neil and Kanengoni (2022) support this perspective by stating that positive relationships, where a person feels socially interconnected, engaged and supported, can reduce depression, improve overall health, and promote healthy behaviours (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7).

Students want to feel seen and heard, so lecturers need to try their best to accomplish that. In the researcher’s opinion, a lecturer should always aim to identify the root of the problem, understand student’s needs, determine what they require, and figure out the best way to support them. The researcher suggests that an onsite campus psychologist should be available. This way, lecturers can quickly refer students after ascertaining their needs, allowing them to receive help promptly without being transferred to someone off campus.

5.3.4.3 Absenteeism

Lecturers were asked: **What are the causes of absenteeism at the college? In the problems you mentioned, what can you do as a lecturer to make sure that students attend your class or come to college?** They responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Lack of transport fees.*

Lack of motivation- as lecturers you can motivate them, coming to school can change their future. Peer pressure.”

Lecturer B: *“Students fail- as a lecturer, I will control my register and monitor the students.”*

Lecturer C: *“Most students tend to lose interest in education due to the strategies colleges are using. We are dealing with the new generation and we are living in the 4th industrial revolution, so old teaching strategies are no longer suitable for our students. So as a lecturer, I will do the best I can to teach using new teaching strategies which include the 4th industrial revolution to draw student’s interest in learning.”*

Lecturer D: *“The students’ absenteeism some contribute which be the family, backgrounds, behavioural issues, as well as the motivational lack also the structural, social and environmental conditions. The lack of interest in study, punishment in schools, the household work or due to peer influence.”*

Lecturer E: *“Lack of control in their attendance register. Strikes due to NSFAS. I can provide students cards for all students to knock in and out. Based on the attendance register a student who will be absent will be unenrolled to the system when he/she has registered to eliminate the number of absenteeism.”*

Lecturer F: *“Pregnancy- give birth, child-headed families, sickness in students, students on drugs.*

As a lecturer, we have to encourage students and emphasise the process of taking care of themselves (drugs/ pregnancy). Make sure they are aware of side effects/ understand risky behaviours.”

Lecturer G: *“Strike, because of NSFAS late funding students, and it affects students because they are unable to attend the classes because they do not have money for transport. The student support officer can capture or submit applications for NSFAS early or the office of NSFAS can place 1 official on the campus to assist the student support officer.”*

Lecturers expressed various opinions on why students are absent from college. Some believe that transportation costs are the main issue, while others think that student absenteeism is due to a lack of control over attendance registers. Additionally, some lecturers believe that students lose interest in their studies, while others point to issues with NSFAS funding leading to student protests. Lack of structure, pregnancy, drug use, illness, and students being heads of their families are also cited as reasons for absenteeism. All of these points are valid, as noted by Kasita (2019), who indicates that individual factors such as drug and alcohol abuse, poor health, family responsibilities, pregnancy and poverty can contribute to non-attendance (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.4).

In the researcher’s opinion, the college or campus should seek sponsors or donations from the community to assist students, as NSFAS funds can sometimes be problematic or insufficient, and having additional funds available for special cases would be beneficial. HODs should ensure they monitor class attendance and make it clear to students that they are expected to

attend classes. The college should establish a policy regarding absenteeism, outlining consequences for students who are absent more than five times in a week. This will help discourage students from skipping classes and encourage them to communicate to their lecturers if they are unable to attend.

5.3.4.4 Possible reasons for student dropout

Campus managers were asked: **What do you think are possible causes of student dropout in TVET colleges?** They responded as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Delays in NSFAS payments would be the primary problem. They lack the money to visit the university. Their funds are insufficient to cover lodging.”*

Campus Manager B: *“The contributing factors in the TVET dropout might be the lack of financial and psychosocial support by the college and community. Students also lack motivation when they see unemployed graduates.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Financial problems- Delayed funding from NSFAS to the neediest students. Unattended psychosocial issues like anxiety, depression. Wrong career choice.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Parents are not supportive of their children regarding their college work. Money or financial constraints, students come from different backgrounds some students come from poor families. Lack of knowledge from students, as to which programmes to choose from and later drop out because the course is difficult for them. Transport is an issue to most of the students, if one does not have the funds to come to college. NSFAS is not provided in time to the students. The aim of the students is not learning, some of the students want the NSFAS money, and after receiving they then decide to drop out. Some of the students get pregnant then they drop out. Lack of motivation is a serious issue with our students, if not motivated they drop out.”*

Campus managers seem to share the same sentiments that NSFAS or financial issues are the main cause of dropouts. However, they also mention that parents are not supportive of students, with other factors including psychosocial issues, poor backgrounds, and wrong career choices. Edwards (2023) agrees with this and states that financial concerns, personal or family difficulties, academic stress, emotional challenges, and unhealthy home environments are the primary causes of dropouts (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.8).

In the researcher's opinion, parents who did not attend higher education institutions themselves may find it challenging to support their children in their education. This lack of understanding may lead to a situation where parents do not address their children's absences from class, ultimately resulting in their children dropping out. Students from low-income backgrounds often lack the funds for transportation – and if they do have money, they are likely to prioritise groceries for their households over paying for transportation to get to school. Therefore, the college should provide on-campus housing for these students. Most students lack sufficient information about TVET colleges, leading them to often choose the wrong course or programme. Therefore, when potential students come to campus to apply, programmes should be clearly explained to them. McLaughlin (2013) identifies travelling distances, financial constraints, workload challenges, and unrealistic expectations of the programme as some of the reasons for poor academic performance and high dropout rates among students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.8).

The HODs were asked the same question: **What do you think are possible causes of student dropout in TVET colleges?** They responded as follows:

HOD A: *“Usually when they come in the first year, they will all get the financial support from NSFAS. But as they progress because NSFAS is based on performance, they need to pass their subject. So when you realise that the student is normal and financially supported, you'll find that when it starts with attending maybe once or twice a week. If you check the resume to say I do not have transport, I do not have money for transport. I cannot. I cannot afford to stay like that. When there is or on the accommodation that they are providing, so just I'm just saying this was because it's the financial age that we have actually that's the financial reasons like they cannot afford any more because they are coming from that poor background. So if they are not financially supported they drop out. Another thing is poor programme fit. You should not apply in January. They'll come and look, for example, they want your office admin to find that there is no space. They take any programme which they do not want. So when they realise that I'm not fit for this programme and I'm not interested in the skills, they will drop out. Yes, we have foundational skills, for example, all you'll find is students just because they have meds, they go for, what can I say for mechanical engineering to make an example, you'll find that they're scared, which can be done in high school, that student does not have that foundation. So that weak foundation, will drive them to network, pass some of the subjects, and at the end, they'll have to carry more subjects to the next level. This will make them drop out. Another*

thing which I cannot try to mention ineffective teaching methods from the lecturers. We might not realise that, but it plays a crucial role. It starts with a student bunking class, maybe for example, I'm not attending that class. The Lecturer's not teaching us well and everything at the end of the day, the student is going to drop out. Why? Because they failed. If they fail the subject, they cannot progress. If they cannot progress, they drop out. Some of which I just believe is something that I'm thinking out loud is poor mental health. Students with threats and depression, anxieties and all those personal problems that they have. It does lead them to drop out because they cannot cope in class; they cannot cope with academics. So that will help them to drop out. So lastly, what I can mention is a poor learning environment student tend to compare their institution with others. If they find that, ah, this is pointless, this is a poor environment. While this TVET college in Johannesburg is performing well, they're having everything. Why am I continuing here? Let me go to Whitby for example, to get a better facility where I can play with my college so the poor learning environment can contribute to dropouts because they want to learn in a better environment.”

HOD B: *“Wrong career choice- there is no career guidance, they want to register for any course, the half way they realise it is not the course they want.”*

Financial support- depend on NSFAS, if there is no NSFAS they will drop out. Challenges college do not offer support, then student dropouts. No psychologist at the campus level. Motivation (lack of employment because of previous students). Academic support- does not get any form of support.”

HOD C: *“I think lack of motivation/ struggling with the content. Finding out that they make it, he/she drops out, and NSFAS does not cover them (financial concerns) and the wrong choice of programme. Poor discipline.”*

HOD D: *“Financial challenges- some students are bread winners at home, they cannot balance also being students. Accommodation/ transport affects them a lot.”*

HOD E: *“Poor preparedness and lack of motivation*

Some students with mentality discipline and motivation, which affects their concentration to their studying. Academic challenges different in the content and workload can lead to frustration and disengagement. Choosing the wrong programme- students who do not select programmes that align with their interests or activities may find it hard to stay engaged. Family

concerns- family difficulties may force students to abandon their studies. Personal and family problems- health challenges and family responsibilities. Access to campus.”

HOD F: *“Financial problems, too much work to do and part-time jobs put stress on school work.”*

HOD G: *“Late payment NSFAS, and other financial aid schemes. Poor career guidance. Insufficient screening tests for placing students in relevant programmes that match their personality.”*

The HODs all agree and share the same sentiments as the campus managers that funds are the main issue among students at TVET colleges. They further added that poor preparedness from the students and a lack of motivation are also contributing factors. Academic challenges, poor discipline, family responsibilities and poor career choices were also mentioned.

Students were also asked the same question: **What do you think are the reasons for students dropping out at the college?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“Most of the time not having enough money and NSFAS situation.”*

Student B: *“It can be caused by a lot of challenges that they face such as mental health issues, money, and academic struggles and others can drop out because of peer pressure.”*

Student C: *“The reasons can be financial constraints, academic challenges, personal reasons or mismatch expectations.”*

Student D: *“Reasons for drop out, various factors contribute, including financial constraints personal issues, lack of academic support, work-study balance challenges and feeling disconnected from the college community.”*

Student E: *“Students drop out of college because of personal issues and financial situations, poor time management.”*

Student F: *“Social challenges and lack of motivation.”*

Student G: *“Because other students are struggling with NSFAS, others are funded whilst others are declined so they end up being dropouts.”*

The students agree with the campus managers and HODs regarding the issues of funds. They indicated that they struggle financially, and this affects their academics.

Students were asked to provide solutions by being posed the following question: **How can the college help in avoiding possible student dropout?** They responded as follows:

Student A: *“I think to have time and communicate about NSFAS early and assist/ provide financial support.”*

Student B: *“The college can help students by providing academic support promoting mental health and wellness and also helping with financial struggles.”*

Student C: *“By offering financial assistance, work-study programmes to alleviate financial burdens and enable students to continue their education, implementing mentorship programmes to offer guidance, support and encouragement.”*

Student D: *“Preventing dropout, the college can help by offering financial aid, counselling, mentorship, academic support, flexible scheduling and fostering a supportive campus environment.”*

Student E: *“Provide financial assistance, personal support and leadership development opportunities.”*

Student F: *“They need to motivate the students all the time and create a supportive environment that encourages students.”*

Student G: *“To help students with accommodation and provide college bus for transport.”*

Students believe that most issues stem from financial constraints. They all agree that if the financial burden is lifted, there will be far fewer dropouts. To address this, the college should provide academic support, motivation, encouraging environments, mentorship, counselling, and flexible schedules.

5.3.5 Theme 5: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Lecturers in Providing Student Support at TVET Colleges

5.3.5.1 Strengths and weaknesses of student support

Lecturers were asked: **What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?** They responded as follows:

Lecturer A: *“Strengths- Students have easy access to the student support office, the officials are helpful and extracurricular activities are done for them to give them a break from their studies.*

Weaknesses- not much follow-ups on student problems (not much is done).”

Lecturer B: *“Strengths- it is to further their studies, to be professionals, to be experts in their field of study.*

Weaknesses- the students cannot take the initiative and study on their own, especially when the lecturer is not around, they depend on lecturers.”

Lecturer C: *“There are lots and lots of strengths and weaknesses in TVET college, to mention a few:*

Strengths: Comprehensive support services whereby, campuses among the college conduct career guidance which will help students choose the correct studying stream based on their subjects. Practical training, whereby the college provides students with different workshops, where they do hands-on activities which are related to their field of study.

Weaknesses: Lack of infrastructure, Ehlanzeni TVET College has several campuses which has fewer classes, which is why those campuses end up having two slot times for starting their classes. Some start at 7:30 am and some at 1:00 pm. That causes poor performance in the college as a result. Since students get to classes in the afternoon tired they lose focus. And some of the periods in the afternoon get disturbed since students who stay far away are on the rash of the transport late. Lack of training for lecturers, as we all know, the more the lecturer enhances their knowledge the more students will perform in their academics.

Technological barriers, at Ehlanzeni TVET College students have limited access to modern technology and the internet. I can say about 90% of students have no access to the internet where they stay. Not talk alone about laptops, they do not have them. So they are not able to familiarise themselves with modern technology”

Lecturer D: *“Strengths- Ehlanzeni TVET College has student support services that assist and guide to apply for bursaries.*

Weaknesses- TVET lecturers are left unsupported with often inadequate, pedagogical skills, lack of industry experience and poor career prospects.”

