

**Integrating Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS) to Africanise
career education in South African schools**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

Psychology of Education

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Supervisor: Doctor Hermien Olivier

30 January 2026

DECLARATION

I declare that: **Integrating Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS) to Africanise career education in South African schools.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude to the high school learners who actively participated in this research and generously shared their insights. As you advance to Grade 10, I wish you great success in the years to come.

To my husband and children, who steadfastly supported and inspired me, and patiently set aside their own needs while I concentrated on completing my thesis. I deeply cherish you all.

My sincere gratitude is extended to my advisor, Dr Hermien Olivier, for her thorough guidance, constructive challenges, and heartfelt concern – not only for my academic progress but also for my personal well-being. Your exceptional support is genuinely appreciated.

My great-grandparents, Missionary Robert Franz and Helene Franz, emigrated from their homeland to South Africa, dedicating their lives to the betterment of others. They continue to inspire me to reflect on my own responsibility to society.

To my departed loved ones – my father, Tony van der Spek; my mother, Hester Roos; my sister-in-law, Carin van der Spek; Rolf Gevers; Marelise Gevers; and Nico Gevers – thank you for shaping my character and steering me towards understanding my life's purpose.

Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to my language editor, Dr Lee-Anne Roux, for her quick turnaround and compassionate approach.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Alex, Rainer, Ilgar, Armand, Mishkah, Logan, Beate, Liandi, Liezl and Krijn.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative embedded case study explored the integration of Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS), specifically Ubuntu and African proverbs, within South Africa's educational framework, with the objective of Africanising career education in high schools. The study involved 30 Grade 9 learners (15 from a public high school and 15 from a private high school in Gauteng Province, South Africa), as well as two Life Orientation teachers from the respective schools. The study explored the persistent prevalence of a Western-centric curriculum, which has remained predominantly unchanged since the establishment of democracy in 1994, thereby marginalising cultural diversity in a country facing a youth unemployment rate of 58.5%. This oversight intensifies difficulties in identity formation during Erikson's fifth developmental stage, which are further aggravated by the emergence of automation and the demands of the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

The research employed a combination of interpretivist and Indigenous methodologies, unfolding in two phases: first, five-week workshops incorporating reflective talking circles based on Ubuntu principles and African proverbs to indigenise the concepts of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence); second, semi-structured interviews with teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of career education within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

The findings highlighted the transformative potential of IAKS in enhancing career preparedness by incorporating cultural relevance, fostering independent learning, and strengthening adolescent identity amid technological disruption. Learners from public schools expressed significant socio-economic concerns, in contrast to their private-school peers, reflecting persistent disparities in access to resources. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with inadequate professional development and institutional barriers. The study recommends a synergistic Afrocentric-Eurocentric curricular framework to empower learners, integrating Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS) into the Life Orientation syllabus (particularly the World of Work section), improving teacher training in Africanised pedagogies, and enacting legislative changes to promote an inclusive educational environment.

The study advocates for longitudinal research to assess the long-term feasibility of fair career education in various educational settings, thereby promoting sustainable youth empowerment aligned with South Africa's socio-historical needs.

Keywords: Indigenous African Knowledge Systems, Ubuntu, African proverbs, Africanise, career education, career construction, decolonisation, youth unemployment, career adaptability, Life Orientation, South African schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
5IR	Fifth Industrial Revolution
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CCT	Career Construction Theory
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAKS	Indigenous African Knowledge Systems
IB	International Baccalaureate
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
LO	Life Orientation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PEC	Person–environment correspondence
PPS	Professional Provident Society
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory

SDL	Self-Directed Learning
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STF	Systems Theory Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
Unisa	University of South Africa
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter establishes the foundation for examining how Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS) can transform South Africa's Eurocentric career education, thereby preparing learners more effectively for a dynamic job market. Figure 1 presents an overview of the chapter's main sections.

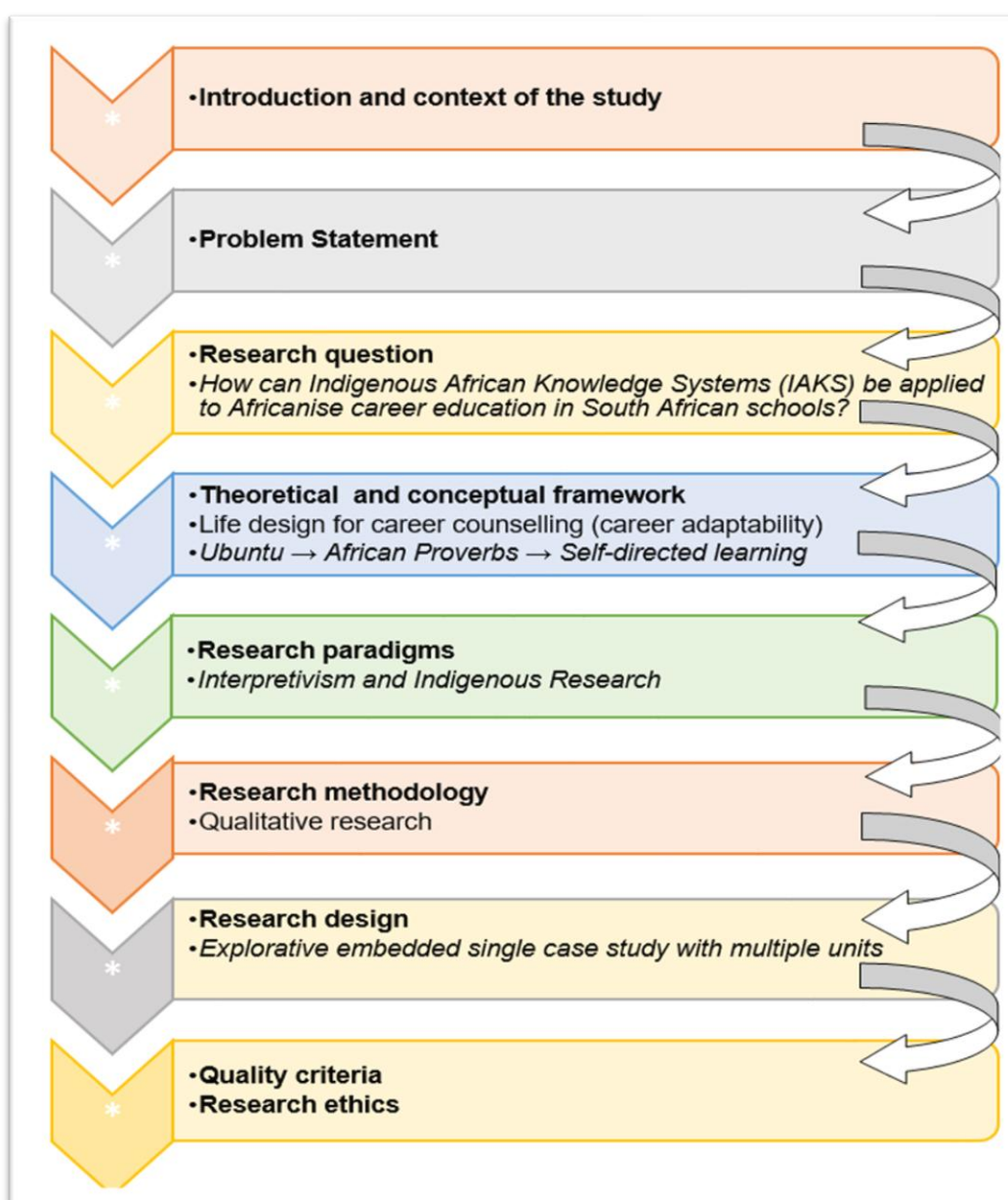


Figure 1: Overview of Chapter 1

1.2 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The challenge of establishing a decolonised curriculum in African education arises from a persistent focus on Eurocentric perspectives concerning African learners. This focus often overlooks indigenous, Afrocentric teaching methods, which are grounded in cultural and communal values (Bhudha et al., 2023). The structure and content of school education and curricula have largely remained unchanged since the end of apartheid in 1994. This continuity preserves a strict separation between coloniser and colonised perspectives, limits cross-cultural diversity, and overlooks variations in knowledge systems (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). The Eurocentric approach fails to integrate both theoretical and practical learning that would enable learners to address community-specific challenges. Historically, IAKS were dismissed as obsolete until recent academic developments recognised their value in promoting culturally responsive education (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Da Silva et al., 2024).

The fifth industrial revolution (5IR), centred on personalisation and emerging after the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, builds on the fourth industrial revolution's (4IR) focus on digitisation and information exchange among businesses, machines, and people (Sarfraz et al., 2021; Anil, 2025). This advanced society relies on artificial intelligence (AI) to bridge the divide between human and machine capabilities through cognitive computing, with automation potentially rendering numerous professional, desk-based, and managerial positions obsolete (Anil, 2025). In South Africa, such technological developments intensify economic difficulties, as Statistics South Africa reports a youth unemployment rate of 58.5% among individuals aged 15 to 24 in the third quarter of 2025. Of the 10.3 million young people in this age group, almost 3.5 million (33.9%) were neither employed nor enrolled in school nor participating in training programmes (NEET) (Dludla, 2025; Maluleke, 2025). Adolescence represents a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, encompassing the approximate age range of 12 to 18 years (Patterson, 2018).

South African high school learners face a precarious situation shaped by the nation's history of colonisation and poverty, as they navigate the challenging transition from education to employment during adolescence. The Professional Provident Society's Student Confidence Index shows that only 19% of learners felt adequately prepared for the move from high school to university. This gap extends beyond academic readiness, revealing a systemic failure to equip young people for the challenges

ahead. A striking 80% of learners reported feeling unprepared, citing insufficient guidance from both schools and parents (Professional Provident Society, 2025).

The phase where learners choose school subjects in Grade 10 aligns with Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development, *identity versus role confusion*, where they explore their sense of self (Pillay, 2020; Gross, 2020). As job stability declines, career adaptability – which includes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence – becomes essential for navigating the evolving job market (Pillay, 2020; Stead & Subich, 2024). Nevertheless, the lack of organised in-class career education sessions facilitated by Life Orientation (LO) teachers, coupled with limited research on Africanising career education, complicates learners' career decision-making. Such gaps indicate the necessity for further investigation into culturally relevant frameworks (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024; Sikhwari et al., 2025).

To address the Eurocentric limitations in research, this study adopted the career adaptability construct, integrating IAKS – particularly the Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs – to inform and enrich Africanised career construction activities. By anchoring the methodology in these culturally relevant frameworks, the approach promotes self-directed learning (SDL), encourages cross-cultural diversity, and helps bridge the gap between coloniser and colonised perspectives in career education research (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). These dynamic frameworks can support learners in preparing for career planning and shaping their career identity, thereby facilitating their successful transition into the workforce.

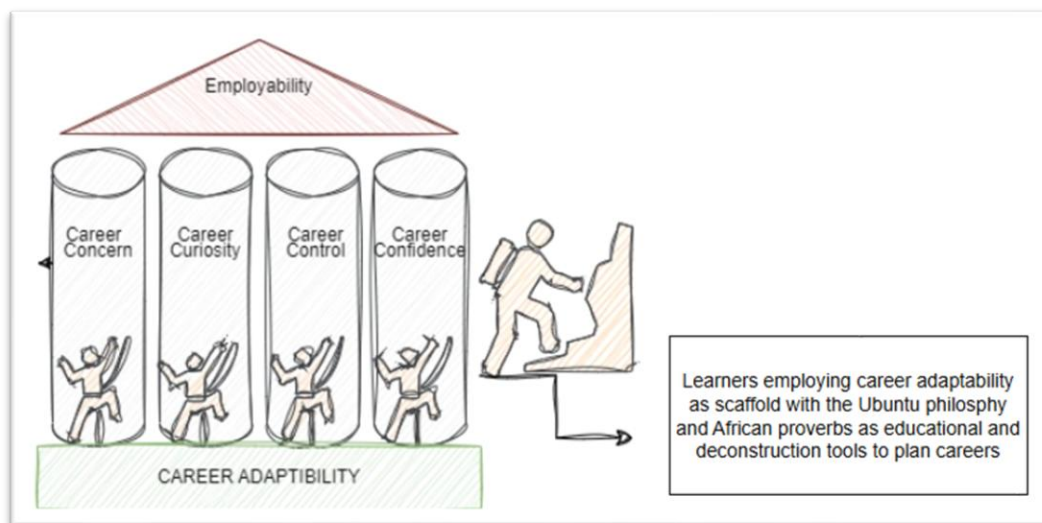


Figure 2: Researcher's rendition of Phase 1 of the study

1.3 PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE STUDY

My interest in how South African youth prepare for work developed over two decades of interviewing numerous entry-level job seekers, informed by my varied experience as a former teacher, recruitment consultant, narrative counsellor, and owner of a Gauteng-based recruitment agency. During this time, I became increasingly concerned that many school leavers have a limited understanding of workplace expectations, alongside a lack of practical skills and self-awareness. This situation points to a wider issue in their transition to professional life.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A range of complex challenges has hindered learners from actively participating in the workforce. Firstly, the continued use of outdated, Eurocentric career education in schools does not equip learners with the career adaptability required to navigate an uncertain and rapidly changing labour market. Secondly, the persistently high youth unemployment rate in South Africa presents a significant barrier to accessing entry-level opportunities. Thirdly, adolescent identity confusion further contributes to disengagement, as young people find it difficult to align their aspirations with realistic career paths (Gross, 2020; Staff Writer, 2021). The Eurocentric career education models in South African schools hinder cross-cultural diversity (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018).

The limited availability of practical career guidance for learners is a significant concern, as they currently receive minimal support in schools and often lack the financial resources to consult an experienced career counsellor (Maree, 2020b). Building on the discussion, the Department of Science and Technology's (2021) *Indigenous Knowledge Systems Report* recommended that the Department of Education (DoE) initiate efforts to integrate IAKS into school curricula and appropriate accreditation frameworks.