Lecturer E: *“The strength of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College is that they provide quality education to students which includes practical skills and theoretical skills which will enable students to be easily employed. Provide support of giving students entrepreneurship skills to start their business after completing their field of study or career.”*

Lecturer F: *“Strengths- It can attend to students or referrals from lecturers. If the student is not feeling well, they assist with taking the student to the clinic or hospital. Assist in family issues, able to provide sanitary to students. Engage with students, making them a priority.*

Weaknesses- Sometimes, the managers lack a sense of urgency. We do not have our facilities, especially clinics at the campuses. Pregnancy issues, the process of taking students to hospitals/ clinics. Sick students, the student support does not sit down with them to ask their problems. We rely on higher education.”

Lecturer G: *“The strength of student support I think is that they quickly attend to students who have problems, I remember last year I had a student who had problems of being robbed and I referred her to the student support office and managed to quickly help her.*

Their weaknesses are that they cannot plan for students' NSFAS early, the students have to first fight or strike before they can have what they need.”

Lecturers had varying opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of student support at the college. They agree on the weaknesses that lecturers lack training and are left unsupported. However, they feel that students are promptly attended to and referral forms are used. Lecturers highlighted strengths such as assisting in career guidance, providing practical training, giving students access to student support, and offering quality education. However, they also identified issues with student support. Lecturers noted a lack of infrastructure and mentioned that there is no follow-up conducted after students seek their help. They also pointed out that student support lacks a sense of urgency. These weaknesses should be addressed with management to enhance the overall student support at the college.

Campus managers were asked the same question: **What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?** They responded as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“There’s still a lot to be done. More weaknesses than strengths. College concentrates more on other activities (sports, art & culture) leaving behind academic support. We do not have peer educators, or part-time students (who need help). Students who do not have educational tours but have money for sports. We need to set our priorities in the college. Set attendance. We do not have enforced policies (Implement & monitor). We need to implement student support policies.”*

Campus Manager B: *“Strength: Extra-curricular activities Weakness: Academic and Exit Support and irrelevant academic groups”*

Campus Manager C: *“Strength: High level of confidentiality, Good communication and interpersonal skills, and people orientated (user friendly)*

Weakness: Lack of information to some fields of study within the campus, and incompetence.”

Campus Manager D: *“Weaknesses- Lack of private rooms for one-on-one sessions with students. Issues with equipment (Computers/ printers). No proper furniture in their offices.*

Strengths- Qualifies for the position, attends to students quickly.”

Campus managers expressed various opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of student support. They believe that there is much that needs to be done. Campus managers stated that the colleges focus more on sports than on academic issues, and further indicated that student policies must be implemented. Some campus managers think the strength lies in extracurricular activities, while others do not agree with this. Campus managers stated that SSS prioritise confidentiality, with the main weakness being the lack of information in certain fields of study. Additionally, they mentioned a shortage of private rooms, but highlighted the strength of prompt student assistance. Campus managers also discussed academic groups that may not be beneficial. According to CrunchGrade (2023), if academic support groups are not supervised by a lecturer or no tutor is allocated, it may lead to discussions about unrelated topics. Once given the freedom to start a task or project, the inevitable urge to chat about plans for the weekend, or the interesting stories someone heard about creeps in. The amount of time spent on irrelevant topics is substantial when examined closely (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.11). The researcher believes that all points brought up by the campus managers are valid, and any weaknesses should be addressed with strategies.

The HODs were asked: **What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?** They responded as follows:

HOD A: *“Our Student Support office, but from what I have observed is there like being proactive. Most of the time, it depends. In the college, they expect lecturers to refer students to them after realising maybe the problem and so on, which I believe is something that can be done during registration to say that we offer support on this.*

A platform to come in two days and being like the student support to say that we need to follow up on students do not wait for the lecturers because, with the workload that they have, it can sometimes leave their mind not realising that students are lacking behind they need to offer that free support to help students do the right thing, help them to say that you can overcome these challenges by doing this and this. So offering them productive support and. That's a corrective approach that can solve a lot of things. So another thing is to take the holistic approach. We must then separate financially academics and everything. Let's deal with the student as a whole to say that once a student registers, these are the services that we need to make certain that the student is taken care of. Let's give them personal development and support. Let's check if students are getting in as fast. We do not have to wait for the student to come crying to say that we are not getting it. Let it be something that is lecturers. As a college, we are doing. To say that we need to look at these things that make our students act on or to act earlier before we find problems and so on. So maybe what I can say is that the weakness that we are that I'm identifying is the limited information available. So students, if we look at our approach it is like, what do we call this document that we usually give them at the beginning of the year? The student's support document. It does not highlight all the services like psychologically, and socially, they will tell them ongoing during the year. So the limited information is one of the weaknesses that we have because sometimes students are not even aware of some of the services we are offering. So we need to make our information available to them on social media. They serve them in corridors less students. Be aware that if I have a problem, I do not have to die inside. I can approach these offices if I have a problem with academic issues, where do I get assistance? Another thing, it is a follow-up support. We refer students, but we do not even know. What was the exact information that was given to the student? How was the student's health? How is the student coping after that? Because when students are struggling with student support, we need to make sure that the student that we are helping now the student is OK. So we need to make sure that students are getting that help.

Another thing that I think it is a weakness to us is having one student support officer dealing with student problems, and financial problems. Social challenges and everything. So if a health and so on, if you can. Maybe 1% deal with a psychologist for example being a different person, having a nurse to deal with health issues, and having a student support officer dealing with academic issues. So if you can help different. Offices, insurance, and support will deal with different issues for students will help us to bring better understanding and might assist a lot of our students because currently you have a social issue. You go to student support, you have financial. In the end, you will find that students are striking because some of the issues are not attended to, not because the students cannot, like the Student Support Office, I cannot assist them, but because it is a heavy load. They need to assist each other. Yes, that is my take to say that if we can have different students approach officers within the student support services, it might assist their college.”

HOD B: *“Strengths- student support has entry assessment writing CAP test, assist in identifying challenges. Accessibility of student support. Hand-in-hand relationship with student support and student representative council.*

Weakness- Gap in lecturing staff and student support, they need to work hand in hand. Process of referrals (lecturers do not know that they must refer students). Induction/orientation, show lecturers what is the purpose of student support.”

HOD C: *“Strengths- Pre-entry student support- Ehlanzeni TVET College provides pre-entry student support to assist students in making informed study choices. This includes career counselling, selection and placement tests, orientation programmes and financial aid. Career counselling- students receive guidance on career choices, ensuring they have full information and are comfortable with their chosen choices. Selection and placements tests- these tests help determine students’ strengths and weaknesses, aiding in identifying potential challenges during their studies. Orientation programmes- students become familiar with college services, preparing them for the academic year. Financial aid (NSFAS) - the college assists students in applying for financial aid to cover tuition fees, accommodation, and food. Code of Conduct- students are informed about college rules, including time. Weaknesses- Selection and placement tests- are without the true reflection of what course is supposed to be taken by the students (it is basic calculation and English).”*

HOD D: *“Strengths- we have a referral system for students, we have peer educators at the college, they assist a lot. We have access/ partnership with Higher Health. Weaknesses- Lack of awareness from students, they do not use the services. If a student is referred, he/she feels somehow/ or that student support has a certain stigma. Some services are periodical, not available all the time (higher health maybe comes once a year).”*

HOD E: *“Strengths- Pre-entry student career counselling, selection tests. Practical aid-colleges help students apply for NSFAS to cover tuition fees, accommodation and food for their students. Code of conduct- clear guidance ensures students have good behaviour, timekeeping and respect for others. Weaknesses- Resources constraints- limited resources may affect the quality and availability of student support services. Academic preparedness- some students may lack adequate academic preparation, which impacts their success. Industry partnership-TVET programmes require partnerships with industry for practical training and employment opportunities.”*

HOD F: *“Strengths- students are quickly attended to in case of ill-health at the college.”*

Weaknesses- they cannot attend NSFAS issues with urgency.”

HOD G: *“Weakness- Student support services- student ratio is too much, at our campus it is 1300 students to 1 student support officer, and student support services at the campus level are understaffed. Strengths- SSS has an office well equipped with services aimed at supporting students’ services holistically.”*

The HODs generally agree on the strengths of student support, including pre-entry student support, career counselling, selection and placement tests, orientation programme, NSFAS assistance, and the code of conduct. However, they had differing opinions on the weaknesses, with some of them mentioning resources, academic preparedness, and industry partnerships. The high rate of student non-performance is closely linked to an increased dropout percentage, which is a significant challenge in higher education (Du Plessis & Gerber, 2012) (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7.5). This therefore suggests that students were not academically prepared. On the other hand, HODs agree on the strengths of student support, namely, being well equipped, attending to students promptly, and having referrals in place. The weaknesses identified include being understaffed, an inability to attend to all students, and a lack of awareness from students who do not utilise the services.

HODs believe student support is proactive and expects lecturers to make referrals. They also feel that all problems should be made known during registration. Additionally, they discussed the importance of writing CAP tests to assist in identifying challenges. Wistow (2023) explains that student advisers should take responsibility for proactive, student-led support rather than waiting for students to experience difficulties before offering help. This includes restructuring career advice, embedding workplace skills in each programme and building peer support networks (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.15). The researcher believes that all shortcomings should be considered, and strategies should be developed to address these deficiencies.

5.3.6 Theme 6: Support of College Management and Stakeholders in Student Support Services

5.3.6.1 Support from college and stakeholders

Lecturers, campus managers and HODs were asked the same question: **How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?** Their responses were as follows:

Lecturer A: *“By providing support and training for lecturers as lecturers are the ones who have close contact with the students.”*

Lecturer B: *“By providing training and provide relevant resources that can be used in class.”*

Lecturer C: *“By providing them with enough resources, provide them with training based on their area of specialisation and the content they deliver. And also provide with enough infrastructure.”*

Lecturer D: *“College management and stakeholders can support lecturers in student support service by providing adequate training and resources to help them address the diverse needs of students effectively. They can also encourage collaboration among lecturers, counsellors and other support staff to better assist students. Also creating a supportive work environment and recognising the importance of lecturers’ involvement in students’ support can contribute to the overall success in this area, the college must prioritise students’ support and the necessary support to lecturers to ensure students’ success.”*

Lecturer E: *“By engaging lecturers and students to organisations who can hand in hand them to provide practical experience on programmes that students learn in them. Get organisations that can teach students about the importance of the courses they have enrolled in them. Bring practical training for students to practice, e.g., sim[ulation] centre where business students*

will practice for their field work. Workshops for engineering students to practice their field of work. Giving proper training to lecturers for their support.”

Lecturer F: *“They can help with building facilities and clinics. Have our psychologist, and social workers at the campus.”*

Lecturer G: *“By offering the necessary training for the lecturers, e.g., wellness, academic training so that they will be able to handle any situation they are facing with students.”*

Lecturers believe that providing support and training to lecturers is necessary. They also feel that resources should be provided to them. Additionally, they suggest that organisations could educate students on the importance of the courses they have enrolled in. The researcher agrees that the opinions of lecturers should be considered and that they should receive support. According to Ndivhuwo, Sundani and Mamokhere (2021), instructors should be given opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues and support each other in building positive relationships with students (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.15).

Campus managers responded to the same question – **How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?** – as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Implementation of policies (This is key) student code of conduct must be implemented. Lecturers will perform if a student code of conduct is implemented. Lecturers cannot discipline students, so lecturers must be supported to use the student support code of conduct. If lecturers want to go the extra mile, how can lecturers be assisted that students come to class.”*

Campus Manager B: *“They can support by providing proper basic training on counselling to all lecturing staff members of the college.”*

Campus Manager C: *“By meeting the needs of the lecturers e.g. equal pay for the equal job done, equip them with enough adequate resources to conduct their duties effectively. Employ enough staff according to the number of classes or student needs, as to avoid overloading them with more work that they cannot perform.”*

Campus Manager D: *“Provide practicum centres for all practicals at the college. Projectors in all classrooms save time for writing. Monitor students to come to class for teaching and learning to go on. Time management/ time for periods must be arranged to suit all subjects.”*

It is apparent that campus managers have thoroughly considered the needs of the campuses, and are fully aware of the problems and the strategies that can be implemented to address them. Campus managers outlined different strategies to support students, including implementing policies and a student code of conduct to be enforced by lecturers. They also emphasised the importance of providing support and training to all lecturers, meeting their needs, and establishing practicum centres for practicals at the college.

It is recommended that campus managers should come together to share strategies that can benefit both lecturers and the college as a whole. El Sherbiny (2019) suggests that campus managers should understand that professional development is crucial for improving the quality of lecturing. Therefore, they must carefully plan for these meetings. Professional development should be intentional and involve communication, participation, collective knowledge, a focus on student learning, ongoing development, and be analytic and reflective (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.12).

When asked the same question – **How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?** – the HODs responded as follows:

HOD A: *“Resource allocation.*

I think it is the duty to of the college management to make sure that they empower lecturers to provide effective support services, for example, financial support, the allocation of budget for professional development training, mental health awareness, teaching resources and everything, it lies within the college management. So if they can be able to allocate those resources financially, it will assist in dedicated time. The management is most of the time within their offices. So going to class and seeing how things are going will help them to see how they allocate time to lecture us. The schedules that they need to deal with the students to support them, might assist them in saying let's go get to the drawing board. They need enough time to teach and the students need support from TVET colleges we are mostly focusing on practicals. Let's give lecturers practical lectures for theory. Time while the lecturers are not heavily loaded with many things to do. Another thing is technology and tools. The coalition needs to invest in technology and we cannot say we are in the fire. Our era, like the Fourth Industrial Revolution era. Why we do not have enough technology? For example, we are expecting Australians to use online communication platforms, learning management systems, and student support features within the website. Where do they get that data? So it is something within the

management and stakeholders to say that let's provide students with these tools. Are they needed in order to access? Teaching and learning so that they can learn easier. Another thing is collaboration with support staff. We need to offer communication and collaboration between lecturers and student support staff. Let it not be a burden of a lecturer to make sure that student's well-being is recognised. Let other staff support them by being advisors, counsellors, counsellors, and career advisors because currently you become a lecturer. You have to provide all those services. In stages, I believe that the management has to support them through award ceremonies, give them something that will encourage the students, recognise them, and make them feel like they need to perform better because the college is doing something for us. The college is giving us something great. I'm going to get that award. Another thing is I'm not sure when I'll come to study the alumni support. We need our students to come back and be ambassadors. Mental other students say that this one of our students, they have to give back. What I've learned is that the NSFAS that they're getting the college in TVET colleges. They're not paying it back. So the alumni have to come back to say that the college helped me this far. They were assisting us on how to learn even though it was difficult for us. So bringing the cultivating back like bringing back to the college, they just need to give back. So this needs to be cultivated through the alumni programme that you can create as a college. So it is not within the shoulders of the lecturers but within the management. So these are these are these are some of the things that the management can assist with.”

HOD B: *“True training- lecturers do not know how to handle students with disability. Importance of induction, build a relationship with student support services.”*

HOD C: *“By giving/ identifying skills needed or providing proper training to all lecturers.”*

HOD D: *“Training and workshops for lecturers. Services must be available at all times at the college.”*

HOD E: *“Collaboration and communication- Foster open communication channels between leaders, students support practitioners and management. Regular meetings or workshops can facilitate collaboration and sharing of insights. Training and professional development Provide training sessions for leaders on student support strategies, mental health awareness and effective communication. Encourage ongoing professional development to keep lecturers' improved best practices. Resource allocation- Allocate resources (technology) to enhance student support services. Ensure that leaders have access to the necessary tools and materials*

for supplying student officers. Student referral systems - Establish clear referral pathways for lecturers to connect students with appropriate student services (counselling, disability services). Train leaders on how to identify students in need and refer them appropriately. Recognition and appreciation- Acknowledge the effects of lecturers in supporting students. Celebrate their contributions through awards, recognition events, or other forms of appreciation. Data-impact decision-making- Collect and analyse data on student's needs, challenges and success rates. Use this information to inform decisions related to student support services and assist students accordingly.”

HOD F: *“They can ask lecturers what they need and take it from there.”*

HOD G: *“Provide workshop capacity capacity-building workshop where student support is discussed, with a purpose for very relevant stakeholders to understand their role.”*

The HODs have various methods for how management and stakeholders can support lecturers. HODs believe that lecturers should participate in training, workshops and collaborations for effective communication. Buthelezi, Mhlongo and Msweli (2021) explain that HODs have a crucial responsibility to empower lecturers to achieve professional maturity, which can only be reached through professional development. Professional development is the cornerstone of college improvement (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.13). HODs emphasised the importance of providing resources to lecturers. The researcher suggests that all campuses or colleges should collaborate and share strategies to better support students.

In the researcher's view, the college should organise training for lecturers. When lecturers are improved, they are more likely to enhance their subjects, leading to improved academic performance. Providing resources is crucial, as without resources they may lack the motivation to teach effectively. However, when resources are readily available, they are more likely to strive for excellence in their subjects.

5.3.6.2 Process of teaching and learning

The researcher posed this question to the lecturers: **How is the process of teaching and learning?** They responded as follows:

LECTURER A: *“It is effective and I love it because I believe that students can change their situations from bad to good.”*

Fine and challenging, so many issues at the college level, so much absenteeism, lack of motivation, and resources. If we do not look at that we can change the lives of a black child.”

LECTURER B: *“The process of teaching and learning is too slow due to the number of protests from the community and the students.”*

LECTURER C: *“The process of teaching and learning practically involves the transfer of information, knowledge and skills from a lecturer or a facilitator to students. It also involves different teaching strategies, different methods of delivering lessons in the classroom.”*

LECTURER D: *“The are some aspects of the teaching and learning process*

Design- these are all types of different learners like auditory students, visual learners, and likewise. It includes activities, teaching aids, and likewise so that efficiency can be maximised. Identifying Topics- The students should have certain previous knowledge and when some new concepts are introduced to them in relation to the previous knowledge that they have. It makes them easier for them to understand.

Presentation- The delivery of the topic must be clear and precise. The way that the lecturer presents the topic plays an important role for students to understand, merely reading the textbook or asking the students to read. Assessment- To understand how much students have learned and whether the design and presentation of concepts are working. Reflection- It is important to reflect and alter the course design topic or style of delivery accordingly. The lecturer learning to be students and learn from them. Happy learning happy teaching.”

LECTURER E: *“Students attend classes from 7:30 to 14:10 Monday to Friday. The lecturer teaches students practical work and uses the E-learning methods.”*

LECTURER F: *“The process of teaching and learning is good, but it is disturbed by NSFAS Issues which results in student protests. It makes it difficult for lecturers to teach students.”*

LECTURER G: *“The teaching–learning process is the knowledge, strategies processes and behaviour which lead to good student outcomes. Effective lecturers have a positive impact on their students and use their expertise to improve learning. Teaching methods help students to master the content of the course, and learn how to apply the content in particular contexts”.*

Lecturers stated that the process of teaching and learning is effective, but the issue of NSFAS is a problem that causes numerous strikes on the campuses. They explained the process of teaching and learning as well as how classes are conducted on campus. The researcher recommends that the issue with NSFAS should be addressed promptly, and students should be funded as soon as possible to prevent strikes.

The researcher believes that addressing NSFAS issues early can help prevent strikes. The college should hire more staff for SSS, as that is where the problem lies. One person cannot handle all student-related or NSFAS issues alone. Wistow (2023) suggests that colleges can revolutionise student support by hiring enthusiastic student success advisers (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10).

5.3.6.3 Strategies for improving student support

Both campus managers and HODs were asked the same question: **What strategies can you suggest for the improvement of student support in general?** The campus managers responded as follows:

Campus manager A: *“Have proper student support unit (let all the units that are supposed to be in student support be present). Full vacant posts (have a proper unit that deals with career guidance, and on-course support for students.) We do not have a clinic, if not someone who deals with counselling, or social workers for challenges (home/ personal, drugs, alcohol). Posts must be filled, have track of all students, placement officers (have all units in place in improving student support), have peer educators to support academic, workshop assistants to help aid students.”*

Campus Manager B: *“Strategies aimed at improving student support involve a flexible approach that addresses academic, emotional, social, and financial needs.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Involve lecturers in every step so they know what to do. Employ more staff in student support services”*

Campus Manager D: *“Students must participate in sports so that they refresh their minds, and they will be active and concentrate in class. That will also assist them in their career choice. We need to organise work-based experiences for the students, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. We must have monitoring tools to monitor lecturers to make sure they do justice to the students.”*

All campus managers are aware of what needs to be done to improve the college and how to do it. They came up with various strategies aimed at bettering the institution, noting that it is important for campus managers to collaborate and share ideas on how to improve the college. They believe that involving lecturers in every step of the process is crucial. Researchers such as Ndivhuwo, Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) concur, stating that instructors should have opportunities to interact with colleagues, support each other in building strong relationships with students, and reflect on both successes and challenges in their efforts (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10).

Campus managers spoke about peer tutoring. In the researcher's opinion, this is an excellent idea because students will be able to learn from each other and may come up with better strategies for studying. Students are more likely to listen to their peers because they may feel they understand them better. The DHET (2020) states that students who excel in a specific subject are offered incentives to tutor their peers, under the supervision and mentorship of a lecturer teaching that particular programme or an academic support officer. Former alumni who excelled in certain subjects may also be approached or utilised for tutoring (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10).

HODs responded to the same question – **What strategies can you suggest for the improvement of student support in general?** – as follows:

HOD A: *“Number one, who can look at academic support? Let's give them tutoring services. Let's give them relevant workshops.*

Let's provide libraries. Unfortunately, our campus does not even have a library, so students need that as part of academic support. So let's give them financial support too. We're starting programmes, something that will assist them in both their backgrounds. To say that we need this to improve our students. Looking at mental health and wellness support: We need to provide access because we can talk about this, but is it accessible? We need to provide access to counsellors, therapists, and workshops on stress management and mental health. Sometimes we focus on the lecturers, forgetting that the student is also faced with those challenges where they need access to all the services. So we cannot only talk about them, but we need to provide access to those services Social support: Let's help them help that sense of belonging as I belong to a college and I'm proud mentorship programmes that you will help them like understand their diverse in their needs because they come like from different backgrounds, they have

different needs. So we need to provide social support. And lastly, I can say we need to provide career support. And let's assist them with career counselling internship opportunities. Let there be a database that provides internship opportunities for students. Let no student come out and look for their internship, leadership and so on. Let's have it. That happens of them to say that we are going to place them actually as a college. We need to be ready for the students before they complete so that after college it will encourage other people to come to college to say that we know that after that we are also going to get. Experience. Remember today they cannot hire you without experience, so those internship programmes that that career support will assist them. How to write your relevant CV, how can one behave in an interview? Interview skills we need to support them before they leave the college. Another thing that you can look at, we can look at technology integration support as students do understand that we are living technological era, but they do not know how to utilise it for their academic success. So we need to support them technologically and the part of integration. Lastly, that I can mention, we need to also give them this culturally responsive support we cannot have students who do not understand the diversity of their backgrounds and the experience that they need to go back looking at now, we are looking at creating TVET colleges, craning our economy, sustainability. Let's give them that responsive support to say that you are not only responsible for academic aspects like success, but you also have that responsibility back to the Community. Let's support them also on there so that they understand as a student what to do after this.”

HOD B: *“Training- Building of relationship between different stakeholders. Visibility.”*

HOD C: *“There must be awareness – all employees must know what is expected from them to support students provided with proper training.”*

HOD D: *“The issues of confidentiality and privacy, what happens in student support should not be public knowledge. Students should be educated about services provided by the student support services. Lecturers should be equipped with knowledge and skills of student support services.”*

HOD E: *“Academic support, accommodation and counselling, progress that promotes campus movement, career counselling to explore motivation and skills, Campus health care services, Networking and events, student counsellors, workshops.”*

HOD F: *“Collective working. Hire a dedicated student advisor. Restructuring student advice.”*

HOD G: *“Put in place early alert systems in identifying students with learning problems that will tailor support to students with individual needs. Various channels of support, e.g., WhatsApp, email, etc. Staff training. Engage parents and guardians.”*

It is evident from the responses given that HODs have many ideas and are eager to share them with anyone willing to listen. HODs expressed the importance of working together, hiring student advisors, and restructuring student advice. They clarified the need for implementing alert systems that can identify when a student requires support, providing staff training, and agreed on the importance of training. One HOD mentioned that information about student support should be shared with others, and emphasised the role of libraries and counselling on campus. The researcher believes that counselling services are essential on all campuses, as students come from diverse backgrounds with various issues, and may require someone to talk to. Mental health issues among students are attributed to psychological, biological and environmental factors (Mohd Shafiee & Mutalib, 2020). Therefore, organisations should be able to recognise and address the issues impacting students’ mental well-being (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10). The researcher recommends implementing these strategies to support students.