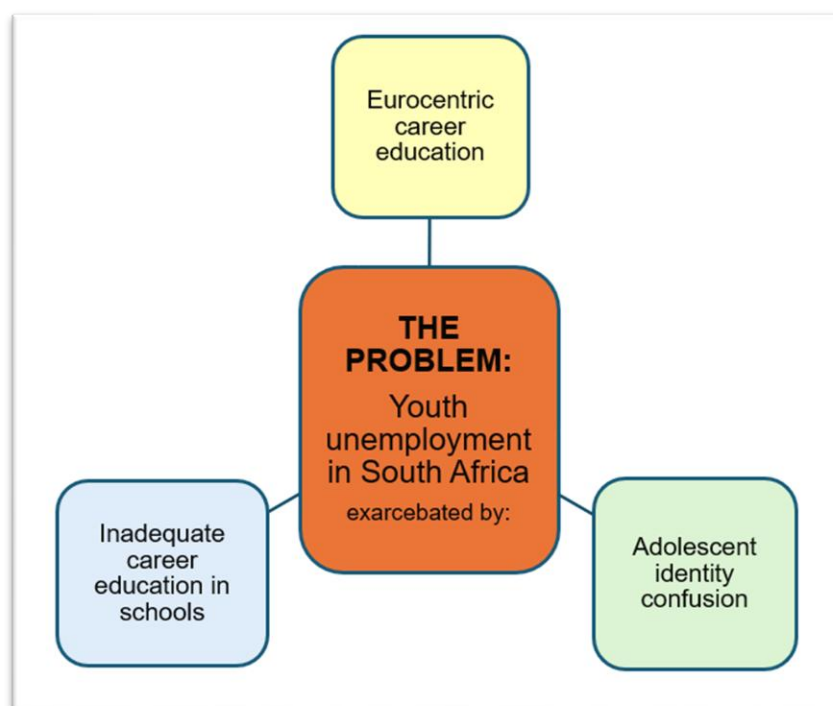


Figure 3: The problem – youth unemployment

Ubuntu, grounded in the African philosophy of “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” (a person is a person through other persons), provides a culturally relevant framework for resolving adolescent identity confusion (Ramose, 1999). By emphasising interconnectedness, communal belonging, and relational self-definition, Ubuntu shifts adolescents’ focus from individualistic uncertainty to finding purpose through responsibility to family, community, and ancestors (Tutu, 1999; Erikson, 1968). In the South African context, this approach helps mitigate identity fragmentation caused by rapid social change and supports the integration of Indigenous African Knowledge Systems into career education (Letseka, 2012).

The researcher explored the African philosophy of academic knowledge transfer to facilitate positive outcomes for these young learners. IAKS, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, together with the career adaptability construct, could potentially serve as a framework to Africanise career education and assist diverse learners in preparing for, and forming, career trajectories.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question guiding this study was:

How might IAKS be integrated into the career education curriculum within South African schools?

The following supplementary research questions were formulated to address all facets of the main research question:

1. How can the career adaptability psychosocial construct be Africanised to assist learners in their career-building exercises?
2. What are learners' perceptions of career education and employability?
3. How can IAKS, particularly Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, be practically operationalised to Africanise career education in South African schools?
4. How do learners interact and respond to Ubuntu-informed talking circles during the IAKS-based workshop sessions?
5. What are teachers' views on teaching vocational education in South African Schools?
6. What are the similarities and differences in learner reflection between a public and a private school?

1.6 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Aims

The study aims to:

1. Advance multiculturalism, inclusion, and curriculum transformation by integrating an Afrocentric perspective and IAKS into the predominantly Eurocentric framework of educational knowledge and teaching practices in Life Orientation, thereby creating space for culturally relevant career education that prepares all learners for meaningful career trajectories.
2. Africanise the career adaptability psychosocial construct using Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs as deconstruction and educational tools, assisting learners in their career-building exercises, fostering SDL and equipping them to navigate and form resilient career trajectories in the South African context.

3. Explore learners' perceptions of career education and employability, together with their responses to group work in IAKS-informed workshops, to gain deep insight into how these factors influence the preparation for and active formation of career trajectories among South African school learners.
4. Understand and interpret teachers' reflections on career education and the integration of IAKS in South African schools, identifying enablers, barriers, and opportunities for embedding Afrocentric approaches that support effective career trajectory preparation and formation.
5. Identify similarities and differences in learner reflections and perspectives between public and private high schools, with the goal of promoting equitable, context-sensitive career education that prepares learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds for successful career trajectories.
6. Generate evidence-based, practical recommendations for the integration of IAKS into career education curricula, teacher professional development, and policy, thereby contributing to the decolonisation of education and the enhancement of learners' career trajectories in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.6.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. To explore the Africanisation of the career adaptability psychosocial construct utilising IAKS to assist Grade 9 learners in career development (Phase 1: Africanising career adaptability).
2. To explore learners' perceptions of career education and employability in South African schools, with particular attention to how these perceptions shape their readiness to prepare for and actively form career trajectories (Phase 1: learner engagement).
3. To explore practical strategies for integrating IAKS into career education within the Life Orientation curriculum in South African schools and providing a model

for Afrocentric curriculum transformation that prepares learners for relevant career trajectories (Phase 1 and 2: learner- and teacher feedback).

4. To understand and explore how learners interact and respond to talking circles during IAKS-based workshop sessions, examining the role of Ubuntu-informed collaboration in developing interpersonal and reflective skills for career development (Phase 1 – workshop: the practice of IAKS: Ubuntu and African Proverbs).
5. To explain teachers' views on teaching career education and the incorporation of IAKS in the South African school curriculum, identifying implications for effective implementation that support learners' and systemic challenges (Phase 2: teacher perspectives).
6. To identify and compare similarities and differences in learner reflections and perspectives between a public and a private high school, highlighting issues of equity and access in career education so that all learners, regardless of school context, can be prepared for and supported in forming viable career trajectories (Phase 1: Public vs private school perceptions).
7. To synthesise the findings across all research questions and offer practical, evidence-based suggestions for future practice, including curriculum design, teacher training, and policy recommendations that embed IAKS to better prepare South African learners for the formation of meaningful, resilient, and culturally aligned career trajectories (Key considerations).

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Career construction theory (CCT)

CCT views career selection as a meaningful process that enables individuals to plan and pursue careers aligned with their aspirations (Savickas, 2020). It advocates for sustainable, decent work and fosters a sense of purpose in one's career. By emphasising narratives, actions, life themes, role clarification, and self-reflection, *CCT* provides the conceptual framework for this study (Maree, 2019).

1.7.2 Career adaptability

The study explored the construct of *career adaptability*, which includes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence in individuals (Stead & Subich, 2024). This dynamic process facilitates career development throughout the lifespan, promoting a more flexible approach to life planning within CCT (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). The study consisted of five workshop sessions in Phase 1, integrating IAKS, the Ubuntu philosophy, and African proverbs to promote career adaptability, inform career trajectories, and nurture a sense of purpose.

1.7.3 Africanism

Africanism is a philosophy that centres African experiences, values and ways of knowing, and Africanise is the active process of transforming education (curriculum, pedagogy and institutional practices) to reflect African realities, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and cultural perspectives (Msila & Gumbo, 2016). Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) and Banda and Banda (2017) argue that Africa's reliance on foreign research limits the advancement of African scholarship. They suggest that education should enable learners to make sense of their own experiences, using schools as a foundation and advocating for Afrocentric research that values cultural and social inclusion (Nkosinkulu, 2021).

For Phases 1 and 2 of the study, the researcher incorporated Africanism by utilising IAKS to enhance the research.

1.7.4 Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS)

Nkosinkulu (2021) and Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) describe *IAKS* as a philosophical system that guides Indigenous individuals within their cultural context, as well as a distinctive perspective grounded in traditional local practices. The study utilised IAKS, particularly Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, as educational tools to deepen Grade 9 high school learners' understanding of career adaptability.

1.7.5 Instructional scaffolding

Instructional scaffolding in education draws on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), providing tailored support to learners and progressively reducing guidance as their competence grows, thereby fostering independent learning (Main,

2021). Within the five workshop sessions, the career adaptability construct functioned as an instructional scaffold to equip learners for the demands of the workplace.

1.7.6 African proverbs

African proverbs inspire critical thinking, creativity, and broaden understanding, creating a supportive environment for learners to explore diverse viewpoints (Babalola & Alu, 2019). The researcher employed African proverbs in Phase 1 of the study to explore the four elements of career adaptability, thereby encouraging innovative thinking among the learners.

1.7.7 Ubuntu philosophy

Ubuntu, a moral philosophy rooted in IAKS, holds particular significance for Black African communities, as it foregrounds interdependence and communal values (Shange, 2021). Ubuntu can significantly contribute to career planning, identity development, and the decolonisation process in South Africa (Sefotho, 2021). The philosophy was incorporated into both phases of the study to shape learners' approaches to career planning and identity formation, as well as to advance the decolonisation of career education.

The terms '*Ubuntu philosophy*' and '*Ubuntu*' are used interchangeably in this study to refer to the African moral belief system centred on interdependence and communal values.

1.7.8 Self-directed learning

SDL involves individuals identifying their learning needs, setting goals, selecting resources and techniques, and assessing the outcomes independently or with guidance (Botha et al., 2025). Phase 1 involved learners engaging in *SDL*, identifying their work needs, and becoming motivated to seek external resources to prepare for the world of work.

1.7.9 Adolescence

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, spanning approximately ages 12 to 18 (Patterson, 2018). Grade 9 learners in South Africa experience a critical identity crisis, requiring a continuous progression between childhood and their future selves, while balancing self-perception with others'

expectations (Maehler & Hernández-Torrano, 2025). African *adolescence* is shaped by indigenous influences, resulting in a hybrid identity that emphasises social integration over individualism (Nsamenang, 2002). This study involved Grade 9 learners in South Africa, exploring their experiences within the school system during adolescence.

1.7.10 National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

Career education in South African schools is guided by the *National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS), which informs all subjects from Grades R to 12 and shapes the structure and delivery of career-focused learning (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2025a). For this study, the researcher sought to integrate IAKS into the Grade 9 LO and career education syllabus, particularly the World of Work section.

1.8 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Theoretical frameworks are tools used to interpret findings by proposing concepts and relationships, and to explain the narrative that emerges from the analysis. They consist of interconnected ideas intended to guide research and clarify the study's results (Van der Walddt, 2024).

1.8.1 Career construction theory

CCT describes how individuals make career choices, using self-agency to manage change and understand work tasks. It offers a framework for understanding work-related behaviour, and includes strategies for career advancement (Savickas, 2020).

1.8.2 Career adaptability

Career adaptability constitutes a central theme within CCT. It represents a vital dimension of career development, centring on an individual's psychological and social capacities to navigate present and anticipated tasks, job transitions, and work-related demands. The concept originated within the life-span, life-space theory, initially introduced to address the limitations of career maturity. Over the past two decades, scholarly attention has increasingly shifted towards career adaptability, supplanting the notion of maturity, as adaptability is regarded as fundamental for constructing successful careers and effectively shaping one's life. Career adaptability

encompasses the capacity to modify oneself and one's circumstances in order to manage career exploration, decision-making, and transitions (Cadaret & Hartung, 2021).

1.8.3 Indigenous African Knowledge Systems

*I*AKS plays an integral role in the daily lives and traditions of South Africa's indigenous communities. It is reflected in spiritual and cultural ceremonies, agricultural practices, and health interventions. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) arises from the distinct social contexts and lived experiences of these communities (Department of Science and Technology, 2021). The Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, incorporated in Phases 1 and 2, are rooted in IAKS.

1.8.4 African proverbs

African proverbs play a vital role in transmitting traditional philosophical sayings and the wisdom of elders to younger generations (Sheposh, 2020). These proverbs cover all aspects of human life, guiding individuals towards virtue and wisdom, while offering advice on living meaningfully and teaching moral values (Babalola & Alu, 2019). The workshop described in the study used African proverbs to explore the four elements of career adaptability — concern, control, curiosity, and confidence — thereby strengthening learners' creative thinking and practical skills.

1.8.5 Self-directed learning

SDL is an educational approach that empowers learners to take charge of their own learning journey. Through this method, learners establish their learning objectives, identify appropriate resources, and select effective strategies. They then acquire new knowledge or skills and subsequently evaluate the outcomes of their efforts (Germeroth, 2024). In Phase 1 of the study, learners employed SDL strategies, with an emphasis on aspects of career adaptability such as concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, thereby transitioning from passive recipients to active participants.

1.9 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A *paradigm* comprises fundamental beliefs and philosophical concepts that shape scholarly research, serving as a perspective and worldview to guide study design, implementation, and outcomes (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). In this study, the researcher

integrated two complementary paradigms: an interpretivist approach to examine and interpret learners' perspectives and teachers' interviews, alongside elements of the Indigenous research paradigm to address the needs of diverse South African learners, thereby ensuring a culturally responsive framework.

1.9.1 Interpretivist paradigm

The study adopted an *interpretivist paradigm*, rooted in phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophies, which views human experiences as distinct from physical phenomena (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). In contrast to positivism, interpretivism acknowledges that cultural, situational, and temporal variations shape diverse social realities, making it unsuitable to study humans as if they were physical entities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). By focusing on participants' internal thoughts, this approach enabled the researcher to thoroughly explore the phenomenon under investigation, relying on participants' perspectives to inform the study's findings (Kankam, 2019). This paradigm complemented the study's use of CCT and its integration of interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms to address the diverse needs of South African learners.

1.9.2 Indigenous research paradigm

This study also adopted the principles of the *indigenous research paradigm*, characterised by a relativist and relational ontology shaped by multiple socially constructed realities that emerge from diverse relationships (Held, 2019). Culture functions as a lens through which individuals interpret, comprehend, and ascribe meaning to reality, with spirituality and reciprocity constituting essential elements (Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021; Schneider & Kayseas, 2018). Held (2019) asserts that the epistemology of this paradigm is intersubjective, depending on shared understanding, while its axiological approach is informed by interpersonal accountability, valuing the relationships cultivated throughout the research process to facilitate respectful representation and meaningful exchange.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This section outlines the research methods and design of the study, highlighting the qualitative research approach through a single embedded case study.

1.10.1 Research approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach, which prioritised understanding meaning through language rather than numerical data (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). This method involves individuals interpreting social issues and drawing on various forms of empirical evidence, such as case studies, narratives, reflections, personal experiences, interviews, artefacts, observations and transcripts, to help individuals understand and interpret life challenges (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

1.10.2 Exploratory single case study with multiple embedded units

This study utilised an exploratory, multiple embedded, single-case study design. Creswell and Poth (2023) define a *case study* as a qualitative method in which the researcher engages with a specific individual, group, organisation, or partnership – referred to as a bounded unit – within either a single-site or multi-site context for a predetermined period (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

1.11 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was employed in Phase 1 of the study to select participants who aligned with the research objectives intentionally. In Phase 2, convenience sampling was used, with participants chosen based on accessibility and availability to streamline the research process.

1.11.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling enables researchers to deliberately select participants who possess significant knowledge of a specific phenomenon and who represent a group, event, place, or category relevant to the study's objectives (Creswell et al., 2018).

1.11.2 Convenience sampling

In Phase 2, the researcher identified and engaged a LO teacher at the two schools hosting the workshops conducted for this study. Their selection was determined by their accessibility and willingness to participate in an interview (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

1.12 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Qualitative data collection facilitates the identification and analysis of research phenomena through methods such as narratives, listening, observation, and digital content analysis (Flick, 2018). Such data enable the development of rich, detailed accounts and support a more comprehensive and contextualised understanding of the field.

1.12.1 Semi-structured open-ended interviews

The study employed *semi-structured interviews* with South African teachers, integrating verbal, non-verbal, visual, auditory, and written components to gather authentic data (Billups, 2021). Open-ended questions were used to enable teachers to share their experiences, perspectives, and underlying reasoning in depth.

1.12.2 Informal observation

Observation was used to collect authentic data from natural social interactions in Phase 1, specifically during the workshops, capturing participants' actions, non-verbal cues, and interpersonal dynamics (Billups, 2021). Reflective notes were documented after each session to support systematic reflection and data analysis.

1.12.3 Talking circles – group discussions

In Phase 1, the study utilised *pedagogical talking circles* to decolonise and indigenise educational practices, cultivating mutual, relationship-based learning grounded in situated relatedness, respectful listening, and reflective witnessing (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). This method established a framework that prioritised connection, attentiveness, and thoughtful observation.

1.12.4 Reflective practice: Reflective writing, doodling, and journalling

In Phase 1, the study utilised *reflective writing*, *doodling*, and *journalling* as qualitative research tools to document the experiences of both participants and researchers. The reflective journal captured perceptions, insights, and potential biases, while writing and doodling on worksheets enabled learners to engage with complex ideas through written reflections and visual representations. These methods fostered credible, participant-driven findings, aligning with the study's focus on the diverse experiences of South African learners (Billups, 2021, pp. 153–165).

1.13 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis involves interpreting and extracting meaning from textual and visual data by deconstructing it into smaller components before synthesising these into a cohesive whole (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The dynamic interplay inherent in this approach differentiates qualitative research from quantitative research, demonstrating a methodology that remains both flexible and responsive as the study progresses (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

1.13.1 Reflexive thematic analysis

The study utilised *reflexive thematic analysis*, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022), alongside indigenous research methods. Integrating this approach with Indigenous theorising allowed for the emergence of concepts and theories grounded in the lived experiences of Indigenous communities, a principle integral to Indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2021).

ATLAS.ti was employed to facilitate data analysis, integrating human analytical expertise with AI to achieve rapid and accurate results. The synergy between these elements strengthened the reliability of the insights generated, thereby establishing

ATLAS.ti as a valuable research instrument (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025).

1.14 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Qualitative studies in South Africa play an important role in informing educational practices (Stahl & King, 2020). Ensuring reliability is essential when evaluating learners' achievement and the effectiveness of the curriculum. Stahl and King (2020) highlight four key criteria for establishing trustworthiness and dependability of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are described in more detail below.

1.14.1 Credibility

Qualitative research depends on rigorous methods, suitable designs, and coherent theoretical frameworks to establish credibility (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). Techniques such as triangulation, respondent validation, data saturation, reflexivity, peer review, and ongoing observation contributed to the credibility of the study's findings (Yadav, 2022).

1.14.2 Transferability

Transferability concerns the applicability of findings to other settings, which is facilitated by providing detailed descriptions, considering various contexts, and using typical sampling (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a; Yadav, 2022). This approach allowed the researcher to assess the relevance of the outcomes to their own contexts, linking specific results to broader implications.

1.14.3 Dependability

Dependability prioritises a flexible research approach, precise documentation, and ongoing reflection, reinforced by audit trails, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stahl & King, 2020). These practices enhance the consistency and trustworthiness of the research process.

1.14.4 Confirmability

Yadav (2022) and Nieuwenhuis (2025b) emphasise *confirmability* as a vital criterion for qualitative research, ensuring the study's findings accurately reflected learners' perspectives and avoided researcher bias.

1.15 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical considerations are fundamental in research involving human participants, requiring voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Qualitative research often presents challenges such as distorted perspectives, necessitating reflexive practices. Segalo and Molobela (2019) propose an Africanist, decolonial ethical framework that privileges contextual relevance and Ubuntu's communal respect over Eurocentric autonomy. Chilisa and Phatshwane (2022) identify eight ethical considerations in Indigenous research, referred to as the “eight R's” (refer to Table 30: Ethical considerations in indigenous research (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022)). The researcher completed the ethics application process for the University of South Africa (Unisa), securing written consent from the Gauteng DoE, school principals, academics, and teachers, as well as voluntary consent from parents and participants. The Unisa Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved (reference number 2023/10/11/59371064/14/AM, addendum 1) these protocols, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines throughout the research process.

1.16 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.16.1 Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations related to its geographical and demographic scope, logistical constraints, ethical considerations, and the nature of the teacher interviews. The research was confined to Gauteng province, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other provinces or educational contexts within South Africa with different socio-economic and cultural contexts. However, as this is an interpretivist qualitative study, the aim was not statistical generalisability but rather transferability through thick, rich description that allows readers to assess applicability to similar settings.

The semi-structured interviews with teachers were subject to time constraints, as both participants had limited availability due to heavy teaching workloads. Additionally, teachers may have been hesitant to openly criticise the national curriculum or school policies, potentially limiting the depth of critical commentary on systemic barriers.

Social desirability bias may have influenced learners' responses during the workshops and reflective writing activities, as participants may have provided answers they

perceived as socially acceptable. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to mitigate this risk.

1.16.2 Delimitations

The study was deliberately delimited to focus on career education within selected high schools in Gauteng province, South Africa. It specifically targeted Grade 9 learners and LO teachers, as this phase of schooling is considered critical for identity formation and early career development within the CAPS curriculum. The research design prioritised an interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigm to explore learners' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives.

Data collection was confined to semi-structured interviews and workshop-based activities, reflecting the study's emphasis on qualitative inquiry rather than large-scale quantitative measurement. Drawing on the experience of a former teacher, the study intentionally narrowed its scope to examine the Africanisation of career education and the role of IAKS in promoting career adaptability. These delimitations were necessary to maintain methodological coherence and ensure in-depth, contextually grounded analysis. A detailed exploration of the study's delimitations is provided in Section 6.9.

The scope was further delimited to public high schools in Gauteng to enable an intensive, contextually rich examination within a province where the researcher possessed prior professional experience and established access. This geographical and demographic focus supported the collection of authentic, culturally nuanced data on local career-education practices while remaining feasible within the study's resource and time constraints.

The sample size was determined according to the principles of qualitative research, with the explicit rationale of reaching data saturation. This ensured sufficient depth and richness of insight into participants' perspectives on Africanised career adaptability and IAKS integration, without expanding the sample to a point where the intensive, interpretive analysis would be compromised.

Purposive sampling was employed as it allowed the deliberate selection of information-rich cases, specifically Grade 9 LO teachers with direct experience of the CAPS career-education component and learners at a pivotal stage of identity and career development. This non-probability approach aligned with the interpretivist and

Indigenous paradigmatic orientation, maximising the relevance and depth of the data while avoiding the dilution that random sampling might introduce in a small-scale qualitative study.

1.17 RESEARCH PLAN AND TIMELINE

The research for this study was executed in two phases, as illustrated in the figure below:

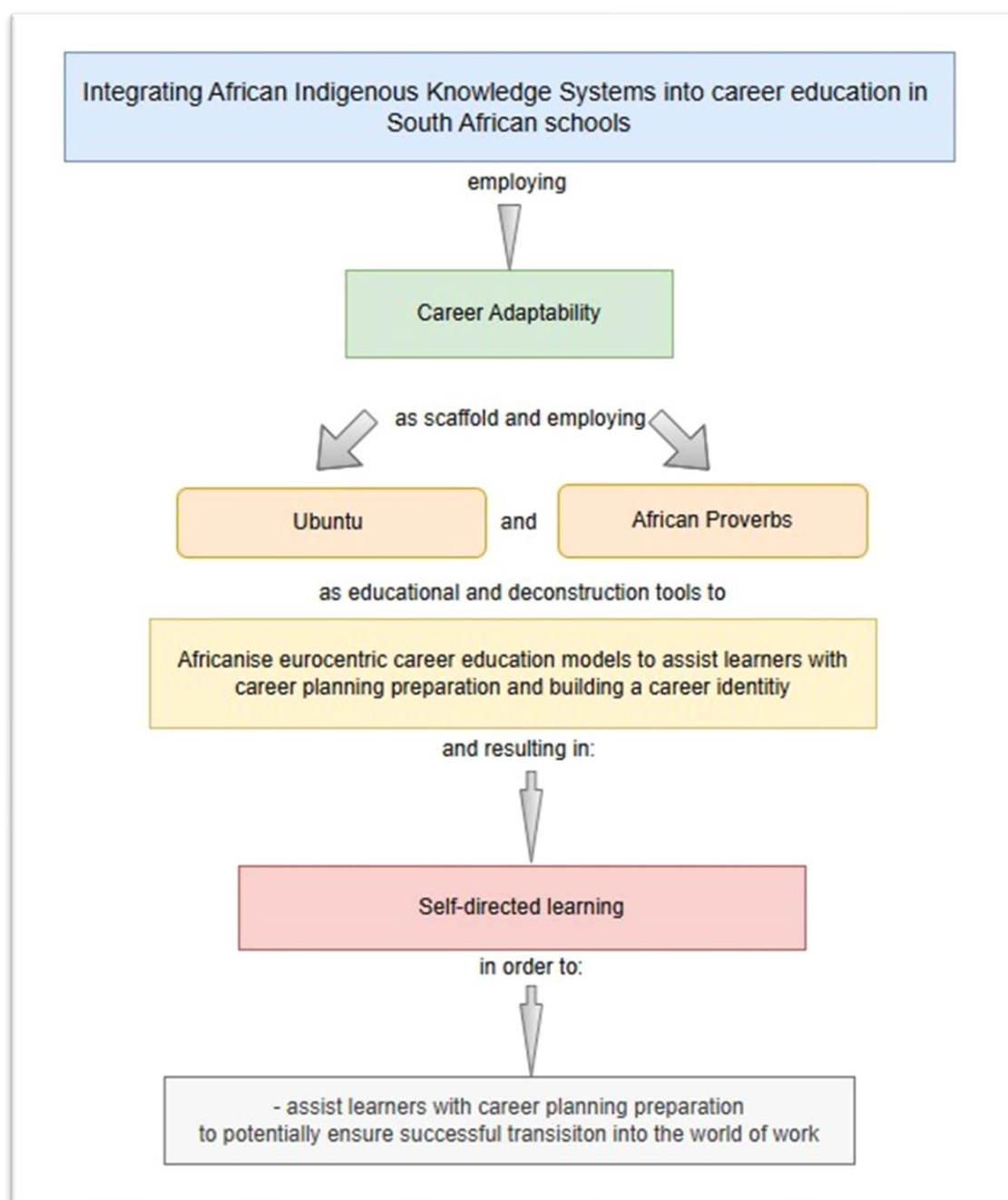


Figure 4: Graphical depiction of the research plan

1.17.1 Phase 1: Workshop with learners

This study aimed to assist learners in preparing for their careers through two phases. Phase 1 focused on the practical application of career adaptability, using talking circles to explore how learners practised Ubuntu within a structured setting. The research took place during the second term of the academic calendar, with five consecutive weeks of one-hour sessions held after school. The career adaptability framework was broken down using African proverbs as guiding tools. Over the remaining four weeks, each session addressed a different aspect of the career adaptability construct, with a relevant African proverb serving as the foundation for reflection. This approach created a clear connection between the elements of career adaptability and learners' involvement.

1.17.2 Phase 2: Interviews with teachers

The researcher adapted the interview schedule to accommodate participants' availability. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were used, and each interview was limited to approximately one hour. This approach facilitated in-depth and relevant contributions, ensuring a coherent yet flexible interview environment that supported rich data collection.

The Interview Questionnaire for the LO Teachers comprised the following questions:

- What is your view of career education in South African schools?
- Have learners discussed or offered opinions regarding the effectiveness of the career education syllabus?
- What content would you like to see in a future career education syllabus, or are you satisfied with the existing syllabus?
- What are your thoughts on the Africanisation of the syllabus, i.e., integrating IAKS into the syllabus, which would encourage learners to explore the world of work better?

1.18 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This thesis addresses a significant gap in the Africanisation of career education within South African high schools, where the Eurocentric CAPS career education curriculum largely overlooks IAKS. By empirically demonstrating how IAKS can be incorporated into career adaptability, the study offers a valuable contribution to the development of a culturally relevant career education curriculum, particularly for young people facing high unemployment rates and uncertainty regarding subject choices in Grade 9. The study's significance lies in proposing a hybrid multicultural Afrocentric-Eurocentric model that fosters resilience, cultural pride, and adaptive strategies, presenting transformative implications for equitable education policy and practice in South Africa.

1.19 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is structured into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research problem, context, aims and objectives, significance of the study, and the overall structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant national and international literature on career education, Africanisation, IAKS, and career adaptability, establishing the theoretical grounding for the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the study, including the key paradigms, concepts, and assumptions that guide the research.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter describes the research design, methodology, participants, data collection methods, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion

This chapter presents and analyses the data, interprets the findings, and discusses them in relation to the literature and research objectives.

Chapter 6: Findings, Limitations, and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the main findings, outlines the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

1.20 CONCLUSION

This chapter established the foundation for a qualitative study that integrated interpretive and Indigenous African research methodologies, drawing on postcolonial and career construction theories. Firstly, it articulated the objective of incorporating IAKS, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, into teaching practices to develop a more balanced career education curriculum that reflects both African and Eurocentric perspectives. It then described how the study employed workshops with Grade 9 learners and interviews with teachers as a case study to explore the Africanisation of career education within South African schools. In doing so, it demonstrated the potential of this approach to equip learners for the professional world, taking into account South Africa's complex historical and contemporary challenges. Accordingly, this chapter set the stage for the following chapter, which reviews literature on African philosophy, Africanisation, adolescence, the South African school system, and career theories to support the study's direction.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The figure below illustrates the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