5.3.6.4 Support provided to lecturers by campus managers and HODs

Participants were asked: **What can a campus manager/HOD do to support lecturers?** They responded as follows:

Campus Manager A: *“Give support to lecturers if they have challenges with students (implement student code of conduct). We need to improve the code of conduct. If lecturers organise extra- classes, the college management team must assist in making sure students come to class (issues of funds) and make students attend. Lecturers should be compensated (funds to the college). Understand the lecturer’s challenges, and have sessions with lecturers, supervisors, and campus managers to find out what they need/ want to be supported. What gadgets should be available to lecturers (because we have 4IR at the college? Award lecturers if they have performed well.”*

Campus Manager B: *“They can support by providing a conducive working environment, taking care of the lecturer's well-being, providing teaching and learning resources and limiting the number of students per class to a maximum of 30.”*

Campus Manager C: *“Arrange workshops/ Seminars to enhance their knowledge and studies, arrange Wellness Programmes for them, provide lecturers with adequate resources for them to give good quality work”*

Campus Manager D: *“Firstly, organise training for lecturers at least once per semester, also encourage lecturers to study/ do professional development in that way they will deliver fruitful content to the students. Lecturers are going through the most, so the campus must organise wellness campaigns for the lecturers, and also get financial advisors to advise lecturers. We must set targets for lecturers at the beginning of the year, and if one achieves the target rewards must be given to that particular lecturer.”*

All campus managers raised similar points, indicating that providing support to lecturers can be made easier if they all agree. The researcher suggests that campus managers should implement a lecturer assistance policy that is tailored to the specific needs of each campus or college. This policy should be reviewed annually to account for the changing demographics of students at each campus.

When asked the same question – **What can a campus manager/HOD do to support lecturers?** – the HODs replied as follows:

HOD A: *“Resource allocation. Like them, they have to provide adequate. Like enough resources to lecture us so that they can be able to do their work without stress, and be able to offer subjects without any challenges. Workload management. As a head of department, we just need to be realistic about teaching loads. We need to allow lecturers to have time for lesson planning to have time for research to also have time to support students. During activities and so on, because currently, lecturers have that time to go to class, after that 2 minutes is fine. When students come it is like I'm busy. So we need as leaders to look at the workload that lecturers have. So financial supports financial resource support. We need to secure funding for professional development, looking at the opportunities, when can you take lecturers to workshops? How does this lecture I need like support? What has changed in the industry at their conferences that need this lecture to go through so that they can improve their performance training programmes that are related to methodologies, subject matter expertise, and technology integration? We are looking at a technological era. How can we assist lecturers in integrating technology into their lessons to make them innovate? No students now have abortion studies in class. You give them that theory. It is not working for them. What they're*

expecting, they want to be engaging. They want technology to play a part, in a normal classroom, like a classroom size, looking at how the lecturer can manage a classroom like the classroom with the number of students; do we have, for example, in a computer class? If I have 30 students, does the lecturer have also 30 computers because the class needs to be managed effectively? Resources: So another thing is a campus manager, HOD we can give them teaching assistance. Let's help. Let us have support groups for lecturers. How can we help each other improve? How can we help each other with administrative work? How do you offer that subject? So we need to give them that teaching assistance. So something that I like the most, it is awards and appreciation.

An employee is a performing employee. When people are happy, they can work. So as a department, we need to create that environment where people are appreciated, where people are aware that it does not always have to be like monetary to say we're doing a great job or it encourages someone to wake up in the morning to say that I am having an impact out there and people do see it and I'm not expecting a colleague to see it. But the managers, the people I'm reporting to, they recognise my work. It helps lecturers to wake up in the morning.

Without fulfilling me to say that I'm doing something better and I am recognised.

So performance reviews like giving that support to say that. How are you performing? Like being transparent and fair, this is what you are doing right? And your knowledge in this area is excellent. This is where we can support you. These other research facilities that you can offer, we need to review the performance of lecturers and make sure that we support them not just to say that you're failing students.

Complaining and giving that negative attitude, but performance reviews for the sake of improvement, will assist lecturers in OK mentorship programmes. We must create a partnership in which a lecturer has a unique relationship with the coordinator of the department or the school director so that, if I need assistance, I know where to go and that I have an experienced mentor to help me navigate the programme. I have no supervisor. I have a mentor who will guide me and help me along the way.

So we also need open communication. People who do not talk, usually have stress and lots of things, so transparent communication can assist when we are transparent with lecturers, give them feedback, give them documents, give them curriculum development, give them student

support initiatives and as a leader, you are not expecting lecturers to always come with initiatives, but you can also provide those initiatives and guide them through.

So lastly, I can say a departmental meeting. Usually, people have a lot of things to say. They have lots of complaints, they have lots of tight challenges, so meetings will be easier for them to voice out. Is not a meeting, but we can take it as a discussion meeting. What are the challenges? How can we improve? How can we help you? Those are the meetings that lecturers need so that at the end of the day we know that we'll come out with solutions and it will work. The lecturer it will, it will make the lecturer's work easier which will help the lecturer to support students. Easier, because when the leader is supporting the lecture, the lecturer will make the lecturer's work easier to support the students.”

HOD B: *“Have lecturer's profile/ know lecturers’ qualifications. Helps assist with required training. Access to resources for their subjects. Recognition and lecturers’ performance can motivate them to do more. Give them something beyond their job description (so that they can grow in the skills, and motivate the lecturers to grow.”*

HOD C: *“Firstly, the head of the college must apply different leadership styles, do away with autocratic leadership, be innovative, and expose themselves to new practices.*

Exercise transactional leadership style and transformational leadership style; do away with the autocratic leadership style. Be innovative: exposure to new ideas and practices encourages innovation in teaching methods and curriculum design.”

HOD D: *“Engagement with lecturers to find out their challenges (quarterly meetings), if they can say what they feel or express their challenges they can recommend training for that lecturer.”*

HOD E: *“Acknowledge and normalise feelings, create space for reflection, mentor conversations, and ask what they need.”*

HOD F: *“Do in-service training for lecturers.”*

HOD G: *“Avail and engage with students more often and ensure information is shared within students in advance e.g. Induction.”*

The HODs have varying ideas, and all which can be beneficial. It is crucial for HODs to collaborate with campus managers to support lecturers, ultimately leading to better results. The researcher suggests that if each campus documents its ideas and shares them with other campuses, it could prove highly advantageous. This is because other campuses have unique perspectives that could be overlooked. Different concepts may also be more effective on certain campuses than on others.

5.4 Presentation of Data Collected Through Document Analysis

The researcher obtained permission from the campus managers to analyse college documents, including class registers, referral forms, student registration forms and class monitoring documents, for thorough document analysis.

5.4.1 Class Registers

All the colleges have class registers. The college lecturers are responsible for controlling the class registers and then submitting them to the supervisors for monitoring. Lecturers expressed concern about high rates of absenteeism at the college, attributing it to the various challenges students face. While lecturers are in charge of the class registers, the researcher noted that they do not always mark registers for every period. Sometimes, they forget, and students end up filling out the registers themselves upon returning to class, as if they had been present, indicating a lack of proper monitoring. This suggests that lecturers do not have enough time to check class registers.

Therefore, the researcher believes that it is crucial to implement stringent monitoring of attendance registers. One suggestion is to design the class registers on a weekly basis so that lecturers can effectively monitor students' attendance. Lecturers should ensure that they attend to the class registers before each class and that they are properly signed. Furthermore, every Friday, the registers should be submitted to supervisors for monitoring student attendance. This is in line with **Lecturer E**, who stated: *"Lack of control in their attendance register... I can provide students cards for all students to knock in and out. Based on the attendance register a student who will be absent will be unenrolled to the system when he/she has registered to eliminate the number of absenteeism."*

5.4.2 Referral Forms

The document analysis accurately reflected the statements by lecturers and campus managers regarding the use of referral forms to direct students facing challenges to SSS. Each college

has its own referral forms in place. These forms play a crucial role in guiding the college on how to address student challenges. For example, as noted by participants:

HOD B: *“Lecturers help in referrals, and work hand in hand with student support services.”*

Lecturer B: *“As lecturers, we are not equipped to deal with students who have mental issues. The only thing that we can do is to refer them to the relevant people.”*

Despite this, some lecturers seem to have overlooked the existence of referral forms. Campus managers should therefore ensure that copies are provided to lecturers to remind them of their existence and importance.

The researcher believes that the referral system is extremely useful, as students with serious issues can thereby be directed to the appropriate resources, whether it be a psychologist or some other type of assistant. This system should be utilised by lecturers as they spend the most time with students and are able to understand their needs. These referral forms should be distributed to lecturers, who must then ensure that they follow through with the necessary actions.

5.4.3 College Registration Forms for Students

Every college has registration forms for students. These forms are used to track which programmes the students are registered for and how often they change programmes. Many students register without career guidance, and when they find the programme too difficult, they end up dropping out. This is a major challenge for the college. The campus managers emphasised the need to provide support to students in terms of career guidance and pre-entry expectations at the college to reduce dropouts. These findings are supported by the interview responses from participants. For example:

Campus Manager B: *“The lecturers within the campus play a huge role. They are indeed the loco-parentis for the students. Their responsibilities include, amongst others, the following: Marketing and Recruitment, Career Guidance, Registration, Lecturing, Academic Support as well as Moral Support.”*

HOD B: *“Wrong career choice- there is no career guidance, they want to register for any course, then halfway they realise it is not the course they want.*

Financial support- depend on NSFAS, if there is no NSFAS they will drop out. Challenges- [if the] college do not offer support, then student dropouts. No psychologist at the campus level.

Motivation (lack of employment because of previous students). Academic support- does not get any form of support.”

Therefore, the college needs to organise campaigns and explain all the programmes available at the college. During the application process, courses should be explained to potential students to determine their interests. This way, students can apply for a course that is best suited for them. Additionally, students should be informed about their future prospects after completing their courses, such as employment opportunities or potential occupations.

Once potential students have registered and become full-time students, the responsibility falls on the college. Therefore, it is the college’s duty to provide motivation to students, which can be achieved by organising a motivational day, for example, where former students can come and share their success stories. Additionally, lecturers can contribute by sharing their academic challenges and how they overcame them, as this could greatly inspire students to strive for more.

5.4.4 Class Monitoring Documents

All participating campuses have class monitoring documents that outline when class visits will occur throughout the year. Proper procedures are followed for class monitoring. The researcher observed that class monitoring documents were available at all campuses. However, some of the documents were not completed as lecturers did not provide feedback. Student class registers maintain a daily record of attendance and absences. Registers are an effective way to gather information about students and identify patterns. Lecturers can follow up and determine why students are frequently absent and address any underlying issues to provide the best assistance to students in need.

5.5 Presentation of Data Collected Through Observation

The researcher obtained permission from campus managers to conduct observations at the school. Observations were scheduled before the researcher arrived at the campuses. The observation schedules were related to the aims and objectives of the study. According to the research schedule, the researcher observed the following:

Table 5.4: Observation details and researcher’s feedback

Observation details	YES/ No	Feedback from researcher
1. Observation of teaching and learning.	✓	The teaching and learning process is effective, with lecturers consistently attending all their classes and students actively participating. For instance, attendance was promptly taken as soon as the students arrived in class, and every period was attended during the day.
2. Observation of how lecturers behave towards students.	✓	Some lecturers seemed approachable, while others lacked patience.
3. Observation of how lectures are conducted.	✓	Lectures are conducted in a well-organised manner, with up-to-date lesson plans prepared by the lecturers. They are punctual, and students actively participate in class. The information and content provided are of a high standard and suitable for the students’ level.
4. Observation of how support is provided to students.	✓	Support was provided to students. When they arrived late to class, they were asked about the reasons for doing so and how they could be best assisted. Lecturers also provided extra notes and allowed students to schedule one-on-one sessions.
5. Students' behaviour towards lecturers.	✓	Some students displayed poor attitudes towards their lecturers, while others were bored during lessons and lacked concentration.
6. Lecturer effectiveness in student support.	✓	Lecturers demonstrated their ability to effectively support students.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the information gathered from the seven participating campuses at Ehlanzeni TVET College. The conclusions from the literature were combined with the interviews in this chapter. The primary data collection instrument used was interviews. The data collected through interviews was supplemented with document analysis and observations. All data from transcribed interviews were organised into six themes that were relevant to the research question and the focus of the study. Within each theme, the researcher included direct quotations from the responses of participants. These responses highlighted various challenges faced by the college, such as dropouts, absenteeism, lack of resources, inadequate training, NSFAS issues, academic challenges and strategies for improvement. These emerging themes suggest that challenges can be addressed by providing motivation and support to both lecturers and students, which can lead to improved academic performance. The next chapter will summarise the findings and conclusions, as well as provide suggestions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed participants' responses and their perspectives on the lecturers' experiences in student support. The research study aimed to explore stakeholders' experiences in student support at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. Campus managers, HODs, lecturers and students were included as participants in the study. In the previous chapter, data was collected using three instruments: semi-structured interviews, direct observations and document analysis. The key findings of the research are discussed in this chapter, and recommendations based on these findings are presented. This chapter summarises the first five chapters and also includes recommendations and suggestions for future research. The following questions guided the study's findings and recommendations:

Main research question: What are stakeholders' experiences in student support at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province? This main research question is underpinned by six sub-questions:

- ❖ What are the roles of lecturers in supporting students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ How do lecturers provide support to students in TVET colleges?
- ❖ What are the challenges experienced by lecturers when supporting student?
- ❖ How do lecturers mitigate the challenges they experience in supporting students?
- ❖ What are the strengths and weaknesses of student support at the TVET college?
- ❖ How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?