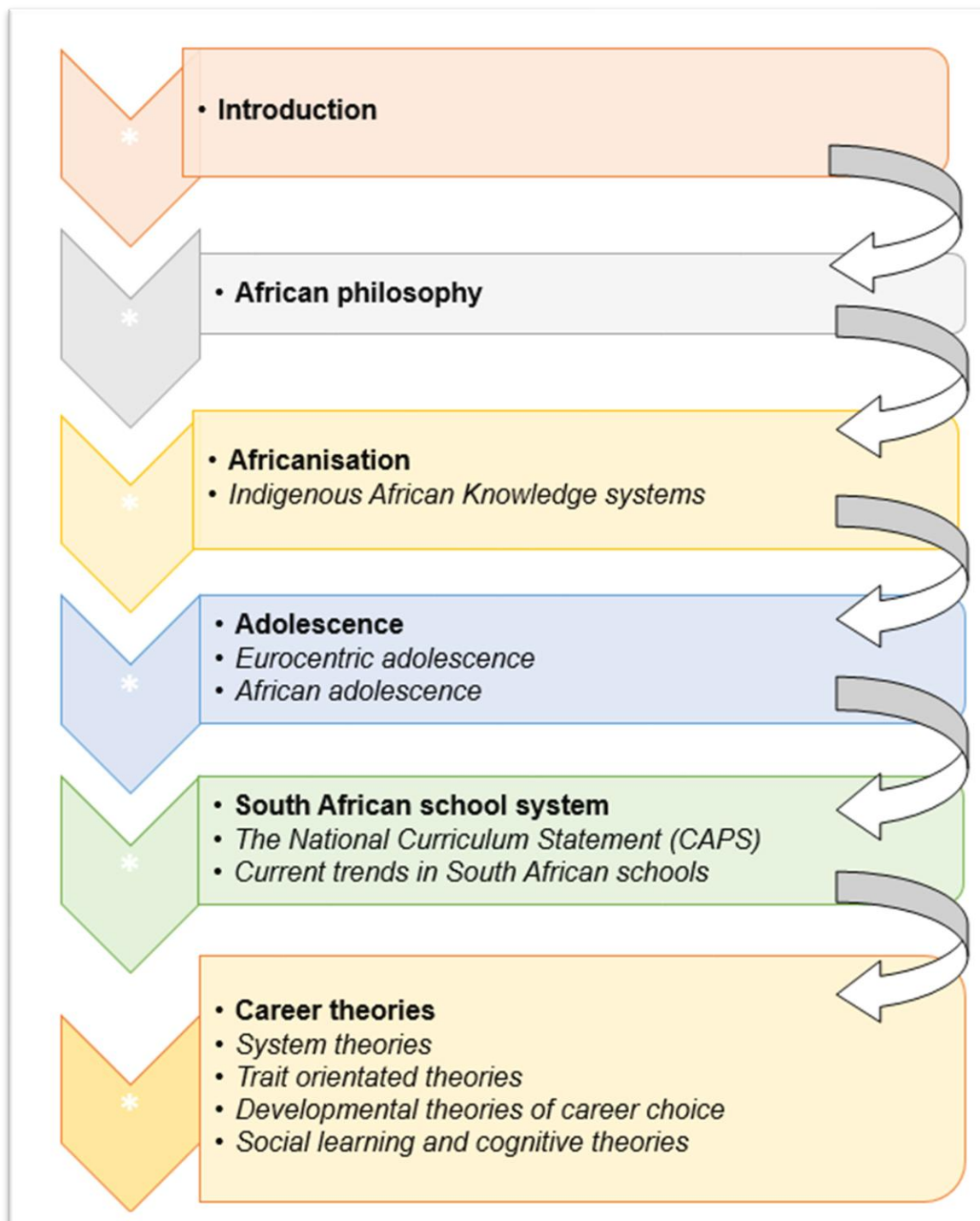


Figure 5: Overview of Chapter 2

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the topic of the study and outlined the main elements of the research process. This chapter explores current literature relevant to the study. It incorporates the concept of ‘career adaptability’, which refers to the ability to navigate challenges encountered in career development with the support of IAKS, specifically Ubuntu and African proverbs. Framed by African proverbs, these elements of career adaptability collectively establish an Africanised framework for career education. To begin, an analysis of African philosophy is presented, providing a foundation for understanding the application of Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs in Phase 1 of the study. This is followed by a discussion of the historical context of South African schools, with a focus on the experiences of Grade 9 learners within this setting. Lastly, prominent career theories are outlined, and the demands placed on individuals by the contemporary world of work are considered.

2.3 AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

African philosophy examines knowledge, reality, and human actions from the perspectives of people in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Sheposh, 2020). Unlike older traditions, the idea of a single, shared African philosophy emerged more recently, gaining prominence in the 20th century. However, Sheposh (2020) notes that defining it has been challenging due to Africa's wide range of cultures. Nevertheless, a distinctive worldview – shaped by traditional spiritual beliefs and community values – has played a significant role in the formation of African philosophy (Sheposh, 2020).

SSA resisted the influences of Egypt, Christianity, and Islam, thereby fostering diverse cultures with distinct languages and customs (Sheposh, 2020). From the 15th century, coastal trade with Europeans began, followed by the late 19th-century ‘Scramble for Africa’ for resources, which resulted in the division of the continent into European colonies. Consequently, Africa was fragmented into territories under European control. During the 1950s and 1960s, many SSA nations pursued independence, and by 1980, nearly all had gained freedom from European rule (Sheposh, 2020). Notably, these communities relied primarily on oral traditions rather than written records until the 19th and 20th centuries, transmitting knowledge through proverbs from wise elders

to younger generations. Although their cultures varied, these groups often shared common values and religious ideas (Sheposh, 2020).

Interestingly, Metz (2022) contends that describing something as African or SSA does not necessarily mean it originates exclusively from that region; rather, it suggests that certain features are particularly prevalent or distinct within that context. Consequently, this clarification does not point to fundamentally different elements compared to Western or other cultural traditions. Instead, it draws attention to the unique qualities and customs of Indigenous Black communities south of the Sahara Desert, which play a significant role in shaping their views and practices (Metz, 2022).

Scholars approach African philosophy in diverse ways. For example, Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka, as cited in Sheposh (2020), identifies six leading schools of thought. Four of these – ethnophilosophy, philosophical sagacity,¹ professional-modernist philosophy, and nationalist-ideological philosophy – are the primary African philosophical schools clearly outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Major African philosophical schools (Sheposh, 2020)

• SCHOOL	• VIEWS	• CONCEPTS
Ethnophilosophy	A philosophy centred on communities, drawing on the traditional beliefs, customs, practices, and languages of African cultures.	Encourage the use of traditional proverbs from local cultures as a vital part of a region’s philosophical heritage. The African perspective tends to rely more on intuition and feelings than on rational reasoning.
Philosophical sagacity	Place greater attention on a personal philosophical	True African philosophy is held solely by the collective wisdom of a

¹ *African sagacity* emphasises the importance of oral traditions, storytelling, and community-based knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation (Presbey, 2025).

	approach than one based on the community.	community's wise members.
Professional-modernist philosophy	African philosophy remains a continuous process, developed separately from methods tied to ethnophilosophy.	For true African philosophy to become widely accepted, it must establish and endure criticism from outside sources. Once constructed, it should be employed to address African-related concerns rather than being founded on traditional African ideas.
Nationalist-ideological philosophy	Initially emerged during the mid-20th century, precipitated by anti-colonial African liberation movements. Centres on the traditional beliefs of local African cultures as the basis for a postcolonial philosophy driven by ideology, focusing on national identity.	Examines traditional cultural philosophies using literature, fictional works, and artistic creations.

Ocholla (2020) noted that contemporary education and knowledge systems emerged during the period of colonisation. Colonisation profoundly shaped African social systems, establishing a pervasive pattern of dependence that affected all facets of life. Although it diminished the prominence of IK, relegating it to the margins of formal structures, approximately 80% of Africans continue to rely on these traditional

practices in their everyday lives (Buthelezi et al., 2024). This ongoing use highlights the strength and relevance of IK.

Linked to this, the call for an Africanised curriculum arises from the historical legacy of colonialism in Africa and the dominance of Eurocentric models (Msila & Gumbo, 2016). Furthermore, in his review of *Africanising the Curriculum: Indigenous Perspectives and Theories*, Samuel (2017) emphasises that curricula should create opportunities for individuals to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue on a global scale. This approach promotes inclusivity by challenging colonial legacies and integrating diverse voices and IKS into education, thereby enriching learning and ensuring cultural relevance (Samuel, 2017).

Overall, African philosophy reflects a distinctive sub-Saharan worldview shaped by spiritual beliefs, communal values, and oral traditions. It emerged as a recognised field in the twentieth century despite diverse cultures and major historical shifts, including European colonisation and independence movements (Sheposh, 2020). Although colonial influences marginalised IK within formal education, its continued use by most Africans highlights its enduring relevance (Ocholla, 2020). Consequently, the push for an Africanised curriculum seeks to balance this local wisdom with external knowledge systems, moving away from Eurocentric dominance to create a more inclusive form of education that values diverse perspectives (Samuel, 2017). This approach supports learners in shaping their identities and career paths, addressing past exclusions while responding to the needs of South Africa's diverse population.

2.4 AFRICANISATION

In this study, *Africanisation*, also referred to as *decolonisation*, is understood as the process of integrating Indigenous traits, lived experiences, practices, beliefs, values, and lifestyles rooted in SSA traditions into the school curriculum (Etieyibo, 2018). Similarly, Msila and Gumbo (2016) assert that achieving Africanisation in schools depends on establishing an education system grounded in a culture shaped by IKS and tailored to the specific needs and contexts of African learners. By integrating these elements, Africanisation empowers learners to engage meaningfully with their heritage, countering historical marginalisation while encouraging global dialogue based on respect for IKS (Samuel, 2017). Van der Westhuizen et al. (2017) emphasise the need to cultivate IK, ensuring that education and training are relevant to the African

context. Therefore, it is imperative to develop thorough, baseline-driven, bottom-up research that is contextually aware and rigorous (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017).

Ultimately, Africanisation rejects the perpetuation of colonial frameworks that categorise individuals into distinct cultural and societal groups. Rather, it seeks to cultivate interdependence of ideas and actions that challenge oppression, discrimination, colonialism, apartheid, and domination (Etieyibo, 2016).

It is important to distinguish between two interrelated but distinct processes: Africanising the content (what is taught) and Africanising the pedagogy (how it is taught). Africanising the content involves incorporating African philosophies, proverbs, histories, and value systems into the curriculum itself. Africanising the pedagogy, on the other hand, refers to the methods of teaching and learning, shifting from individualistic, lecture-based approaches to communal, dialogic, and reflective practices. This study employs both dimensions. African proverbs are used to Africanise the content of career adaptability discussions, while Ubuntu-informed talking circles represent an Africanised pedagogy that fosters relational learning, collective meaning-making, and peer support. This dual approach ensures that learners not only encounter culturally relevant knowledge but also experience it through culturally congruent methods.

2.4.1 Indigenous African Knowledge Systems

This study sought to integrate IAKS into the research process to enhance and harmonise career education for South Africa's diverse learner population. It is widely accepted that IAKS represents a distinct body of knowledge. More precisely, this knowledge arises from a collective understanding, intricately connected to and shaped by the cultural context of the relevant region. Furthermore, IAKS are fundamentally tied to the environment, emerging through local interactions and oral traditions within communities. Over time, IAKS have evolved by assimilating fragmented external influences, primarily shared informally within local settings. IAKS do not belong exclusively to any individual, group or authority, nor is there a central repository for this ever-evolving collective knowledge (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019a; Ocholla, 2020).

Based on the points discussed above, many Indigenous educational practices are typically informal, although there are significant exceptions, such as apprenticeships

and initiation ceremonies (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019a). In general, African educational approaches seek to develop individuals into morally upright and competent members of society. To further clarify this, the table below presents the main characteristics of IKS, offering a concise summary of their unique features.

Table 2: Key characteristics of IK

Distinctive features	Description	Reference
Anchored in time and place	Context-specific bodies of knowledge developed by Indigenous communities through long-standing interaction with their environments.	(Tondi, 2019)
Community centred	IK is community-focused, naturally cooperative, and tied to a precise group of individuals. Cultural heritage guides this knowledge. Shared norms shape and define personal values and responsibility to the community. As a result, learning becomes a strongly collective process.	(Ijatuy et al., 2025)
First-hand and real-world	IK steers everyday practices, relationships, and life events. Understanding comes through practical methods, such as observation,	(Jessen et al., 2022)

	internships, recreation, and participation. Much of this knowledge applies directly to real-world situations arising from solving problems. This hands-on quality strengthens its trustworthiness, often proven by its lasting presence across time.	
Verbal transmission	Apart from earlier African written records influenced by Northern traditions, spoken stories and information sharing remain key ways of passing down IK. Tales, proverbs, and sayings form a foundation for societies, helping connect one generation to the next.	(Mdhuli et al., 2021)
Transgenerational	IK flows from older generations to younger ones. Elders are seen and respected as guardians and teachers of this knowledge.	(Malapane et al., 2024)
Ever-changing nature	IK keeps changing and adapting. It does not stand alone but draws from and adds to other forms of knowledge.	(Bhuda & Saurombe, 2022)
All-inclusive and mystical	A broad approach examines and addresses multiple	(Nche & Michael, 2024)

	factors affecting people and groups simultaneously, rather than one by one. Religion, spirituality, and morals are integral components of the primary form of IK, which reflects a community's way of thinking. It encompasses respect for the world and a recognition of the interconnectedness between people and their surroundings; likewise, IK is linked to other knowledge systems, such as Western ones.	
Varied and specific	Dedication to, awareness of, and understanding of IK change between communities. This knowledge is suited to specific, smaller groups or types of practical expertise for skilled work. Differences arise in gender, age, social level, occupation, goals, and guidance. Learning IK calls for guidance from a range of knowledgeable individuals.	(Seroto & Higgs, 2024)

Additionally, Mthembu (2021) explains that ten virtues are central to IAKS, encouraging learners to understand and embody these qualities in their behaviour.

Specifically, these virtues include exercising self-discipline in one's thoughts and actions; demonstrating unwavering commitment; dedicating oneself fully to goals while trusting in one's capacity to learn; approaching life with a strong sense of purpose; avoiding bitterness in the face of unfair treatment; preparing oneself for new beginnings; and attaining balance through a spiritual identity connected to higher principles. They also involve openness to initiation and readiness for growth, as well as belief in the power of deepened understanding. Together, these traits guide learners in reflecting the essence of African IK in their daily lives (Mthembu, 2021).



Figure 6: Ten virtues of IAKS (Mthembu, 2021)

Many of these virtues apply directly to career planning and identity formation, making them suitable for inclusion in multicultural education in South African schools. They align with learners' needs as they chart future paths and develop a sense of self. Therefore, integrating them into the curriculum could make schooling more relevant across the country's diverse settings.

Mthembu’s (2021) ten qualities of IAKS offer a profound philosophical basis that can be directly aligned with Savickas’s (2020) four aspects of career adaptability, thereby establishing a cohesive Africanised framework. Self-discipline and accountability correspond with career control, enhancing the capacity to assume responsibility for one’s career development. Preparedness for expansion and receptiveness are closely related to career curiosity, fostering exploration of diverse opportunities. Resilience and endurance correlate with career confidence, empowering learners to persevere through challenges. Ultimately, communal orientation and interdependence align with career concern, shifting focus from personal anxieties to collective future planning. This mapping illustrates that IAKS is not only complementary to Western career theory but also provides culturally rooted techniques for cultivating the essential psychosocial resources required by learners.

Furthermore, Chilisa (2020) notes that this knowledge has accumulated over many generations through lived experience, attentive study, and practical learning from mistakes and successes. It remains adaptable, incorporating new perspectives and external information to suit local contexts. Every community member – elders, women, men, and children – holds some of this knowledge, though the depth of understanding varies with age, gender, social status, daily routines, and roles at home or in the community. It is preserved in memory and tradition, reflected in stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural norms, beliefs, rituals, community practices, laws, local languages, material objects, forms of sharing, and social structures. It is transmitted mainly through speech, specific examples, and cultural practices such as dances and ceremonies (Chilisa, 2020).

Similarly, Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019), drawing on Oguananam, outlines the philosophical distinctions between Indigenous and Western knowledge, as shown in the table below. This comparison shows the distinctive nature of Indigenous approaches, setting them apart from Western systems in significant ways. It therefore offers a clear basis for understanding how these differences shape knowledge in South African contexts.

Table 3: Philosophical differences between Indigenous and Western forms of knowledge (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019)

Indigenous Knowledge	Western Knowledge
Passing down occurs through spoken means, such as folklore and legends, or copying and repeating actions.	Passing down happens through written texts and published works.
Learning occurs by observing and joining in repeated actions, hands-on experiences, and practical trials.	Learning involves teaching and fitting knowledge into set frameworks and structures.
Arises from a spiritual basis, viewing the universe and its processes as filled with spirits – both living and departed – including elements like fire and trees.	Draws a line between the living and the dead, treating all as physical entities.
Regards the world as linked and related, forming a single system where no living thing stands above another but works together.	Positions humans as superior to nature, with permission to use and control it.
Takes a broad, all-inclusive approach, built on a sense of connection between the natural and the mystical.	Takes a narrow, separated approach, setting clear limits – each connection is seen as a distinct unit.
Depends on a lengthy history of intimate connections with nature and its events.	Relies heavily on numbers and measurable aspects for its strength.
Places importance on feelings and instinct, trusting in an engaged way of knowing.	Grows through logic and close examination, keeping distance from the observer and repeating measures to manage results.

Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) identifies four key features of Indigenous research. Firstly, it focuses on local issues rather than on pre-existing Western theories to define and

frame a research topic. Secondly, it remains sensitive to its context, guided by ideas, methods, and theories drawn from local experiences and IK relevant to the setting. Thirdly, it allows for blending Western and Indigenous theories, creating a combined approach where suitable. Finally, in its most progressive form, it bases its assumptions about reality, knowledge, and values in research on an Indigenous research framework, reflecting a distinctly local way of understanding.

In summary, Africanisation in education seeks to weave Indigenous African traits, experiences, and values into the school curriculum, creating a system that reflects the diverse realities of SSA learners and counters historical marginalisation from colonial and apartheid eras. By grounding education in IKS, this approach highlights community-focused, practical, and ever-changing learning passed down through spoken traditions, shaping morally capable individuals who are suited to their local contexts. Consequently, it moves beyond Western models by valuing collective understanding, spiritual connections, and adaptability, offering a distinct path for learners to build career identities and personal purposes (Etieyibo, 2016; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Metz, 2022; Msila & Gumbo, 2016; Mthembu, 2021; Sarr, 2020; Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2017). Thus, Africanisation calls for a balanced blend of local and external knowledge, ensuring education meets the needs of South Africa's diverse youth while addressing past inequities.

2.5 ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a key developmental stage within the South African school system, particularly for Grade 9 learners who serve as research participants in the present study (Haarr, 2024). In South Africa, learners typically commence formal schooling at seven and progress annually; by the end of Grade 9, they are approximately 15 years old (Haarr, 2024). The period aligns with Erikson's fifth psychosocial crisis, 'identity versus role confusion', during which adolescents seek to consolidate a coherent sense of self amid shifting social and cultural currents (Maree, 2021). In South Africa, identity formation unfolds within intersecting influences, including Indigenous African traditions, colonial legacies, and contemporary global forces (Sirin et al., 2024). These influences highlight the importance of culturally sensitive educational programmes to aid career exploration and identity formation (Shabangu & Mpofu, 2025).

The following table depicts the characteristics of learners with a sense of identity versus identity confusion in Erikson's fifth stage of development.

Table 4: Stage 5 of Erikson's developmental framework (Hamacheck, 1988)

A Sense of Identity: I Know the Kind of Person I Am	Identity Confusion: I Am Unsure of Who I Am
Stable self-esteem: Exhibits a consistent sense of self-worth that remains stable over time.	Unsteady self-esteem: Shows frequent swings between positive and negative feelings.
Goal integration: Effectively links short-term aims with long-term plans.	Short-term focus: Often sets short-term goals but struggles with long-term planning.
Resilience to peer pressure: Resists the sway of peers with noticeable strength.	Openness to peer pressure: Tends to give in to peer influence more easily.
Self-acceptance: Holds a solid level of personal approval.	Low self-acceptance: Regularly faces a lack of personal approval.
Decisive decision-making: Makes clear, confident choices without doubt or delay.	Hesitant decision-making: Struggles with choices, wary of picking the wrong option.
Self-determination: Maintains a strong sense of independence, regardless of the results.	Passive outlook: Sees future events as fixed, believing control is limited.
Individuality in self-approval: Gains personal approval through unique traits.	Reliance on others' approval: Looks for validation by meeting others' expectations.
Intimacy without self-loss: Sustains close physical and emotional ties without losing personal identity.	Troubled relationships: Finds it hard to keep close ties, often overly attached or too distant.

Adolescence, a crucial transition from childhood to adulthood, is characterised by profound physical and psychosocial change (Güroğlu, 2020). During this period, young people increasingly seek independence from adult caregivers – a process known as social reorientation – which supports the development of social responsibilities and goals essential for adulthood (Güroğlu, 2020).

Similarly, Batool and Ghayas (2020) contend that forming a career identity in adolescence is a meaningful and consequential process. As teenagers consider their future work, they explore options, evaluate alternatives, and choose potential pathways. In a world of continual change and uncertainty, where secure employment can be limited, crafting a career plan is crucial. Such planning deepens self-understanding and guides behaviour in work settings, offering direction and purpose. It also fosters awareness of how actions relate to outcomes and a sense of ongoing progress. Accordingly, career identity is inherently dynamic and evolves over time (Batool & Ghayas, 2020).

Lastly, adolescent occupational identity can be understood as a picture of one's future self in the world of work, encompassing perceived interests, skills, and a sense of belonging. The facets of occupational identity outlined below can be examined through concepts from the social and behavioural sciences, offering a structured lens on this development (Callahan et al., 2019):

- Self-Concept

Cognitive structures function as internal frameworks that shape an individual's self-concept. Furthermore, self-concept reflects and guides ongoing behaviour, resulting in a continuous cycle of mutual influence (Callahan et al., 2019).

- Self-Efficacy

Engagement in practical and project-based learning activities cultivates self-efficacy, which emerges from the relationship between self-concept and tangible achievement. Such experiential approaches reinforce individuals' belief in their capabilities, as direct successes align cognitive processes with concrete outcomes (Callahan et al., 2019).

- Belonging

Belonging refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as part of an actual or imagined group united by shared interests and behaviours. Self-concept, self-efficacy, and active participation within learning networks are key factors in developing this sense of connection, linking personal identity to a wider community context (Callahan et al., 2019).

2.5.1 South African adolescents

Nsamenang (2002) critiques the Eurocentric orientation in adolescent psychology, contending that it fails to account for the diverse cultural experiences of SSA. He contends that Western research has historically dominated the field, often reinterpreting African adolescence through a Euro-American lens and thereby neglecting its broader global context. Nsamenang (2002) maintains that adolescence is a socially constructed period shaped by a triadic historical interplay of indigenous African customs, Arab-Islamic influences, and Western Christian traditions. This amalgamation informs the hybrid identities of African youth as they negotiate both local and external influences.

Nsamenang (2008) stresses the significance of social integration within African ontogeny, drawing attention to its divergence from Western individualism. He examines practical aspects, including family roles, peer influences, sexuality, education, and employment. Nsamenang notes the resilience of IKS, even amidst challenges such as poverty, health crises (e.g. HIV/AIDS), and inadequate education, which often fail to align with the realities of African life. He advocates a multidisciplinary and inclusive approach to understanding and supporting SSA learners in overcoming methodological challenges, such as limited local literature and the necessity for adolescent perspectives (Nsamenang, 2002).

Consequently, Life Skills and LO teachers should take into account learners' African or Western heritage when discussing developmental stages, as these may not always align with established Western or African frameworks (Nsamenang, 2008). Nsamenang (2008) bases his stages of social selfhood on Indigenous life cycles, noting that environmental and cultural factors shape the development of culturally competent individuals. He draws attention to the importance of social context and communal interaction, arguing that individual identity is closely linked with communal relationships and responsibilities. Teachers should use context-specific examples to

teach practical skills while respecting traditions, thereby supporting identity development.

In summary, adolescence in Grade 9 represents a pivotal transition from childhood to adulthood, during which learners, typically around the age of 15, either develop a coherent sense of identity or experience confusion. This stage is characterised by attributes such as stable self-esteem, integration of goals, and resilience, contrasted with fluctuating confidence and dependence on others. The period is marked by increasing autonomy and the formation of a career identity, encouraging adolescents to align their interests, abilities, and sense of belonging with future occupational roles through practical engagement and self-reflection. Within the African context, this developmental journey merges Indigenous traditions, Islamic influences, and Western legacies, resulting in a hybrid identity that prioritises social integration over individualism (Nsamenang, 2002; Batool & Ghayas, 2020; Güroğlu, 2020). Despite challenges such as poverty and limited educational opportunities, this culturally rich process highlights the importance of an inclusive approach in supporting youth as they navigate their personal and career paths.

2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

South Africa's education system remains primarily public, according to the DBE's Review of Progress in the Basic Education Sector to 2024 (DBE, 2023). These figures highlight the South African basic education system's reliance on public institutions, despite ongoing challenges, including infrastructure development and resource allocation. In 2023, about 12,767,699 learners, or 95% of those enrolled, were in the public sector (DBE, 2023).

2.6.1 Public schools

The DBE in South Africa categorises schools into five quintiles based on the socioeconomic status of their communities. This mechanism ensures that every school receives the same government funds, promoting equal treatment. Although this is the goal, subsidies often fail to meet the requirements of many schools (Laas, 2025).

Therefore, schools in areas where parents can pay higher fees generally have access to more resources. Increased funding allows for improved facilities, well-qualified teachers, smaller class sizes, and stronger academic outcomes. A quintile 4 or 5

public school may charge between R25,000 and R40,000 per year. While this is less expensive than private school fees, it remains out of reach for many families, revealing ongoing issues with accessibility. The South African government works with organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to address educational inequalities by supporting disadvantaged schools with teacher training, educational materials, and infrastructure upgrades. These efforts aim to reduce disparities in resources among schools. Quintile 1 comprises the least affluent schools, while quintile 5 includes those with the greatest wealth. This classification reflects South Africa's varied economic landscape and calls attention to the need for fair distribution of educational resources (Laas, 2025):

Quintile 1: Schools charge no fees, receive increased government funding, and may provide free meals and transport for learners.

Quintile 2: Schools are fee-free, benefit from additional funding, and may offer free meals and transport services.

Quintile 3: No fees are charged, extra funding is provided, and learners may access free meals and transport.

Quintile 4: These are fee-paying schools where families contribute annually to costs.

Quintile 5: Schools require annual financial contributions from families as they are fee-paying institutions.

Parents in South Africa encounter various difficulties when choosing schools for their children, such as proximity, enrolment restrictions, and financial constraints. Although it is possible to apply to public schools outside designated zones, admission remains uncertain. Zoning policies tend to favour local learners. In urban areas, highly regarded schools often have long waiting lists, which complicates access for numerous families (Laas, 2025).

Public schools offer the majority of learners access to education. The system is organised to deliver instruction from early childhood through to higher education. Below is a summary of its operational framework, as set out by the DBE (2011).

Table 5: South African Education System (DBE, 2025b)

Early Childhood Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Education
Pre-Primary (Nursery/Preschool): For children ages three to six. Although not compulsory, a great many young children attend.	Foundation Phase – Grades R (Reception) – 3 (ages 5 to 9): This stage centres on fundamental literacy as well as mathematical competencies. Intermediate Phase – Grades 4–6 (ages 9–12): Learners commence exploring a broader variety of subjects. Senior Phase: Grades 7–9 (ages 12–15): This stage prepares learners for more focused and independent learning.	Further Education and Training (FET) Phase: Grades 10 through 12 (ages 15 to 18): A setting where learners choose subjects corresponding to their interests and career objectives. Grade 10: A gateway to further focused subjects. Grade 11: Additional focus and getting ready for the final examinations. Grade 12: Matriculation year, resulting in the National Senior Certificate	Universities and Universities of Technology: Present undergraduate and graduate degrees. Universities typically offer academic and theoretical courses, whereas Universities of Technology focus on practical, job-related education. Colleges offer further education and training in various occupational and technical fields.

		(NSC) exams, which must be passed to enter universities and other higher learning institutions.	
Following the National Curriculum Statement, Grades R-12 (CAPS) in public schools and some private schools (DBE, 2011).			

This study focused on the Senior Phase, specifically Grade 9, as it equips learners for more directed and purposeful learning in subsequent stages. The public high school chosen for this study falls in the quintile 5 category.

2.6.2 Independent and private schools

South Africa is home to more than 50 international schools in Johannesburg and Cape Town. These institutions offer a variety of curricula, including British, German, American, French, Waldorf, and Montessori, ensuring a wide range of educational choices for learners (Laas, 2025). International schools are known for their high-quality teaching, modern facilities, and small class sizes. However, the higher fees mean that fewer than 5% of South African adolescents are able to attend (Laas, 2025).

Private schools in South Africa, also referred to as independent schools, provide varied learning environments. While these schools are known for their strong academic standards, excellent facilities, and smaller classes, enrolment remains low due to the high cost of attendance, with less than 5% of children able to enrol (Laas, 2025). These privately run institutions are required to register with the government and comply with national academic standards. The Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa represents most independent schools in the region. Families with an international background often choose the International Baccalaureate (IB), British General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), or A-Levels instead of the South African curriculum (Laas, 2025).

Montessori, Waldorf, Abbots, and other private schools are available throughout South Africa. These institutions focus on holistic development and encourage SDL (Laas, 2025). Private religious schools, well-established boarding schools, and academies specialising in music and art also form part of the educational landscape. Factors such as location, reputation, and educational approach influence private school fees. Tuition averages around R80,000 per year, which is significantly higher than that of public schools (Laas, 2025).

Below is a table outlining key educational approaches and philosophies in South African education.

Table 6: Educational concepts and philosophies (Laas, 2025)

Educational Approach	Overview	Level of Education	School Type
Montessori	The approach centres on self-directed, practical learning within a carefully prepared setting, encouraging child development and autonomy. It fosters academic, emotional, and social development by integrating life skills with sensory-rich resources.	Primary schools	Private
Waldorf-Steiner	The method promotes balanced growth via academic, artistic, and practical development. Imagination-based education fosters creativity and psychological maturity alongside conventional instruction.	Primary and high schools	Private
Faith-Based	Faith-based schools follow the national curriculum while incorporating principles from various traditions, including Christian, Catholic, Anglican, Jewish, and Muslim traditions.	Primary and high schools	Private
Abbotts	The values espoused by Abbotts include uniqueness, diversity, freedom of expression, and autonomy. It approaches learners as young adults, promoting character, accountability, and responsibility.	High schools	Private

2.6.3 The National Curriculum Statement (CAPS)

Drawing on the NCS (DBE, 2025a), which guides learners' understanding of themselves and their societal roles, LO emerges as a fundamental aspect of the

educational framework. LO explores the individual's relationship with others and the wider community, with specific attention to self-awareness, personal beliefs, responsible citizenship, maintaining a balanced and active lifestyle, social relationships, leisure pursuits, physical well-being, employment, and career development. Through this approach, learners develop and apply essential life skills, equipping them to navigate challenges, make informed choices, and demonstrate accountability within an evolving society. The curriculum also stresses the practical application of these skills and concepts in authentic contexts, including participation in physical activities. LO thus plays a pivotal role in preparing learners for organisational and societal demands, particularly in the 21st century, where adaptability and lifelong learning are vital (DBE, 2011).