6.2 Overview of the Chapters

6.2.1 Chapter One: Introduction and Background

This chapter provided an overview of the study, including the introduction and background. It was identified that the majority of lecturers working at the specified TVET college lack the necessary skills to teach vocational subjects effectively, as they have never worked in the industries they teach about.

In addition, the problem statement and rationale were discussed, followed by an explanation of the significance of the study and its assumptions. It was identified that the study will benefit students by helping to reduce the high dropout rate in institutions of higher learning, specifically TVET colleges. This will ultimately equip students to be better prepared for the workforce. The motivation behind the study is to understand the support available for students at TVET colleges. The objectives of the study are detailed and the sub-questions are clearly outlined.

6.2.2 Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presented the theoretical framework of the study. The chosen theories were explained in detail, namely: social constructivist theory, cognitive behavioural theory and student support theory. Cognitive behavioural theory was useful to the researcher because it has evolved over three phases: (a) behavioural principles of human behaviour, (b) cognitive constructs and cognitive mediation, and (c) mindfulness including acceptance and commitment. The principles are firmly based on evidence-informed and evidence-based practice. These concepts describe how behaviour and cognitions are learned and how they can be changed through treatment. The constructivist theory explains that we learn by ‘constructing’ knowledge in our minds. Constructivism argues that learners play an active role in thinking things through, mulling them over, and coming to conclusions based on logic and critical thinking. The SSS are established to enhance students' academic skills, cultivate the confidence necessary for academic achievement, facilitate student engagement and integration into the academic system, and prepare students for active lives in society. Student support theory was discussed in terms of its characteristics, advantages and limitations.

6.2.3 Chapter Three: Literature Review

The chapter provided clear details on the literature review of the study. It covered the challenges faced by students and lecturers at TVET colleges, as well as the strategies used to help students. The chapter further explained what student support entails, the process of teaching and learning at TVET colleges, the role of the lecturer as an information provider, and how to broaden the level of accomplishment for students. It also discussed the lecturer’s role as an implementer of curriculum delivery in TVET colleges, the challenges facing lecturers at TVET college, and the challenges facing students in TVET colleges. Additionally, it touched on the professional development of TVET lecturers, the types of support offered by lecturers

to students, strategies for improving student support, and possible causes of student dropout at TVET colleges.

6.2.4 Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

The chapter provided a clear discussion of the study's methodology. It covered the research paradigm, which was the interpretivist paradigm, the research design which was a single-case study and the methodology used in the study. The brief explanation of the theory helped to strengthen the methodology, which followed a qualitative research approach. Topics such as purposeful sampling were also discussed. The college selected has seven educational campuses. The population consisted of four campus managers, seven HODs (one per campus), seven lecturers and seven students, making a total of 25 participants. The semi-structured interview was the primary data collection instrument and was triangulated with document analysis and direct observation. Consent was obtained from all 25 participants and their participation was entirely voluntary. Before collecting data from the participants, clearance was obtained from the UNISA Ethics Committee.

6.2.5 Chapter Five: Data Presentation, Analysis and Research Findings

The results of the data gathered were presented and discussed in this chapter. Themes that aligned with the research questions, interviews, document analysis and observations were explained. The complete qualitative findings were summarised and presented clearly and comprehensively. This chapter presented, interpreted and analysed the data collected from participant interviews, document analysis and observation. The data were presented in the form of direct participant quotations and tables. The participants' responses were recorded using a voice recorder, and the researcher took notes during the interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed, and grouped into themes. The main themes were further broken down into sub-themes to facilitate data analysis and avoid duplication of information between themes. Prior to discussing and presenting themes, the profiles of participants were provided.

6.2.6 Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter serves as the conclusion of the study, summarising the findings, drawing inferences from them, and offering suggestions based on those conclusions.

6.3 Summary of the Research Findings

This section presents a summary of the research findings regarding the revised literature and data gathered from a selected TVET college. The findings are discussed under the following

themes: Experiences of stakeholders in student support, Roles of lecturers in addressing academic and psychosocial needs and challenges of TVET college students, Support strategies employed by lecturers for TVET college students, Challenges experienced by lecturers' in student support at TVET colleges, The strengths and weaknesses of student support at TVET colleges, and Support from college management and stakeholders in providing SSS.

The following themes that emerged during data analysis and presentation were deliberated:

THEME 1: Experiences of lecturers in providing student support

The lecturers have varying experiences with student support. Some lecturers stated that they are not involved in student support due to lack of time. However, the researcher believes that lecturers should be involved from the initial step, which is the application or recruitment of the students. This way, they can better understand the students' needs and provide the best support possible. The college should ensure that all lecturers have their own offices to meet with students if they need to discuss anything with them. This is important, as the lecturers complained about the lack of facilities at the college. Lecturers discussed the importance of professional development, noting that the college should offer training for student support or provide bursaries for lecturers to enrol in additional studies. Lecturers also emphasised the need for responsibilities; therefore, the college should include student support as a responsibility for all lecturers to avoid any confusion about their roles in supporting students. Brew et al. (2018) state that academics face numerous challenges in content delivery, class size, student diversity, teaching-team locations, competencies, subject-related decisions and student expectations. Therefore, higher education institutions must consider and develop various professional development models to support academics in advancing their skills in teaching and learning (Inamorato dos Santos et al., 2019). Professional development for academics has become a necessary requirement for the competitiveness of higher education institutions (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.3.2). The researcher believes that lecturers should have one or two free periods during the day so that they can have time to do other tasks at the college, most importantly supporting students.

Data has shown that lecturers give the impression of having a consistent understanding of their roles in terms of student support. Campus managers are well-versed in lecturers' roles in student support, and the HODs share the same opinions about these roles. HODs agree on the roles of lecturers, which include providing academic support, creating a positive learning

environment, offering guidance, fostering career paths and facilitating professional development. However, they also mentioned factors that contribute to inadequate support from lecturers, such as a lack of qualifications and resources, as well as issues with training, time management and motivation. It was also discussed that professional development is of utmost importance. Research has revealed that a significant number of TVET lecturers lack workplace experience (McBride, Papier & Needham, 2009) (Refer to chapter 3, 3.3.1).

THEME 2: Roles of lecturers in addressing academic and psychosocial needs and challenges of TVET college students

The lecturers appear to share a common understanding of their roles in terms of student support. They discussed assisting students academically, assessing their progress, providing feedback and offering training. Their responses align with the perspective of Rowland et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of creating teaching materials (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.4). The lecturers are of the same view as Bordia et al. (2022), who spoke of feedback and its significance to students (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.5). Furthermore, lecturers discussed the areas where students need the most support, including mentorship and emotional support, and also referred students to additional help if needed. This demonstrates their understanding of how to assist students. Other lecturers share the same perspective as Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) regarding lecturer–student relationships (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.7). Data from interviews conducted with lecturers indicate that time allocation and time management are significant challenges for students. All lecturers shared a common understanding of the academic challenges students face. They mentioned understanding of content, motivation and resources. All lecturers agreed that students’ backgrounds can affect their academic achievement. Students have different challenges. They expressed the most serious challenges they face, indicating that funds are a major issue for them. They stated that they depend on NSFAS for financial assistance and struggle to balance theory and practical work. Lack of resources is also a significant issue for them. Lecturers also alluded to similar issues, including funds and infrastructure, a fixed curriculum, financial constraints, and a lack of trained educators. This shortage of qualified lecturers is a major problem at TVET colleges.

Campus managers share common perspectives on the roles of lecturers. They believe that lecturers should prioritise being parental figures. They also spoke of the importance of providing academic and social support, and career guidance to students. These roles align with the guidelines outlined by DHET (2020) (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.2.6). Campus managers stated

that they recognise the importance of lecturers focussing on students' studies, simplifying content, ensuring they have enough study materials, and encouraging them to study. They share the same understanding as the Great Schools Partnership (2014) and UNESCO (2023), both of which emphasised the significance of the curriculum (Refer to Chapter 3, 3.6). Campus managers are well-informed regarding lecturers' roles in student support. In this way, the researcher believes campus managers will be able to voice their opinions on what lecturers should do to provide support to students. All campus managers and HODs mentioned the issue of finances, or NSFAS, as they understand that most students depend on NSFAS.

Data generated from interviews with lecturers showed that they articulated various challenges that students may face, including understanding their academic goals and needs. Most students prefer hands-on learning opportunities and emphasise the importance of colleges addressing both academic and psychosocial needs. Career guidance and qualified instructors are also crucial, with a focus on psychosocial needs such as mental health support, peer support and mentorship. Data generated from campus managers indicated that they share the same perspective, as they spoke of understanding what subjects the students were previously exposed to and the fact that they are or were dropouts in their previous schools. Campus managers also mentioned that students want to feel special and that they experience anxiety and depression, hence support must be provided to those students. Furthermore, students should have access to Wi-Fi to carry out their college work. The DHET (2020) states that colleges must promote the development of stronger and more empathetic interactions between lecturers and students (Refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2.6). All the issues or requirements highlighted by the campus managers are valid and accurately represent what students require at TVET colleges.

HODs expressed various views, all of which were valid. They all shared a common understanding of student's needs. HODs discussed the importance of career guidance, providing quality education, meeting industry demands, and offering pre-entry academic support. Additionally, they highlighted issues such as students' low self-esteem, peer pressure, and the need for emotional support. The DHET (2020) states that lecturers, with the support of career guidance experts, should have student summaries that enable them to recognise the psychosocial and socio-economic challenges so that they can provide support (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). HODs state the tutors should be available. Burakova (2023) explains that student with exceptional results are often paired with those who are underperforming so that the lower-performing students can receive assistance (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.6). HODs

expressed that students often read question papers without fully understanding them. They believe that many students are not at college for the purpose of studying, but rather to earn money. This suggests that different campuses experience different challenges, and therefore, it is important for them to come together, engage in discussions, and share their viewpoints.

HODs also discussed coping with programmes, as students struggle to bridge the gap between practical and theoretical learning. They are unsure of how to apply the information they learn in theory to their practical work at the college. It is suggested that the college or subject lecturer should arrange for students to spend two or three weeks each year working in the field or industry during college breaks. This hands-on experience will help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Students should receive guidance on programme selection before applying to college. By choosing the wrong programme, they may realise once classes begin that it is not a good fit for them and end up dropping out. Therefore, career guidance should be provided as early as possible to prevent this scenario. Additionally, the college should have counselling services, including a campus psychologist who can attend to students promptly. This means that every campus should have its own psychologist instead of waiting for referrals, which can be a lengthy process. Currently, students are suffering as a result, with instances of suicide and substance abuse becoming more common.

THEME 3: Support strategies employed by lecturers for TVET college students

Data generated from lecturers suggests that all lecturers made valid points, which indicates that lecturers understand their roles and can effectively support students. The lecturers' ideas are almost identical, demonstrating that the ideas can be beneficial for students. The lecturers spoke about engaging with students and providing social and emotional support. Basson and Rothman (2018) agree that for college students, there are three social structures, and lecturers are part of those structures (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7). Lecturers emphasised the importance of compassion and empathy, as well as the significance of teaching and providing students with relevant resources. They also discussed the use of remote learning. The researcher believes it is very important for lecturers to listen and make time for their students' studies. Sometimes, students may struggle with writing or completing assessments not because they do not want to, but because they are facing difficulties. Lecturers should listen to students and try to offer assistance. In the researcher's opinion, lecturers should attend all classes and consider creating

WhatsApp groups to support students with their studies while they are at home. Colleges should implement a learning management system for online learning where lecturers can create video lessons for students to watch in their free time and ask questions as needed. Additionally, it is essential for lecturers to communicate clearly and provide detailed expectations and deadlines for each course. The researcher believes that students should not have to wonder what is expected from them by their lecturers, and that clear instructions from the lecturer are crucial for academic performance.

Campus managers agree that lecturers must act as parental figures to students and strive to make lessons engaging. They also emphasise the importance of understanding the students' backgrounds and ensuring they are placed in appropriate programmes. Slavitt and Egbert (2023) suggest that lecturers can identify students' strengths and needs in order to effectively support them (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.14). The researcher believes that lecturers must know their students. This can be achieved by involving lecturers from the recruitment stage, so that they can build relationships with students. Sometimes it is very difficult to remain engaged during the busy times of the year if lecturers are not involved. If lecturers take the time to know their students, they will understand which strategies to use to keep lessons interesting. The researcher believes if lecturers are parents themselves, they will be more likely to listen, care and show empathy towards their students. Therefore, the researcher suggests that lecturers should strive to embody parental principles.

All HODs have various methods for effectively supporting students. Motivation is key, including engaging with students, organising academic trips, providing referrals to student support services, offering effective study tips, assisting with bursaries, providing e-learning opportunities, and offering resources. All of these support systems are important and can help students. Students appear to understand what student support entails. When students understand what student support is, they will be able to identify the kind of support they should expect or require from the college. All students expect academic support from their lecturers. Motivation is also reflected in students' commitment and engagement in the learning environment, as well as their enjoyment of the learning process (Souder, 2020). Motivation is not the same as commitment, which refers to how much a student appears to be engaged and focused on their work (Loveless, 2022) (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1). The researcher believes that motivation is an important factor in student performance. The college can organise motivational days and invite people from different fields to come and share their stories. The

researcher understands that the use of referral forms is very important. If a lecturer feels that students need more help, they can use the referral form so that students can be assisted. Lecturers can also follow up to see if the student has been assisted.

THEME 4: Challenges experienced by lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges

Lecturers expressed varying opinions on the reasons why students are absent from college. Some believe that transport costs are a major factor, while others point to issues with NSFAS as a leading cause of student unrest and protests. Lecturers mentioned that lack of structure, pregnancy, drugs, sickness, and the students being heads of families, all of which are valid points. Kasita (2019) indicates that personal factors such as drugs, excessive drinking, ill health, family matters, pregnancy and poverty may lead to non-attendance (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2.4). In the researcher's opinion, the college or campus should seek sponsors or donations from the community to assist students, as NSFAS funds can sometimes be insufficient. Therefore, the campus managers should have funds available for special cases.

Lecturers have developed various approaches for addressing students, all of which are understandable and achievable. One lecturer suggests addressing to the root of the problem, which aligns with the research of Hinton and Cook (2021), which discusses the need for knowing one's students in order to acquire a deep understanding of their needs and create positive relationships (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.14). In the researcher's opinion, students might be acting out due to family issues, frustrations, or financial problems. Therefore, the lecturer can always talk to students outside of class, ask what the issue might be, and offer help if needed. Additionally, if the student feels that the lecturer does not like him/her, they might drop out or fail the subject. Jansen and Warren (2023) state that students raised in poverty are particularly susceptible to stressors that undermine school behaviour and performance. For instance, girls exposed to abuse tend to experience mood swings in school, while boys experience diminishing curiosity, learning and memory (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.1.2).

Most of the lecturers feel that the college lacks sufficient resources. They explained that the current resources are inadequate to support both themselves and the students. They believe that the college should provide e-books, computers/laptops, textbooks and data to assist students in their learning even when they are not on campus. Van Rensburg (2020) also agrees that TVET colleges are lacking in resources (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.2). However, some lecturers

believe that the college does have enough resources, pointing to good results and a learning management system that allows them to send lessons to students.

Lecturers believe that they were equipped to handle mental health issues and feel that all students experiencing such issues should be referred to professionals. However, lecturers also believe that they can assist students by showing empathy, actively listening to them, communicating effectively, and providing encouragement. Eloff, O'Neil and Kanengoni (2022) agree with the lecturers' statements that positive relationships, in which a person may feel socially interconnected, involved and cared for, may decrease depression, improve health and promote healthy behaviours (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7). Students want to feel seen and heard so lecturers may have to try their best to accomplish that. In the researcher's opinion, a lecturer should always strive to identify the root of the problem, understand the student's needs, determine what they require, and figure out the best way to assist them. It is the researcher's belief that an onsite should be available in this regard. After lecturers identify their students' needs, they can quickly refer them to the psychologist on campus for immediate help, rather than having to refer them to someone outside of the campus.

Campus managers seem to share the same sentiment that NSFAS or financial issues are the main cause of dropouts. However, they also mention that parents are not supportive of students' psychosocial issues, poor backgrounds and wrong career choices. Edwards (2023) agrees with the assertion that financial concerns, personal or family difficulties, academic stress, emotional difficulties, and unhealthy home environments are the primary causes of dropouts (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.8). In the researcher's opinion, parents may find it challenging to be supportive of something they do not understand if they did not attend tertiary education themselves. This lack of understanding may be why parents do not address their children's absences from class, ultimately leading to them dropping out. Students from low-income backgrounds often do not have the funds for transportation – and if they do have money, they prioritise groceries for their homes over paying for transportation to get to school. Therefore, the college should provide campus housing for such students. McLaughlin (2013) identifies travel time, financial constraints, workload challenges, and unrealistic expectations of the programme as some of the reasons for poor academic performance and a high dropout rate (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.8).

Students believe that most issues stem from financial constraints. All students agree that if the financial burden is lifted there will be far fewer dropouts. In order to support students, it is

necessary to provide academic support, motivation, encouraging environments, mentorship, counselling and flexible schedules.

THEME 5: The strengths and weaknesses of lecturers in providing student support at TVET colleges

Data revealed that lecturers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of student support. They stated that the strengths include easy access to the student support office, helpful officials, and extracurricular activities that provide students with a break from their studies. Students pursue higher education to advance their studies, become professionals, and excel in their chosen field of study. Colleges offer comprehensive support services, including career guidance on campus to assist students in selecting the right academic path based on their interests and subjects. The college offers practical training through different workshops, where students engage in hands-on activities relevant to their field of study. They also provide assistance and guidance in applying for bursaries. The strength of student support lies in its ability to provide quality education to students, encompassing both practical and theoretical skills that will enhance their employability. They also offer support in developing entrepreneurship skills, and are available to assist students who are referred by lecturers. By prioritising student engagement, they are able to promptly address and issues or concerns students may have. Overall, the efficiency and effectiveness of SSS make them invaluable services for students in need.

Lecturers also stated that a major weaknesses is the lack of follow-ups on student problems, with little being done to address this issue. Students struggle to take the initiative and study on their own, especially when the lecturer is not present, as they heavily on their lecturers for guidance and support. Due to a lack of infrastructure, Ehlanzeni TVET College has several campuses with limited classrooms. As a result, these campuses have two time slots for starting classes. Some start at 7:30 am and others at 1:00 pm. This results in poor performance in college, as students arrive tired to afternoon classes, causing them to lose focus. Additionally, some afternoon classes are disrupted by students arriving late due to transportation issues for those who live far away. Another issue is the lack of training for lecturers, which affects students' performance in academics. At Ehlanzeni TVET College, students also face technological barriers, with limited access to modern technology and the internet.

Campus managers have differing opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of student support, and expressed that there is much that needs to be done on campus. They stated that the colleges

focus more on sports rather than academic issues, and further indicated that student policies must be implemented. On the other hand, some campus managers believe that the strength lies in extracurricular activities. Campus managers stated that SSS maintain a high level of confidentiality, with the only weakness being a lack of information in certain fields of study. Additionally, they noted that there is a shortage of private rooms, but a major strength is their ability to assist students promptly. The campus managers also mentioned academic groups that are not useful. CrunchGrade (2023) explains that if one's academic support group is not supervised by a lecturer or if no tutor is assigned, it may result in discussions about unrelated topics. The amount of time wasted on irrelevant discussions is substantial (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.11).

During interviews conducted with HODs, a consensus was reached regarding the strengths of student support. These included pre-entry student support, career counselling, selection and placements tests, orientation programme, NSFAS, and the code of conduct. However, opinions varied on weaknesses, with mentions of resources, academic preparedness and industry partnerships. The high number of students not performing well is correlated with an increasing dropout rate, which is deemed a problem in higher education (Du Plessis & Gerber, 2012) (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.7.5). This suggests that students may not have been adequately prepared academically. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that SSS are well-equipped to assist students effectively and have referral systems in place. However, a weaknesses is the understaffing of these services, leading to difficulties in attending to all students. Additionally, some students may not be aware of these services or choose not to use them. HODs believe that student support should be proactive. Student support, on the other hand, expect lecturers to make referrals and believe that all problems should be identified during registration. Writing CAP tests can help in identifying challenges. Wistow (2023) explains that student advisers should take on the responsibility for proactive, student-led support, rather than waiting for students to encounter difficulties before offering help. This includes restructuring career advice, integrating workplace skills into each programme and building peer support networks (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.15). All weaknesses should be taken into account in this approach.

THEME 6: Support of college management and stakeholders in student support services

Data generated from interviews suggests that providing support and training for lecturers is crucial, as they are the ones who have close contact with students. This includes offering relevant resources that can be used in class, training based on their area of specialisation and

the content they deliver, and ensuring there is enough infrastructure in place. By providing adequate training and resources to help them effectively address the diverse needs of students, colleges can also encourage collaboration among lecturers, counsellors and other support staff to better assist students. Creating a supportive work environment and recognising the importance of lecturers' involvement in students' support can contribute to the overall success in this area. The college must prioritise students' support and provide necessary support to lecturers to ensure students' success. By collaborating with organisations, lecturers and students can be provided with practical experience related to the programmes they are studying. These organisations that help students understand the importance of their courses and offer practical training opportunities. For example, setting up a simulation centre for business students to practice fieldwork, and organising workshops for engineering students to enhance their skills. It is also important to provide proper training and support for lecturers, who have expressed their willingness to assist with building facilities and clinics, for example. Additionally, having psychologists and social workers on campus, along with offering training for lecturers, can further enhance the support system for students.

Data collected from campus managers shows that they have conducted thorough research on their respective campuses and are fully aware of the needs and challenges present. They have identified various strategies that can be implemented to support students effectively. Campus managers discussed the importance of implementing policies and a student code of conduct that should be followed by lecturers. The campus managers emphasised the need for providing support and training to all lecturers. The campus managers stated that practicum centres should be provided for all practicals at the college. They also mentioned that campus managers should collaborate to share strategies that can benefit both lecturers and the college as a whole. El Sherbeny (2019) suggests that campus managers should be aware that professional development is expected to lead to improved quality of lecturing. As such, they must carefully prepare for these sessions. Professional development should be deliberate and involve communication, participation, collaboration, knowledge-sharing, a focus on student learning, continuous improvement, analysis and reflection (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.12).

Data generated from HODs shows that they believe lecturers have varying opinions on how management and stakeholders can support them. HODs think that lecturers should be provided with training, workshops and opportunities for collaboration and communication. Buthelezi, Mhlongo and Msweli (2021) explain that HODs have the critical responsibility of empowering

lecturers to achieve professional maturity. The only way to reach this phase is through lecturer professional development. Professional development is at the core of college improvement (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.13). HODs spoke about the need for resources to be provided to lecturers. The researcher suggests that all campuses or colleges should collaborate and share strategies on how to support students effectively. In the researcher's opinion, the college must organise training for lecturers. By improving the lecturers, they will be motivated to enhance their subjects, ultimately leading to increased academic performance. Resources should be provided to the lecturers, as without resources they will not be motivated to go to class and will not give their best. However, once everything is in their hands, they will do anything to improve their subject.

The campus managers have devised various strategies aimed at improving the college. It is essential for campus managers to collaborate with others and share ideas on how to enhance the college. Researchers such as Ndivhuwo, Sundani and Mamokhere (2021) concur that lecturers should be given opportunities to interact with their peers and provide mutual support in building and sustaining positive relationships with students. They should also be able to reflect on the successes and setbacks in these endeavours. Campus managers also expressed their opinion that lecturers should be involved in every step so they know what to do (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10). Additionally, campus managers spoke of the benefits of peer tutoring. In the researcher's opinion, this is a good idea, as students will be able to hear each other and might come up with better strategies for studying. Students are most likely to listen to their peers because they might feel they understand them. According to the DHET (2020), students who excel in a particular subject are encouraged to assist their fellow students with the guidance and supervision of an academic support officer or a professor teaching that programme. Former students who excelled in a particular subject may also be invited to provide instruction (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10).

HODs expressed the importance of collaboration, the hiring of student advisors, and the restructuring of student advice services. They clarified the need for implementing alert systems that can notify staff when a student requires support, as well as providing staff training. HODs also emphasised the significance of having libraries on campus and further expressed the necessity of counselling services. The researcher believes that counselling is necessary on all campuses because students come from diverse backgrounds with various issues, thus they may require someone to talk to. Students' mental health problems are attributed to psychological,

biological and environmental factors (Mohd Shafiee & Mutalib, 2020). Therefore, organisations should be able to recognise and differentiate the issues affecting students' mental well-being (Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.10). The researcher suggests that all of these strategies should be implemented as they can help students.