In career education, LO provides learners with the values, knowledge, and skills required to make informed choices regarding their study area, career options, opportunities for further and higher education, and future employment (DBE, 2011). This highlights the crucial role that career counsellors and legislators play in guiding the futures of learners, as stated by the DBE (2011).

The table below illustrates the weighting of topics and time allocation for LO across Grades 7 to 9, based on the CAPS curriculum. The content spans the academic year's 40 weeks (80 hours), with only 11 hours dedicated to the world of work, indicating a focused yet limited time frame for this area.

Table 7: Weighting of CAPS topics and hours: Grade 7 to 9 (DBE, 2011)

TOPICS	Grade 7 (hours)	Grade 8 (hours)	Grade 9 (hours)
Development of the self in society	10	9	10
Health, social, and environmental responsibility	10	8	7

Constitutional rights and responsibilities	7	9	7
World of work	8	9	11
Physical Education	35	35	35
Contact time	70	70	70
Examinations	10	10	10
Total hours	80	80	80
Total weeks	40	40	40

The table below summarises topics concerning the world of work for Grades 7 to 9, allocated 11 hours within the academic year, as outlined by the DBE (2011).

Table 8: Overview of topics for the world of work: Grade 7 to 9 (DBE, 2011)

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
WORLD OF WORK	Reading and studying enable learners to explore various career fields, gaining greater clarity about potential professional paths. These activities also allow learners to simulate career-related tasks, building	Through reading and studying, learners encounter a variety of learning styles and six distinct career categories, which help them link their academic performance to their	Learners acquire valuable skills through reading and studying, such as effective time management and the ability to adapt their reading and writing for different purposes. In

	practical understanding while helping them appreciate the relevance of work in fulfilling personal aspirations and developing their abilities.	interests and abilities. This process supports the development of decision-making skills, preparing them for future choices.	addition, learners explore career options beyond Grade 9, gain insight into the job market, select appropriate careers and subjects, identify study and career funding opportunities, and develop a lifelong learning plan.

The CAPS LO curriculum for Grades 7–9 allocates merely 11 hours to the comprehensive "World of Work" topic over a span of three years. In Grade 9, students must select subjects that will influence their eligibility for higher education, career trajectories, and future economic prospects. The 11-hour allowance is insufficient for preparing learners, who are already experiencing Erikson's identity versus role confusion stage, with the necessary career adaptability and informed decision-making abilities. The existing system imposes significant responsibilities on learners while offering limited structured career education, a deficiency that this study aims to rectify through the incorporation of IAKS.

Although the current government school curriculum accommodates traditional career education and vocational training within the LO curriculum, additional counselling in career development is vital for enhancing learners' adaptability to 21st-century career-life challenges. In the 21st century, best practices involve fostering individuals who are able to reflect critically, confront difficulties with imagination, self-create and self-advise, and make informed decisions (Maree, 2013).

2.6.4 Career education in South African schools

Transitions to higher education and employment are impeded by multifaceted challenges, including low self-esteem, educational and financial constraints, insufficient work experience, a LO curriculum that inadequately prepares learners, and LO teachers' struggles to customise career guidance (Cohen, 2023). Although LO seeks to equip learners for life's complexities, addressing educational inequity and unemployment necessitates comprehensive structural reforms within South Africa's education system, requiring concerted action from learners, schools and government.

According to Deputy Minister Buthi Manamela of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DBE 2025b), the government has identified three primary educational priorities: advancing work-based learning and career education to improve employability, investing in Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, and aligning education with industry requirements to support a seamless transition from school to employment. These priorities are intended to provide youth with practical skills relevant to the rapidly changing work environment (DBE, 2025b).

The findings of Sefotho (2017) demonstrate the persistent effects of apartheid-era inequities on career guidance within South African education. Pre-1990 policies restricted services such as psychometric assessments and individual counselling to white learners, excluding black learners and severely limiting their employment opportunities. Such historical discrepancies have reinforced the perception of career guidance as a manifestation of white privilege. Despite post-1994 democratic reforms aimed at broadening access, as reflected in the Higher Education Act of 1997, significant obstacles remain. The ongoing shortage of trained black professionals, language barriers affecting service delivery, and a curriculum misaligned with the needs of many students continue to hinder equitable participation. These enduring challenges perpetuate social injustice for black communities and result in many learners being inadequately prepared for future careers (Sefotho, 2017).

Transitioning to further regional evidence, Maketekete (2022) identifies notable disparities in career guidance resources among three Soweto high schools. Both Grade 9 learners and their LO teachers reported limited access to essential profession-related materials. The absence of such resources hampers learners'

capacity to make informed decisions regarding their future pathways, which accounts for the study's advocacy of practical interventions such as establishing internet-enabled computer laboratories and increasing the availability of career-related materials in school libraries.

Similarly, Makola et al. (2021) extend this narrative by examining broader trends, noting that LO teachers lack the necessary expertise and experience to deliver effective career guidance in numerous schools in less affluent areas. There is an evident gap in possibilities for learning; however, schools in more affluent areas have access to sophisticated career guidance services that are frequently supported by professional psychologists (Makola et al., 2021). This finding corresponds with the DBE framework, which places career development under LO and requires learners to select their subjects by Grade 9. However, provincial efforts, such as career exhibitions for learners in Grade 12, are insufficient to narrow the gap, leaving numerous learners in need of assistance from other organisations, including NGOs and universities (Makola et al., 2021).

Finally, Farao and Du Plessis (2024) present a learner-centric perspective, indicating that learners appreciate the significance of career education in enhancing confidence beyond the classroom and perceive it as vital for making informed decisions. However, they identify a clear lack of structured, in-class support from LO teachers, resulting in learners depending largely on independent study and external support systems, such as friends and family (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024). Furthermore, learners reported experiencing self-doubt stemming from external perceptions and a lack of preparedness attributable to insufficient knowledge. This situation illustrates the critical need for accessible and trustworthy career education. The findings indicate an ongoing dependence on individual initiative despite systemic challenges, thereby calling for specific interventions to promote equity and strengthen decision-making confidence within South African schools (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024).

In summary, learners within South Africa's predominantly public educational system are equipped for future education and employment through the LO curriculum, which allocates only 11 hours per year to employment-related topics, moving students from basic career awareness to informed decision-making. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of LO in mitigating unemployment and educational disparities remains constrained by

insufficient teacher training, unequal resource distribution, and entrenched historical inequities, particularly affecting Black learners, despite its intention to cultivate self-awareness, citizenship, and career readiness. Although the system offers a structured progression from early childhood to higher education, and seeks to meet the twenty-first century's demands for adaptability and practical skills, ongoing challenges such as inadequate guidance, financial constraints, and inequitable access indicate the need for more comprehensive government and educational strategies to enable all learners to navigate their career trajectories successfully (Sefotho, 2017; Makola et al., 2021; Maketeketete, 2022; Cohen, 2023; DBE, 2025b).

2.7 CAREER THEORIES

The notion of "career" has transformed alongside social and economic changes, shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves, others, and the world of work (Watson & Stead, 2025). Such contextual changes play a crucial role in shaping understandings of vocational development and career trajectories. Given the complexity of these factors, delineating career theory within particular decades proves difficult, as it remains inherently multifaceted (Watson & Stead, 2025).

2.7.1 System theories

Systems theory, introduced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968, focuses on the dynamic interactions within systems, drawing attention to their fluid and continually evolving nature (Patton & McMahon, 2021). Adopting this perspective enriches research by accounting for personal, societal, and environmental factors that shape career paths. The theory aligns with context-oriented approaches in career studies, deepening understanding of professional processes and informing practical interventions. Scholars have integrated systems thinking into theoretical models, offering a comprehensive framework for analysing career trajectories, enhancing professional practice, and facilitating effective interventions. This approach has demonstrated considerable value in career development (Patton & McMahon, 2021).

2.7.2 System Theory Framework (STF)

The Systems Theory Framework (STF) serves as a metatheoretical model that modernises career development theory by situating it within systems theory (McMahon & Patton, 2022). By combining systems thinking with mapping, the STF offers a holistic perspective on career development. It comprises three interconnected systems – human, social, and environmental-societal – situated across temporal dimensions of past, present, and future. These systems possess permeable boundaries and involve both content and process influences, illustrating the intricate nature of career development. The STF synthesises existing theories and individual narratives, facilitating a nuanced understanding of career influences within varied cultural contexts (McMahon & Patton, 2021).

2.7.3 Trait-oriented theories

Throughout the 21st century, trait-factor theory has remained influential in various forms within the South African academic landscape (Stead & Watson, 2025). The theory emphasises individual qualities and workplace requirements, supporting career development and vocational decision-making by highlighting the active link between personal attributes and environmental demands. This theory forms part of a broader range of career theories, including those based on traits and factors (Stead & Watson, 2025).

2.7.4 Parsons' tripartite model

Frank Parsons' notable contribution to career development is the trait-and-factor model, a three-part framework for vocational decision-making (Patton & McMahon, 2021). This model includes three principles: self-assessment of an individual's skills, understanding of career requirements, and the informed integration of personal and professional information. The model emphasises the importance of a thorough self-assessment of an individual's skills, abilities, interests, resources, challenges, and other relevant characteristics, which is essential for effective career counselling (Patton & McMahon, 2021).

2.7.5 Person–environment correspondence (PEC) counselling

The trait-and-factor approach represents a career counselling framework based on Frank Parsons' tripartite formula (Patton & McMahon, 2021). PEC utilises problem-

solving through diagnosis and assessment, beginning with the systematic collection of client data to determine career-related concerns. Williamson's (2021) six-step model focuses on personal traits and job requirements, drawing attention to decision-making capacities. Nevertheless, it neglects broader contextual influences. Recent developments have integrated PEC theory, moving the approach from a static matching process towards a more dynamic orientation. The model continues to stand as one of the few career counselling frameworks explicitly grounded in theory (Patton & McMahon, 2021).

2.7.6 Theory of Work Adjustment/PEC theory

The theory of work adjustment posits that individuals and work environments interact to fulfil mutual needs, striving for a state of correspondence or mutual responsiveness (Watson & Stead, 2025). In contrast to trait-factor theory, it provides a systematic framework that predicts adjustment by aligning personal strengths and values with occupational demands and reinforcers, including achievement and security. The theory has developed over time to incorporate personality styles and more complex social dynamics, now referred to as the person-environment-correspondence theory. However, despite offering practical tools, its dependence on outdated learning theories and the scarcity of recent research raise questions regarding its continued relevance (Watson & Stead, 2025).

2.7.7 Developmental theories of career choice

Following World War II, the American middle class experienced substantial growth, resulting in suburban residential patterns and regular commutes to structured corporate workplaces (Savickas & Savickas, 2019). These organisations defined employment roles and career progression through promotions and incremental salary increases. However, societal trends changed, leading to a shift in career counselling. A more holistic approach was developed, emphasising ongoing personal development throughout a person's life. This transformation marked the rise of the career development framework, encouraging adaptation and individual growth in evolving career landscapes (Savickas & Savickas, 2019; Savickas, 2020).

2.7.8 Super's life-span, life-space approach (career development theory)

Donald Super's career development framework expanded from 10 to 14 propositions, integrating differential psychology and developmental psychology (Watson & Stead, 2025). The framework links employment and personal fulfilment to life roles and emphasises self-concept development, influenced by vocational interests and social learning. Super's five stages of the life cycle comprise growth (ages 4-13), exploration (ages 11-24), establishment (ages 24-44), maintenance (ages 45-65), and disengagement (ages 65+). This dynamic framework conceptualises individuals as architects of their career trajectories, influenced by both personal and environmental factors (Watson & Stead, 2025).

Donald Super's archway model of career determinants offers a structured metaphor that foregrounds personal factors, such as personality, values, and aptitudes, alongside situational influences, including social and economic contexts (Watson & Stead, 2025). The model seeks to facilitate a shift from career maturity to adaptability, drawing attention to the individual's capacity to integrate multiple influences into a coherent career trajectory. It presents a holistic perspective on self-concept development, viewing it as a continuous interplay between internal characteristics and external micro- and macro-social systems. The archway represents the resources available to the individual, with the self positioned at its apex, illustrating the central role the person plays in directing and shaping their career (Watson & Stead, 2025).

2.7.9 Gottfredson's developmental theory of occupational aspirations: Circumscription, compromise, and creation

Gottfredson's developmental theory of occupational aspirations provides a comprehensive framework for examining career goals across the lifespan (Watson & Stead, 2025). Integrating person-environment theory with Super's career development model, it demonstrates how social circumstances shape career trajectories. The theory details how developmental and cognitive processes inform employment choices from early childhood, as individuals systematically eliminate options through deliberate exclusion. As understanding of workplace realities increases, people negotiate and adapt their aspirations, placing greater value on attainable options rather than idealised ones. The theory establishes the relationship between human

cognition and self-concept development, offering nuanced perspectives on career decision-making at different stages of life (Watson & Stead, 2025).

2.7.10 Social learning and cognitive theories

Savickas (2015) stresses the significance of social learning and cognitive theories in the context of career development. These frameworks centre on the dynamic interplay between individual cognitive processes, societal factors, and career decision-making. In contrast to traditional psychological career counselling, which drew heavily on clinical psychology and evidence-based approaches, contemporary counsellors increasingly adopt holistic psychology, placing personal perspectives at the forefront. Such an orientation cultivates personal growth and fulfilment by allowing individuals to draw upon their intrinsic knowledge (Savickas, 2015).

2.7.11 Social learning theory of career development

The social learning theory of career development, proposed by Krumboltz, identifies four key factors shaping career trajectories: genetic predispositions, environmental circumstances, experiential learning, and task-related skills (Watson & Stead, 2025). Genetic influences set boundaries on career-related learning, while environmental factors, such as the legacy of apartheid in South Africa and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, inform individual career preferences. Learning is acquired through instrumental and associative processes, and task-related skills are refined through experience. Career decisions are informed by self-reflection, abilities, and actions. Critics contend that the theory places excessive focus on choice rather than on adaptation mechanisms. Nevertheless, its attention to decision-making processes informs counselling practice, particularly with the use of instruments such as the Career Beliefs Inventory (Watson & Stead, 2025).

2.7.12 Social cognitive career theory (SCCT)

SCCT centres on career decision self-efficacy, a concept derived from social learning theory (Juntunen et al., 2019). SCCT explores the interplay between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals in shaping individuals' career trajectories. The theory reconceptualises self-efficacy as a foundational framework for understanding career choice, illustrating its pivotal role in career decision-making. The model has evolved to incorporate contextual factors, including cultural differences and

support systems, which affect interests, goals, and behaviours. The proximal determinants within SCCT illustrate how environmental influences, such as social norms and cultural dynamics, may either facilitate or hinder career development, rendering SCCT a comprehensive tool for analysing career decisions in multifaceted and interconnected contexts (Juntunen et al., 2019).

2.7.13 Social constructivism

Career theory was initially grounded in logical positivism, which prioritised objective, verifiable knowledge and perceived human behaviour as independent of context, focusing primarily on actions rather than environmental factors. The emergence of constructivism shifted this orientation, rejecting notions of "the ultimate truth" and asserting that individuals construct their reality through cognitive processes shaped by environmental interactions. Constructivism regards individuals as open systems, continually adapting to achieve equilibrium, guided by five key principles: active agency, where individuals shape their own trajectories; the collective accumulation of experiences that confer meaning; a self-centred identity; social-symbolic relationships; and ongoing development throughout the lifespan. In contrast to the static certainties of realism, constructivism maintains that knowledge is formed through individual experiences aligned with personal beliefs, framing knowledge as an evolving process of meaning-making. Although constructivism shares with social constructionism an emphasis on connections, narrative, and agency, it was introduced to career psychology at a later point, drawing on theories that posit the mind as actively constructing reality and on systems theory, which conceptualises individuals as self-organising entities embedded within dynamic, interdependent systems such as family or work environments (Patton, 2019).

2.7.14 Career construction theory (CCT)

Within the framework of this study, CCT provides a solid foundation for career adaptability, thereby strengthening its purpose in guiding career education (Savickas, 2020; Maree, 2024; Watson & Stead, 2025).

In the initial phase of the study, the researcher applied the construct of career adaptability, which comprises four core elements: career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence (Kusyadi, 2020). Building on CCT, this construct delivers a comprehensive framework for career development, enabling

individuals to make informed, deliberate and strategic career choices. The theoretical underpinnings of CCT, along with the psychological and social dimensions of career adaptability, are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.3.1, a central component of the study's theoretical framework.

A significant source of conflict arises between Savickas's CCT and Indigenous African perspectives. CCT is largely based on individual agency, expressed in the concept that "I shape my career" through personal narratives, reflection, and life design. Conversely, the Ubuntu ideology asserts that "I am because we are," indicating that career development is really a collective activity. While Western philosophy highlights the autonomous self-constructing meaning in isolation, an Africanised perspective acknowledges that career identity is co-constructed within familial, communal, and cultural contexts. This does not devalue CCT; instead, it enhances it. Integrating Ubuntu transforms career construction from an individualistic activity to a relational, interdependent journey, wherein individual objectives align with social responsibilities and collective wellbeing.

In summary, the evolution of career theories demonstrates how shifting social and economic contexts shape individuals' views of themselves and their work. Systems theory, developed by Von Bertalanffy, adopts a comprehensive approach by exploring the interconnections between personal, social, and environmental factors, deepening our insight into career development. The STF extends this by connecting individual experiences with broader contextual influences, serving as a practical tool for analysis. Trait-oriented and developmental theories, in turn, relate personal attributes to workplace requirements and lifelong progression. Furthermore, social learning and cognitive models, such as Krumboltz's approach, illustrate the significance of experience and adaptability in career decision-making (Juntunen et al., 2019; Savickas, 2020; Patton & McMahon, 2021; Stead & Watson, 2025).

2.8 GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE FOR CAREER GUIDANCE

In a joint statement of the Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance (2025) comprising of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Commission, the European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank, the following section outlines current global principles for best practice:

- Develop a national vision and strategy across education, employment, youth and social protection ministries, with stable funding and clear coordination mechanisms.
- Guarantee universal access while prioritising outreach to vulnerable groups (NEETs, rural learners, low-skilled workers, migrants and people with disabilities). Multiple channels: face-to-face, digital, blended and community outreach.
- Embed career guidance in education from primary school through whole-school approaches, compulsory career education and regular employer engagement (job fairs, shadowing, mentoring and work placements).
- Build career management skills (adaptability, resilience, self-awareness and network use) rather than only providing job information. Personalised career plans are a proven high-impact tool.
- Engage employers and social partners systematically to give learners direct exposure to the world of work and to signal changing skill demands, including green and digital skills.
- Apply ethical technology and AI to increase reach and personalisation, while maintaining quality and equitable access for those with limited digital skills.
- Ensure quality through qualified practitioners, national standards, regular monitoring, evaluation and user feedback.

2.8.1 Contextualising South African career guidance to global best practice

The 2025 joint statement from the Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance characterises South Africa as innovative in outreach but lacking in systemic integration (Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2025). South Africa offers

noteworthy strengths in accessible service delivery. The Khetha public employment service provides career advice weekly via radio broadcast in all 10 official languages. This campaign engages 3.1 million listeners, primarily rural inhabitants aged 15 to 65, in a cost-efficient manner. This strategy directly aligns with the global focus on diverse channels and specialised assistance for at-risk groups (Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2025).

Fundamental structures in the form of career education are an integral component of the LO curriculum. The National Career Advice Portal and helpdesk offer informative services. Sector Education and Training Authorities, particularly the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA, strengthen frameworks, digital resources, and collaboration with technical and vocational education and training institutions. Recent initiatives by the Department of Higher Education and Training, such as the improvement of the National Career Advice Portal, demonstrate an ongoing effort (Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2025).

Global leaders demonstrate high levels of integration. Chile incorporates guidance as a mandatory subject from Grade 1, featuring a systematic progression. Finland provides integrated centres that combine career counselling with mental health and social support. Ireland conducts a whole-school approach engaging all personnel. Montenegro utilises full-time qualified counsellors at primary, intermediate, and postsecondary educational levels (Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance, 2025).

The OECD Economic Survey of South Africa 2025 calls for the enhancement of career support, the addition of job-search counselling, and the enhancement of the level of collaboration among public employment agencies, employers, and educational institutions (OECD, 2025).

2.9 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON IAKS IN EDUCATION

While South Africa has distinct problems, international efforts to integrate IAKS into career education can provide significant insights. Indigenous storytelling and proverbs in secondary school guidance programs in Kenya promote cultural identity and

career confidence (Ochieng, 2018). In Ghana, community engagement, particularly the involvement of elders and local specialists, has demonstrated an enhancement in the relevance of career guidance by aligning learners' ambitions with local economic prospects (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh & Adinkrah, 2016).

In New Zealand, Hinekura Smith (2025) explores *toi Māori*. She shows how Indigenous ancestral knowledge systems extend beyond traditional weaving. *Whatu* pedagogy (cloak weaving) becomes an adaptive approach to *oranga* (wellbeing). It emphasises intergenerational transmission, *whanaungatanga* (connections and reciprocal relationships) and purposeful learning. This counters colonial models. *Whatu* pedagogy is adaptive and responsive. It is also critical. It aims to make knowledge-building visible to learners (Smith, 2025).

These international examples highlight the potential of IAKS to address both cultural relevance and practical career education outcomes.

2.10 IMPLEMENTATION OF IAKS IN SCHOOL CURRICULA

Integrating IAKS into the LO curriculum requires a conscious shift from South Africa's CAPS documents' Eurocentric and Western knowledge focus to an Afrocentric approach that values local indigenous knowledge. Badugela (2019) realistically highlights significant barriers: the curriculum lacks space, time, and training for meaningful integration; many educators lack IAKS content knowledge and institutional support; resources are scarce; and some parents actively discourage IAKS as irrelevant to modern schooling. Badugela (2019) further argues that the viability of IAKS integration remains questionable unless accompanied by targeted teacher capacity development, the creation of stakeholder knowledge-exchange platforms, and dynamic policy efforts to fast-track the process.

Tlali and Sepiriti (2023) strongly recommend integrating IAKS into Lesotho secondary schools to address the moral crisis caused by Eurocentric, decontextualised education that marginalises indigenous epistemologies. They believe that schools should explicitly teach moral values like humanness, self-discipline, communal responsibility, respect, hard work, and emotional intelligence using IAKS, particularly Botho/Ubuntu philosophy, Sesotho proverbs, folktales,

storytelling, and adapted communal practices. This integration would restore context-relevant moral education, complement community efforts and improve the curriculum's ability to foster African-based ethical citizens.

Integrating IAKS into the South African school LO curriculum would strengthen cultural relevance and holistic learner development by embedding local epistemologies, values, oral traditions, community practices, and environmental wisdom into core topics such as the world of work and development of the self in society (Seherrie & Mawela, 2023).

2.11 PERSPECTIVES ON LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

Viewpoints of LO teachers and learners in South African high schools highlight major gaps between CAPS policy goals for career education and actual classroom execution.

LO teachers generally agree on the subject's value for holistic learner development. Inadequacy in career guidance often arises from insufficient pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), inadequate specialised training, limited resources, and restricted access to continuous professional development. These challenges appear most frequently in public and rural schools (Seherrie & Mawela, 2022; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Diale, 2016; Maree & Mahlalela, 2025).

Mulaudzi and Hoque (2025) state that adolescents often see LO as unimportant or only marginally relevant. Further challenges emerge from restrictive learner attitudes and ongoing limits in teacher training and resources. Learners feel frustrated with the mostly theoretical approach to career education. Career education lacks practical use in learners' view. Broader exposure to diverse career opportunities, clearer links between subjects and career paths, personalised counselling, and experiential opportunities appeal to them. Examples include guest speaker sessions, specialised workshops, and job shadowing (Farao & du Plessis, 2024; Jonck, 2015).

Collectively, these stakeholder insights emphasise the critical need for contextually relevant, culturally informed strategies, including the intentional integration of IAKS via Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, to bridge the disconnect between

Eurocentric curricula and the lived experiences of teachers and learners in the South African educational context.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the development of career paths among South African learners, with particular attention to African knowledge systems and career adaptability. The Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs were explored in depth, presenting an Africanised perspective on career education. The chapter also provided a critical analysis of the South African school system, its historical context, and the unique circumstances faced by Grade 9 learners. Various career theories were reviewed, demonstrating their applicability to the evolving needs of the contemporary workforce. By integrating traditional African viewpoints with the demands of modern career development, the chapter laid the groundwork for further advancement within the study's theoretical framework, specifically tailored to the South African context.

The subsequent chapter describes the data collection methods, specifying the instruments and protocols used to obtain information. It further details the procedures for data analysis and interpretation, outlining the techniques applied to process and understand the gathered data. To ensure rigour, the chapter discusses the quality assurance measures implemented to uphold the study's integrity. Consideration of ethical standards is also provided, clarifying the principles followed to protect participants and maintain ethical conduct. The study's limitations are acknowledged, with a clear delineation of its scope and potential constraints. Collectively, these elements establish a coherent framework for understanding the methodological approach adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The figure below illustrates the theoretical and conceptual frameworks utilised in this study:

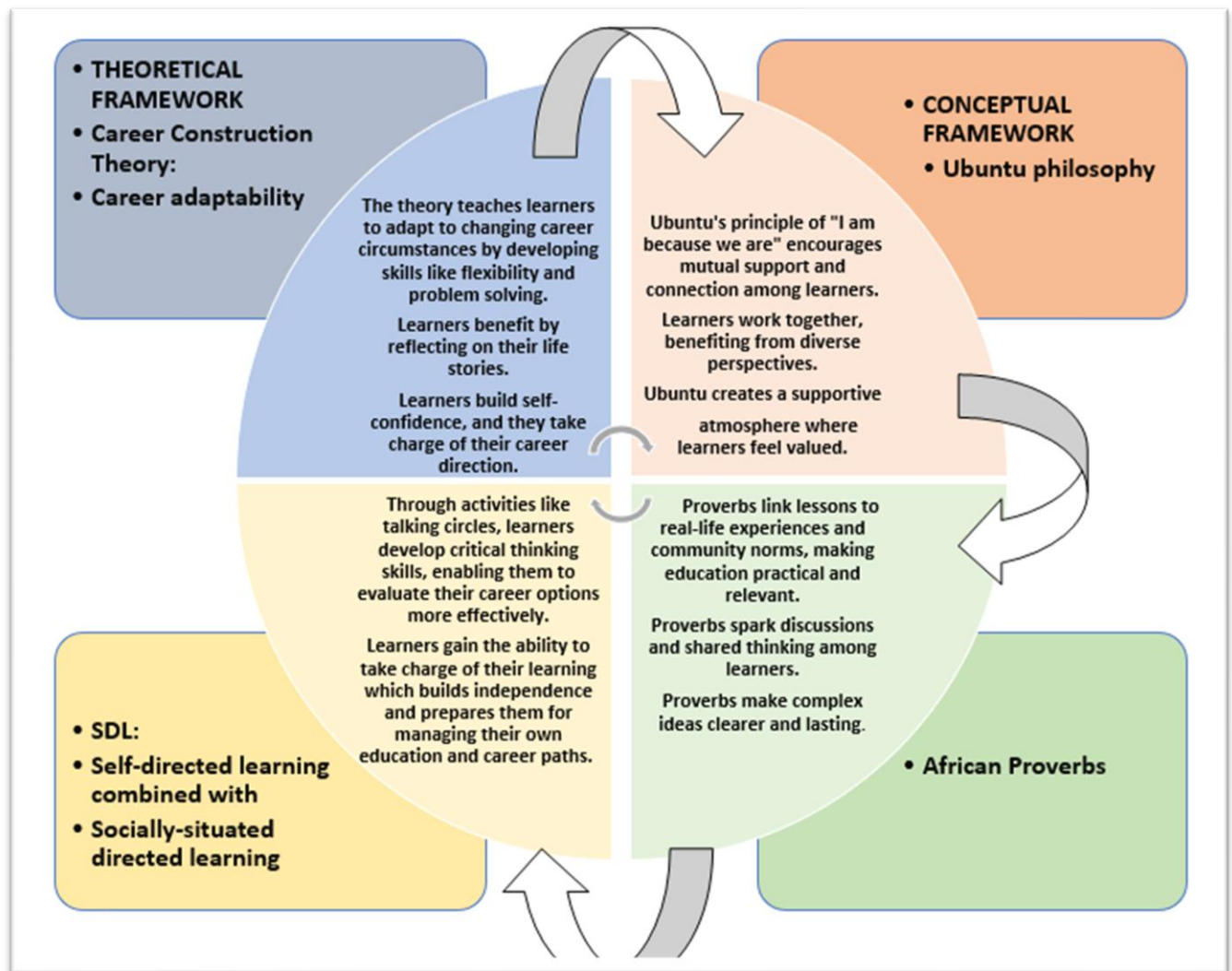


Figure 7: Theoretical and conceptual framework

3.2 INTRODUCTION

This study utilised CCT as its primary theoretical framework, presenting career development as a reflection-based, adaptive process of self-construction and meaning-making in the face of life's uncertainties (McIlveen & Luke, 2023). To

contextualise this approach within African educational contexts, the researcher employed a conceptual framework that incorporates Ubuntu philosophy, African proverbs, and SDL. The aim was to enhance career adaptability through IAKS, focusing on the development of identity, adaptability, knowledge, and skills among South African learners (Algra & Olivier, 2024).

Ubuntu, an African philosophy highlighting interconnectedness, humanism, and collective well-being, enriched life design by integrating relational ethics and social capital into career narratives. This approach fostered learner collaboration and community-oriented reflection (Ngubane & Makua, 2021; Botha et al., 2025). African proverbs served as pedagogical tools that conveyed ancestral wisdom, promoting reflective, value-oriented learning. These proverbs align with the focus of CCT, aiming to inspire resilience, purpose, and moral development (Kemi & Chijioke, 2021). SDL enhances the integration of Ubuntu philosophy, African proverbs, and CCT by enabling learners to independently shape their career paths while remaining rooted in the communal, humanistic principles of Ubuntu (Ngubane & Makua, 2021; Botha et al., 2025).