6.4 Proposed Student Support Model for Lecturers

Table 5.5: TVET student support model (researcher's own creation)



This model has identified challenges experienced by students, namely: resources at the college, students' upbringing, and lack of industry experience from lecturers. Resources from the college are crucial, as students come from various backgrounds and some students may not have the financial means to afford daily expenses or tuition. Therefore, the college should provide access to NSFAS and assist all students with their applications for financial aid. Students' upbringing is a concern because they often come from impoverished backgrounds, and face various challenges. Some students struggle with mental health issues, others are breadwinners or come from child-headed families, all of which present significant obstacles, while pregnancy and alcohol abuse are other commonly experienced issues on campus. Additionally, some lecturers lack industry experience, as they have never worked in their field and their knowledge is solely based on theory. Therefore, colleges should consider hiring lecturers who have recently worked in the industry.

Regarding challenges experienced by lecturers, in terms of the academic qualifications of TVET lecturers, it has been established that some do not possess the necessary qualifications. Additionally, some TVET lecturers lack practical experience in the field, making it difficult for them to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Factors contributing to inadequate student support include a lack of time and patience on the part of lecturers, as well as their limited involvement in the application process from the. Professional development is another challenges, as lecturers need to continuously enhance their skills. Colleges should organise training sessions and provide opportunities for them to receive bursaries. Academic support from the college is crucial and should be available to them at all times.

Student preparedness is a significant issue, as many students are unprepared for the workload that comes with their chosen programmes or courses and sometimes leads them to feeling overwhelmed and dropping out. Students with special needs should also be accommodated, and lecturers should be informed of the specific needs of these students.

In terms of students' academic needs, the lecturer should be aware of any challenges the students may be facing. This way, the lecturer can offer one-on-one study sessions, extra classes, and additional attention to help the students pass the course. When it comes to financial needs, priority should be given to NSFAS as students come from diverse backgrounds and may require assistance for food and transportation. Addressing psychosocial needs is also important.

Lecturers should understand what students require and be aware of their family background in order to provide support.

Regarding challenges experienced by students, it was established that some students felt the college lacked sufficient resources, such as classrooms and computers. Therefore, the college should consider investing in new computers or allocating a budget for this purpose. Additionally, students' upbringing can impact their performance, especially if they come from impoverished backgrounds, as this can affect their attendance in class as well as their overall success. Furthermore, a lack of industry experience among lecturers may hinder students' learning experiences, as lecturers may struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world applications due to their limited field experience.

Important to note here is that the roles of lecturers in addressing academic challenges and psychosocial needs of students are crucial. Lecturers play a significant role in helping students navigate the challenges they face. By referring students to SSS, lecturers can ensure that they receive the necessary help they need. Additionally, lecturers can engage in conversations with students to gain a better understanding of their situation and how best they can help them. It is important for lecturers to recognise that students' backgrounds can affect their academic achievement and to proactively identify and address any challenges that may arise by coming up with solutions that can support students in overcoming obstacles.

With regard to the functions of effective student support, student achievement can be enhanced through providing support to students. Lecturers should engage with students to identify their needs, and students can also declare their needs during registration periods. Reducing student dropout rates can be achieved by conducting pre-entry assessments and offering career guidance to students. It is also important to explain all the programmes to students before they register to ensure they understand the options available and can choose the most suitable programme. Monitoring class attendance and requiring students to sign the register before lessons start is also essential.

In terms of receiving support from the college and stakeholders, it was established that lecturers feel they lack adequate support from the college. Therefore, it is recommended that the college involve lecturers in all student-related processes. It was also noted that the teaching and learning process is effective, but it can sometimes be disturbed by college protests caused by delays in NSFAS funding distribution. To address this issue, NSFAS should ensure timely

allocation of funds to students. Furthermore, in order to enhance student support, lecturers should implement various strategies and receive training for professional development. Additionally, lecturers should be provided with opportunities to gain practical experience in the field to better connect theory with practice.

Education stakeholders who support student learning include lecturers, parents, HODs, campus managers and SSS, all of which play a crucial role in supporting students and should be actively involved. Parents should encourage their children to attend school, while lecturers and all stakeholders should provide additional support to students. This model identifies parents, students, lecturers, HODs, campus managers, SSS, and the college at large as stakeholders. Parents should be involved in their children's education to ensure their success in college. Students are crucial stakeholders and should be the top priority, in the researcher's opinion. The researcher is confident that the college should collaborate with parents in order to effectively support students. By maintaining constant communication with parents, the college will be in a much better position to address all student issues. This will significantly improve student attendance, as students will be concerned about their parents being contacted by the college. It is vital for stakeholders to be proactive, as their involvement is essential for the without success of the college. If stakeholders do not participate, student performance will decline, and dropout rates will increase. The researcher believes that all stakeholders are important and should be involved in the college's operations.

This model explores how different perspectives and beliefs influence people's interactions with the world, and how examining them and exploring alternative explanations can lead to change. It also integrates mindfulness and challenges in behaviour and practice, suggesting that thoughts can be altered and, by doing so, people can change their feelings and, ultimately, their behaviours.

6.5 Recommendations

The literature review and data included in this research reveal lecturers' experiences in student support, covering specific themes. The recommendations outlined below are suggested to enhance student support.

6.5.1 Recommendations for Campus Managers

- ❖ The campus managers have a duty to ensure effective college management. This can be achieved by ensuring that daily directions are clear for all stakeholders (HODs, lecturers and students) and by closely monitoring student and lecturer attendance by HODs. It is important for HODs to ensure that all students are present in their classes and to take action against those who are frequently absent. Additionally, HODs must regularly check attendance registers to minimise absenteeism at the college.
- ❖ Encouraging parent involvement is crucial to instilling discipline in students, as they will understand that their parents will be involved in any disciplinary actions. Strategies should be developed to engage parents in their children's learning to effectively manage students.
- ❖ Campus managers have a duty to ensure that policies are implemented and the student code of conduct should be enforced by lecturers.
- ❖ They should provide support and training to all lecturers, meet their needs, and motivate them to further their studies or engage in professional development.
- ❖ It is recommended that campus managers stay in contact with health officials to arrange monthly visits to colleges, and they should also maintain constant communication with NSFAS offices to ensure that funds are allocated to students in a timely manner.
- ❖ They should ensure that every lecturer visit the industry or field of work every three years to ensure that the college meets industry needs. They should establish industry partnerships and facilitate student placement after completing their studies, and ensure that the college hires lecturers who are experts in their fields and ensure that lecturers are assigned roles based on their strengths and qualifications.
- ❖ It is recommended that the college provide on-campus housing for all students and offer transportation services such as busses or taxis. Additionally, all students should be equipped with tablets or laptops. The college could lend laptops to students for the academic year, ensuring they have the necessary resources to complete their college work.

6.5.2 Recommendations for HODs

- ❖ HODs should ensure that lecturers have sufficient time for lessons (timetable allocation) and assist academically challenged students. Protecting lesson intervals is crucial, and this can only be achieved if HODs effectively monitor the curriculum.
- ❖ Awareness campaigns about student support should be organised. HODs should ensure that lecturers utilise referral forms and follow up with students who need

help. It is important to emphasise the urgency of student support, as they may not always prioritise it.

- ❖ HODs should consider organising workshops for students to provide career guidance, as this can help prevent dropouts. They should also invite motivational speakers and arrange awareness campaigns about student support.
- ❖ HODs should develop strategies for supporting students to improve academic performance, and these strategies should be discussed with lecturers.
- ❖ They should offer support to lecturers through development opportunities such as class visits, feedback and meetings to address any challenges. Additionally, they should introduce new teaching methods, starting with familiar concepts and progressing to those that are unfamiliar.

6.5.3 Recommendations for Lecturers

- ❖ Lecturers should strive to create a supportive environment for students that encourages freedom of expression. Students should feel safe at and receive academic, emotional and informational support. Lecturers should act as mentors, fostering relationships similar to that of a parent and child or friend, in order to build trust and encourage students to share their challenges.
- ❖ An open-door policy for students is recommended that allows students to seek advice or talk at any time. Lecturers should motivate students by sharing their own educational experiences and invite motivational speakers to encourage them. Former students who have excelled can serve as motivational speakers to encourage current students to do the same.
- ❖ It is recommended that lecturers continue their education to provide students with new and updated content, boosting their confidence in the process and improving the academic performance of their students.
- ❖ It is crucial for lecturers to be transparent with management to ensure that resources are provided and that they are aware of any necessary training that they may need.
- ❖ Lecturers should make time for students, while considering their diverse educational needs. Providing one-on-one sessions and extra classes can be beneficial in supporting students effectively.
- ❖ Lecturers should ensure that they monitor their students' attendance, simplify content and analyse results, all of which are important practices. By identifying challenges and

implementing strategies to address them, lecturers can improve student outcomes. Using referral forms can also be helpful in this process.

6.5.4 Recommendations for Students

- ❖ It is recommended that students research the programmes offered at TVET colleges, and apply for those that are best suited for them. This will help reduce the rate of dropouts and ensure that they are adequately prepared for college.
- ❖ Students should make sure to declare any problems they have during the application/registration period so that lecturers are informed of their challenges and can provide support accordingly. They should talk to their lecturers and make sure they know about their challenges in order to receive the necessary support.
- ❖ Students should utilise SSS and ensure that their NSFAS application is submitted on time.
- ❖ Students should have mentors at the college and be part of support groups to avoid turning to alcohol or drugs.

6.5.5 Recommendations for the Department of Higher Education and Training

- ❖ The DHET should ensure that resources are allocated to colleges for the building of libraries, classrooms, and the purchase of computers and laptops.
- ❖ NSFAS funding should be allocated to students early, and all necessary lecturer–student materials should be provided at all times.
- ❖ The DHET should provide bursaries for lecturers to further their studies, as enhancing their knowledge will improve student achievement.
- ❖ The department should organise training and workshops for all lecturers and ensure curriculum changes are made, as the current TVET curriculum does not meet industry needs. Furthermore, the DHET should involve lecturers in the development of curriculum.
- ❖ Compulsory placements should be implemented for all students, and training for NCV programmes should be made compulsory to bridge the gap between theory and practical skills.
- ❖ Finally, psychologists and nurses should be hired for all campuses, with each campus having its own. This will ensure students are quickly attended to and follow-up is done as early as possible.

6.6. Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on the experiences of stakeholders in student support at a selected TVET college in Mpumalanga Province. However, not all colleges in Mpumalanga and South Africa were covered.

The following topics are recommended for further research:

- ❖ Exploring students' experiences in student support in Mpumalanga Province as a whole.
- ❖ Exploring students' experiences in student support at South African TVET colleges as a whole.
- ❖ Exploring how stakeholder involvement in student support can enhance student performance in TVET colleges.
- ❖ Exploring student support challenges in TVET colleges.

6.7. Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of the study pertained to financial difficulties, which were overcome by applying for a UNISA Doctoral bursary. Time constraints were also a limitation to the researcher, who addressed this by working on the chapters at night and using her leave days as a backup. Another limitation was the research design or methodology, which may have hindered or influenced the interpretation of the findings and introduced bias in data analysis. To ensure that this was mitigated, the researcher employed triangulation, field notes, and recorded interviews to avoid bias. Additionally, the researcher's presence at the college during observations influenced participants' responses and behaviour. Participants were hesitant to share their true perceptions due to the observer's presence. To address this issue, participants were informed of the researcher's availability at the college and observation schedules were created to help them feel more at ease.

Another limitation is that the study cannot be generalised to a wider population as it was conducted at a single TVET college. However, the researcher reduced these limitations by using the triangulation method to collect data. Triangulation involves the use of different methods such as observations and semi-structured interviews. To ensure the honesty of participants, each person was allowed to refuse to take part in the research. Participants were asked to read the transcripts of dialogues in which they took part to check whether the words matched with what was intended.

Finally, in order to certify the trustworthiness and validity of the result, as well as to inform other studies, a detailed description of the research setting, including college characteristics and participant demographics was provided. An effort was made to comprehensively describe the findings of this study. The aim was to provide information that could be useful to other researchers and assist in determining the applicability of the study results to their own situations.