Phase 1 of the study comprised workshops that utilised the communal values of Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs as culturally relevant tools to deconstruct the concept of career adaptability. These workshops engaged learners through interactive and reflective activities, including group discussions, writing, and doodling. The aim was to explore both personal and collective career aspirations, thereby creating a supportive environment for self-directed career planning and communal development among South African learners.

3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In qualitative research, theoretical frameworks are fundamental in shaping the design, data collection, and analysis processes, thereby ensuring alignment between research questions and broader epistemological perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Ravitch and Carl (2021) contend that such frameworks integrate conceptual, theoretical, and methodological components, allowing researchers to position their studies within established paradigms, such as interpretivism. Braun and Clarke (2022) assert that theoretical frameworks play a pivotal role in guiding reflexive theme analysis, as they support pattern identification and help to reduce researcher bias.

3.3.1 Career construction theory

CCT theory posits that individual career development is a dynamic process involving the mutual adaptation of the self and external reality, resulting in diverse personal narratives (Wang & Li, 2024). The theory offers a flexible framework for attributing meaning to memories, experiences, and future aspirations, thereby shaping careers in a purposeful manner.

Savickas (2024) contends that CCT serves as an overarching framework for understanding and interpreting pathways to employment within a career education curriculum. Furthermore, Savickas maintains that CCT recognises the importance of structured programmes of study for self-exploration and provides a practical approach to self-development and life design.

Pollard and Maree (2025) advance the perspective that CCT is a psychological approach explaining how individuals construct their sense of self, direct their career behaviours, and derive meaning from their professional lives. The theory comprises three principal domains: vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes. Vocational personality accounts for individual differences in values, abilities, and interests, which are shaped by familial and childhood backgrounds. The table below summarises the attributes of CCT.

Table 9: Attributes of CCT (Algra, 2020)

CCT attributes	Attributes in the study
The emphasis lies in how individuals construct their career paths.	The study employed talking circles to support Grade 9 learners from public and private high schools in exploring their career options through collaborative reflection on career adaptability, guided by the principles of Ubuntu and African proverbs.
Knowledge and unique personal identities develop through social	Learners engaged in group discussions during workshops, using IAKS to explore career concepts, which enhanced their self-

and cognitive activities that occur via collaboration and discussion. People create meaning and value for human existence through community, historical continuity, and cultural backgrounds, as well as through interactions that nurture connections across multiple dimensions.	awareness and personal identities, aligning with the study's interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms. The integration of IAKS, particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs, connected learners to their African heritage, strengthening community values and cultural pride. This connection supported their career decision-making and identity development within the context of South Africa's socio-historical challenges.
CCT focuses on how individuals actively construct their careers. It recognises that career paths are not fixed but are shaped by personal agency, social circumstances, and ongoing choices.	The study's findings highlight learners' proactive efforts and resilience in overcoming systemic barriers, such as high youth unemployment and a Eurocentric curriculum, through the use of IAKS to make adaptable and informed career decisions. These efforts demonstrate personal responsibility and responsiveness to the changing job market.

In this study, CCT functions as a foundational framework for incorporating IAKS, including the Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, into South African career education. Through this framework, learners are equipped to construct meaningful career narratives despite the dominance of Eurocentric curricula and ongoing socio-economic challenges. The focus of CCT on dynamic self-exploration, the deconstruction of experiences, and the collaborative creation of purpose corresponds with the qualitative embedded case study approach utilised in the research.

3.4 CAREER ADAPTABILITY

Career adaptability, a psychological construct rooted in CCT, reflects an individual's readiness and capacity to manage both present and future career-related tasks, job transitions, and personal challenges (Maree, 2020a). The concept entails four principal dimensions: concern for future planning, individual control over what lies ahead, curiosity regarding potential opportunities, and self-identity, alongside confidence in pursuing future ambitions. Unlike Super's vocational maturity, which centres on awareness and understanding of careers suited to stable employment environments (McIlveen & Luke, 2023), career adaptability addresses a broader spectrum of career development. Caderet and Hartung (2021) reference Mark Savickas, who characterises career adaptability as a socio-psychological resource that enables individuals to navigate job-related development, shifts in employment, and the accompanying stress, thereby affecting degrees of social integration. CCT posits that individuals vary chiefly in their readiness to tackle developmental tasks at different life stages. It is thus recommended that individuals receive support to foster new and essential attitudes, beliefs, and competencies, enabling progress within their chosen career domains (Maree, 2020a).

Although career development in children does not primarily focus on making career choices, experiences during childhood lay a solid foundation, whether positive or negative, for later decisions related to education, careers, and broader life outcomes (Peila-Shuster et al., 2019). The combination of personal (subjective) and environmental (objective) factors greatly influences development throughout the early years, from infancy to young adulthood. Therefore, studying childhood career development from an ecological perspective is crucial, recognising that interventions at systemic levels can have a significant impact (Peila-Shuster et al., 2019).

The table below depicts the implications of career adaptability for learners.

Table 10: Implications of career adaptability for learners (adapted from Algra, 2020)

CAREER ADAPTABILITY	SUFFICIENT AMOUNT	INSUFFICIENT AMOUNT
Career concern	Optimistic outlook on future prospects: Actively and eagerly preparing for a future career.	Pessimistic and indifferent attitude toward future prospects.
Career control	Independent action. Taking charge of decisions, accepting responsibility, and owning the direction of one's career path.	Hesitancy in decision-making. Lack of clarity regarding future directions. Inconsistency in approach.
Career curiosity	Inquisitive attitude. Practical exploration of career options. Interest and inquiry into the evolving employment landscape.	Minimal investigation of opportunities. Unrealistic objectives and presumptions about the changing job market.
Career confidence	Build capacities for problem-solving and self-management. Acquire the ability to address challenges while shaping a future career.	Perceptions of the future: Self-doubt Apprehension Reluctance

This study employed career adaptability as a key concept to explore how IAKS, particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs, are integrated into South Africa's

predominantly Eurocentric career education system, with the intention of enhancing learners' job readiness. The study identifies a critical shortage in the current educational system, which, despite the end of apartheid in 1994, remains predominantly unchanged and incompatible with the social and cultural realities of South African learners (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018).

Furthermore, the study integrated IAKS to investigate a culturally relevant approach to career education, drawing on Ubuntu's focus on collaborative interconnection and the utilisation of traditional wisdom found in African proverbs as frameworks to deepen the understanding and application of career adaptability (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). The conceptual framework examined how Ubuntu, African proverbs, and SDL may be incorporated into educational strategies to strengthen career adaptability. These culturally significant concepts facilitate the advancement of SDL and provide a foundation for learners to engage critically with the four dimensions of career adaptability – concern, control, curiosity, and confidence – by situating them within their social and cultural realities. Within the South African context, the country's societal dynamics and continual transformation render these concepts particularly pertinent.

Crucially, this study does not treat IAKS as a mere cultural backdrop to the career adaptability construct. Rather, IAKS function as the primary mechanism through which the four dimensions of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) are developed and sustained in South African learners. Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs serve as culturally embedded scaffolds that translate abstract psychosocial resources into lived, relational practices. In this way, the 4 c's of career adaptability are not imported as foreign concepts but are indigenised and operationalised through local wisdom traditions.

3.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework refers to the comprehensive and logical arrangement of all elements that form the basis of the thought processes, planning, procedures, and implementation of a research study (Kivunja, 2018). As the researcher's understanding evolves, the conceptual framework also develops, becoming more advanced, intricate, and thorough with the accumulation of knowledge. This ongoing

development provides a foundation for further refinement and may involve the integration of multiple strategies (Moschis, 2024).

The conceptual framework underpinning this study is informed by CCT, which reconceptualises career education as a dynamic, meaning-making process.

3.5.1 Ubuntu philosophy

The Ubuntu philosophy is an indigenous African ethic grounded in communal humanism, often translated as "*I am because we are*". Scholars primarily describe it as a philosophy emphasising interconnectedness, shared humanity, and moral relationality, rather than as a rigid theory, framework, or approach in isolation (Kyei-Nuamah & Peng, 2024; Letseka & Moeketsi, 2012).

Although Ubuntu is rooted in philosophical principles of care, respect, and community, it is frequently applied in educational contexts as a transformative pedagogical framework that fosters inclusive practices, decolonises curricula, and advances social justice, harmony, and ecological awareness within teaching and learning (Mugumbate et al., 2024).

The Ubuntu philosophy informs the global perspective from which IK is grounded. The main concepts of Ubuntu include social values (human generosity, wholeness, community, and harmony), spiritism, IK, and respect for the environment. These concepts surround a multilateral human relationship with their social principles, environment, and spirituality (comprising rites and ancestral ideology) (Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021).

The Ubuntu philosophy serves as a guiding light, effectively integrating IAKS into the classroom (Mkosi et al., 2023). Ubuntu's significance lies in its ability to help researchers understand how IAKS can be incorporated into classroom learning and instruction. Moreover, this framework is valuable as it guides teachers in instilling in learners the importance of interaction, expression of thoughts, and reciprocal understanding. Additionally, it is crucial to advance the competencies of fairness, humanity, and justice within the broader context of African IK (Mkosi et al., 2023).

The Ubuntu philosophy, rooted in multiple African countries (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019), has developed under diverse names. Although Ubuntu manifests differently

across various African communities and languages, it reflects a collective ethos that fosters unity. The table below presents the different appellations for Ubuntu and their origins in distinct African nations:

Table 11: Different names for Ubuntu and their origins (Mugumbate et al., 2024)

Country	Local Name(s) for Ubuntu
Angola	gimuntu
Botswana	muthu
Burkina Faso	maaya
Burundi	ubuntu
Cameroon	bato
Congo	bantu
Democratic Republic of Congo	bomoto/bantu
Côte d'Ivoire	maaya
Equatorial Guinea	maaya
Guinea	maaya
Gambia	maaya
Ghana	biako ye
Kenya	utu/munto/mondo
Liberia	maaya
Malawi	umunthu
Mali	maaya/hadama de ya
Mozambique	vumuntu
Namibia	omundu

Nigeria	mutunchi/iwa/agwa
Rwanda	bantu
Sierra Leone	maaya
South Africa	ubuntu/botho
Tanzania	utu/obuntu/bumuntu
Uganda	obuntu
Zambia	umunthu/ubuntu
Zimbabwe	hunhu/unhu/botho/ubuntu

Mugumbate and Chereni (2020) contend that Ubuntu encapsulates principles and behaviours regarded as essential by Black people of African descent for attaining recognition and respect within society. While the principles and customs associated with Ubuntu differ among various ethnic groups, all affirm a core belief: human beings exist within an extensive, interconnected network that includes social, communal, environmental, and spiritual dimensions. Such a collective understanding reflects the notion that, despite variations in cultural practice, individuals remain intrinsically linked to their communities, environments, and spiritual domains (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020).

The Ubuntu philosophy conveys the importance of mutual reliance within communities, rejecting the notion of complete independence in thought (Osa-Oviawe, 2016). It advocates for reciprocal engagement, cooperation, and the sharing of benefits, thereby cultivating foundational values and ethical standards. By challenging Western Eurocentric frameworks, Ubuntu advances a more human-centred perspective, focusing on personal relationships, contexts, and lived experiences rather than solely on scientific rationality (Osa-Oviawe, 2016). Furthermore, Ubuntu reconfigures educational practice, steering it towards an ethical and emancipatory paradigm aligned with societal needs and aspirations. Such a transformation

encourages a symbiotic relationship between educational institutions and the broader community (Osa-Oviawe, 2016).

The Ubuntu philosophy, also referred to as *Botho*, constitutes a moral system within African philosophy that conveys humanness through interpersonal relationships (Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021). Mugumbatre and Nyanguru (2013) note that Ubuntu originated in Africa but has since gained prominence among indigenous communities worldwide. Ubuntu informs the global perspective upon which IK rests (Gaim & Clegg, 2021).

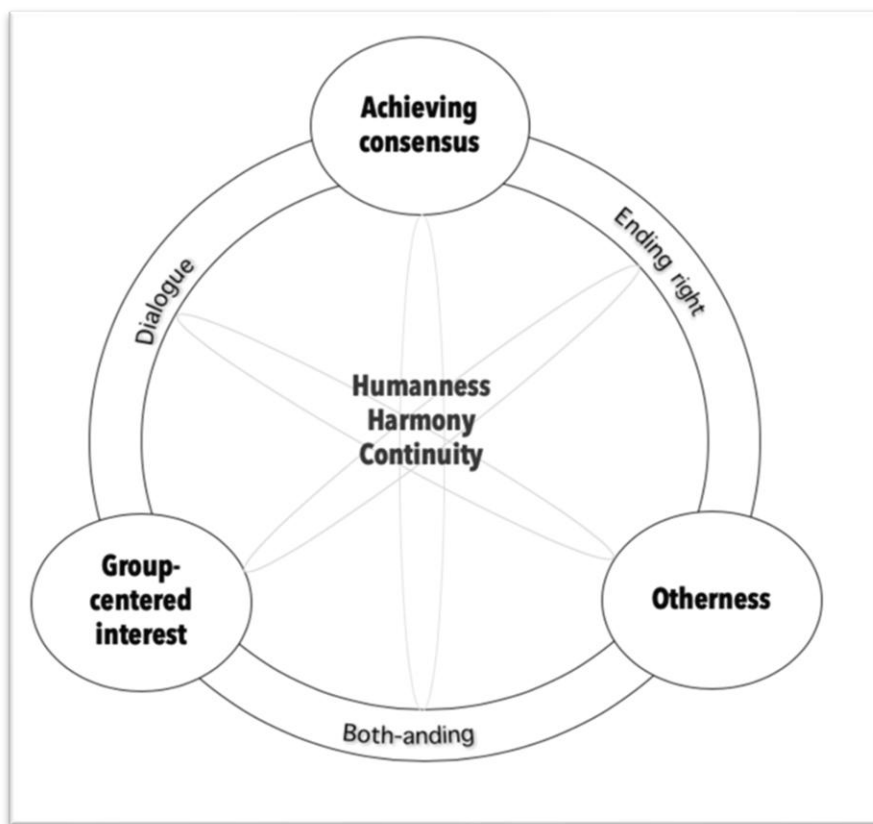


Figure 8: "Ubuntu - interrelated features" (Gaim & Clegg, 2020)

Koenane and Olatunji (2017) characterise Ubuntu as a way of life in which individuals attain humanity through dependable, harmonious coexistence, attentiveness to collective well-being, and the cultivation of strong interpersonal relationships. It entails living authentically as a human being and recognising the significance of interconnectedness. The table below outlines the distinction between a Western approach to life and an Ubuntu approach to life.

Table 12: Differences in Western and Ubuntu approaches (Gaim & Clegg, 2021)

•	• WESTERN APPROACH	• UBUNTU APPROACH
Emphasis and anticipated conclusion	A singular "truth" founded on fact and reason for efficacy and performance.	Compassion, accord, and continuum.
Variance and tension	