6.8. Conclusion

This study presented the experiences of various stakeholders in student support at a specific TVET college in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The literature review and investigation revealed that student support can enhance academic achievement and emphasised the importance of student support. Literature reveals that lecturers are a crucial factor in student support, as they spend the majority of their time with students. Lecturers should offer emotional, academic and informational support to students. The findings of this study provide insight for future research, such as strategies to improve student support. The study revealed that lecturers are engaged in the application process of students, and colleges do not adequately support lecturers in providing this support. The study also revealed that colleges do not have enough resources for both lecturers and students. Recommendations were made on how to improve student support in TVET colleges. The study's conclusions add to the body of knowledge concerning the roles of stakeholders in student support in colleges, as the data findings are advantageous to the college and all stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2024/03/13

Ref: **2024/03/13/54044677/10/AM**

Dear Ms SD Sibambo

Name: Ms SD Sibambo

Student No.:54044677

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2024/03/13 to 2029/03/13

Researcher(s): Name: Ms SD Sibambo
E-mail address: 54044677@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0713351175

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof N Ndou
E-mail address: ndoun@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4468

Title of research:

**Exploring the roles of lecturers in student support at Ehlanzeni Tvet College,
Mpumalanga Province.**

Qualification: PhD Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2024/03/13 to 2029/03/13.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2024/03/13 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2029/03/13**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2024/03/13/54044677/10/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



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



Prof Mpine Makoe
EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za



Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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**Appendix B: Letter requesting permission from the college CEO to conduct interviews
in the college**

P.O Box 678
Komatipoort
1340
28 January 2024

The CEO of the College

Ehlanzeni Tvet College
Private Bag X 11297
Nelspruit
1200

Dear Sir

RE: Request for authorisation to conduct a research study at the Ehlanzeni Tvet College

My name is MS Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo, and I am enrolled at the University of South Africa (Unisa) to do Doctoral studies in Education specialising in Educational Management. I am currently doing research under the supervision of Dr N Ndou, senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I wish to apply for permission to conduct a research study at your college, Tvet College. The title of the research study is:

**EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT EHLANZENI TVET COLLEGE,
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

The study aims to explore the roles of lecturers in student support at the college. The Tvet College has been selected because some lecturers may not understand their roles in terms of student support or how to support students. This lack of understanding may have a negative impact on student achievement and performance. The study will entail observations, semi-



structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews, which will be one-on-one will take approximately 45 minutes per interview. All interviews conducted will be on college premises during college.

The interviews will be scheduled when the lecturers being interviewed have free periods so as not to disrupt teaching activities at the college. All questions being asked in the interview will be written down, and participants will have sight of the questions during the interview.

The study will benefit the college, district and province as a whole because it will provide on which strategies for improvement can be developed. The study will also present the opportunity for discussions about student support services at Tvet colleges. Participation in the research study will be voluntary. There will be no coercion, and no one will be forced to take part. No incentives will be given who take part in the research. The participants' opinions and views will be respected, and their views and comments will remain confidential. Audio recordings will be made of all interviews for quality control and data verification purposes. Permission to record the interviews will be obtained from each participant. In keeping with the university data security policy, all information obtained during the research study will be stored in secure places. Hard copies will be stored in a locked cupboard, and soft copies and all digital materials will be password-secured.

On completion of the study, the final report will be made available to the Tvet college and all Campuses, who have participated in the study. I have attached the ethics clearance certificate to conduct this study issued by the University of South Africa, College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certification ensures that this study meets the requirements and practice of ethical research. My contact details and those of my supervisor are at the bottom of the page.

Yours Sincerely



Sibambo Samkelisiwe Dorothea

Researcher

Cell phone: 0713351175

Email: 54044677@mylife.unisa.ac.za



Supervisor: Prof N Ndou

Cell phone: 078 708 5295

Email: ndoun@unisa.ac.za



Appendix: C Letter requesting permission from college campus managers to conduct interviews on their campuses

P O Box 678
Komatipoort
1340
28 January 2024

The Campus Manager

Ehlanzeni Tvet College
Private Bag X 11297
Nelspruit
1200

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Request for authorisation to conduct a research study at your campus

My name is MS Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo, and I am enrolled at the University of South Africa (Unisa) to do Doctoral studies in Education specialising in Educational Management. I am currently doing research under the supervision of Dr N Ndou, senior lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I wish to apply for permission to conduct a research study at your college, Ehlanzeni Tvet College. The title of the research study is:

**EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT SELECTED TVET COLLEGE,
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

The study aims to explore the roles of lecturers in student support at the college. Tvet College has been selected because some lecturers may not understand their roles in terms of student support or how to support students. This lack of understanding may have a negative impact on student achievement and performance. The study will entail observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews, which will be one-on-one will take approximately 45 minutes per interview. All interviews conducted will be on college premises during college hours.



The interviews will be scheduled when the lecturers being interviewed have free periods so as not to disrupt teaching activities at the college. All questions being asked in the interview will be written down, and participants will have sight of the questions during the interview.

The study will benefit the college, district and province as a whole because it will provide on which strategies for improvement can be developed. The study will also present the opportunity for discussions about student support services at Tvet colleges. Participation in the research study will be voluntary. There will be no coercion, and no one will be forced to take part. No incentives will be given who take part in the research. The participants' opinions and views will be respected, and their views and comments will remain confidential. Audio recordings will be made of all interviews for quality control and data verification purposes. Permission to record the interviews will be obtained from each participant. In keeping with the university data security policy, all information obtained during the research study will be stored in secure places. Hard copies will be stored in a locked cupboard, and soft copies and all digital materials will be password-secured.

On completion of the study, the final report will be made available to the Tvet college and all Campuses, who have participated in the study.

I have attached the ethics clearance certificate to conduct this study issued by the University of South Africa, College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certification ensures that this study meets the requirements and practice of ethical research. My contact details and those of my supervisor are at the bottom of the page.

Yours Sincerely



Sibambo Samkelisiwe Dorothea

Researcher

Cell phone: 0713351175

Email: 54044677@mylife.unisa.ac.za



Supervisor: Prof N Ndou

Cell phone: 078 708 5295

Email: ndoun@unisa.ac.za



Appendix D: Approval Letter From the Mpumalanga Department of Education



Ehlanzeni TVET College
Central Office
29 Bell Street, NELSPRUIT.
Private Bag X11297 NELSPRUIT 1200
Tel: 013-752-7105/5817/7527/5070/4752 Fax: 013-752-4902



02 May 2024

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Ms Sibambo

Your request to conduct research at Ehlanzeni TVET College is hereby acceded to. There are however two conditions to be met by the researcher:

1. The researcher is directed to take measures to avoid the disruption of teaching and learning during the process.
2. The researcher commits to share the outcomes of the study with the College upon completion of the study.

Hoping the above will be found to be in order.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EM Mbuyane', written over a horizontal line.

EM Mbuyane
College Principal

Appendix E: Letter inviting Campus Managers/HODs to Partake in a Research Study

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo, I am conducting a research project at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in this research project entitled as follows:

EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT SELECTED TVET COLLEGE, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

The study aims to explore the effectiveness of lecturers in student support at the college. The Tvet College has been selected because some lecturers may not understand their roles in terms of student support or how to support students.

The researcher will visit all seven campuses of the Tvet College, to interview Campus managers, HODs, Students, and lecturers. Throughout the observations, data collection tools such as observation protocols, interview schedules, and field notes will be used.

When the research project is completed, the researcher will go back to the college/ campuses and discuss the findings with the Principal, CMT members and lecturers.

This research project will be beneficial as it will be easier for lecturers at the college. It will also be of benefit to the student's results. Feedback procedure will be made in the form of evaluation, findings and recommendations of the project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Yours sincerely

Sibambo S.D

Doctoral Student in Education (Unisa)



Appendix F: Letter Inviting Lecturers/Students to Partake in a Research Study

Dear Sir/Madam

I, Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo, I am conducting a research project at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in this research project entitled as follows :

**EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT SELECTED TVET COLLEGE,
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

The study aims to explore the effectiveness of lecturers in student support at the college. The Tvet College has been selected because some lecturers may not understand their roles in terms of student support or how to support students.

The researcher will visit all seven campuses of Tvet College, to interview Campus managers, HODs', Students, and lecturers. Throughout the observations, data collection tools such as observation protocols, interview schedules, and field notes will be used.

When the research project is completed, the researcher will go back to the college/ campuses and discuss the findings with the Principal, CMT members and lecturers.

This research project will be beneficial as it will be easier for lecturers at the college. It will also be of benefit to the student's results. Feedback procedure will be made in the form of evaluation, findings and recommendations of the project.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Yours sincerely

Sibambo S.D

Doctoral Student in Education (Unisa)



Appendix G: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I..... confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I have read (or have had explained to me) and understood, the study informed consent letter and information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of the study will be processed into a research report, and that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the interview being recorded for quality control and verification purposes.

I have received and signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's name and surname (please print)

Participant's signature Date

Researcher's name and surname

Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo

Researcher's signature



Date



Appendix H: Observation Schedule

Observation details	YES/ No	Feedback from researcher
6 Observation of teaching and learning.		
7 Observation of how lecturers behave towards students.		
8 Observation of how lectures are conducted.		
9 Observation of how support is provided to students.		
10 Students' behaviour towards lecturers.		
11 Lecturer effectiveness in student support.		

Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Campus Managers/ HODs

Interview Guide for CAMPUS MANAGER/ HOD

Research Topic: Stakeholders experiences in student support

Place: College premises

Interviewer: Researcher

Interviewees: CM/HOD

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Description of the research topic, informing the interviewees about:

- (a) The purpose of the study is to explore the roles of lecturers in student support.
- (b) The aim is to interview CM/HOD/ Lecturers/ Students at the college.
- (c) The interview will last for 30–45 minutes.
- (d) Requesting the interviewee to read and sign the consent form.
- (e) Switch on the recorder and test it.

Questions

1. What are the roles of lecturers in student support?
2. What are the factors contributing to inadequate student support from lecturers?
3. How can lecturers effectively support students at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?
4. In your opinion what is professional development, and is it vital for lecturers to take part in professional development?



5. What are the academic and psychosocial needs of the students in TVET colleges?
6. What types of challenges do TVET college students face?
7. What are the possible solutions for the challenges encountered?
8. What are the strengths and weakness of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?
9. How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?
10. What do you think are possible causes of student dropout in TVET colleges?
11. Can lecturers' qualification or lack of qualification affect student performance?
12. What strategies can you suggest for the improvement of student support in general?
13. What can a campus manager/HOD do to support lecturers?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND TIME



Appendix J: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Lecturers

Interview Guide for Lecturers

Research Topic: Stakeholders experiences in student support

Place: College premises

Interviewer: Researcher

Interviewees: Lecturers

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Description of the research topic, informing the interviewees about:

- (a) The purpose of the study is to explore roles of lecturers in student support.
- (b) The aim is to interview CM/HOD/ Lecturers/ Students at the college.
- (c) The interview will last for 30–45 minutes.
- (d) Requesting the interviewee to read and sign the consent form.
- (e) Switch on the recorder and test it.

Questions

1. What are the roles of lecturers in student support? Are you doing enough as lecturer to fulfil those roles?
2. How can lecturers effectively support students at Ehlanzeni TVET College in Mpumalanga?
3. What are the academic and psychosocial needs of the students in TVET colleges?
4. What are academic challenges that your students face? How do you as a lecturer support the student?

5. In your opinion can the students' background affect their academic achievement? If yes, what can you do as a lecturer to provide support?
6. What types of challenges do TVET college students face? What are the possible solutions for the challenges encountered?
7. What are the strengths and weakness of student support at Ehlanzeni TVET College?
8. How can the college management and stakeholders support the lecturers in student support services?
9. What are the causes of absenteeism at the college? In the problems you mentioned, what can you do as a lecturer to make sure that students attend your class or come to college?
10. Are there enough resources in the college to assist lecturers with teaching and learning? Substantiate your answers and please provide possible solutions to any challenges.
11. How do you deal with students who behave badly in and outside the lecture rooms?
12. How can lecturers deal with students who have mental health issues (depression, anxiety), and are you equipped as a lecturer do deal with such?
13. How is the process of teaching and learning?
14. Are you enrolled in any programme or institution? If yes, what is the reason for your enrolment?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND TIME.



Appendix K: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Students

Interview Guide for Students

Research Topic: **Stakeholders experiences in student support**

Place: College premises

Interviewer: Researcher

Interviewees: Students

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Description of the research topic, informing the interviewees about:

- (a) The purpose of the study is to explore the roles of lecturers in student support.
- (b) The aim is to interview CM/HOD/ Lecturers/ Students at the college.
- (c) The interview will last for 30–45 minutes.
- (d) Requesting the interviewee to read and sign the consent form.
- (e) Switch on the recorder and test it.

Questions

1. In your own understanding, what is student support?
2. What kind of support do you expect from your lecturers?
3. Based on your answer, in the first question do you feel like the campus provides support to your as college students?
4. Do lecturers assist with student support?
5. What are your challenges as a student at TVET College?
6. What can be done to assist you with the above challenges?
7. Do you think your lecturers have the time and patience to assist you?
8. Do you have enough resources at the college?



9. What do you think are the reasons for student drop out at the College?

10. How can the college help in avoiding possible student drop out?

11. If you could be appointed as lecturer, what do you think you could do to provide better support to the students?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND TIME.

Appendix L: Proof of Editing

Certificate of Professional Editing

Freelance Editors SA

Impala Bend
Ashburton
KwaZulu-Natal
3201
South Africa

Email: freelanceeditorssa@gmail.com

Website: www.freelanceeditors.co.za

15 October 2025

This is to confirm that I, David Kaplan, a full-time professional editor and proofreader, have edited the following paper titled: EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT SUPPORT AT SELECTED TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE by Samkelisiwe Dorothea Sibambo as per academic standards.

Signed: *David Kaplan*

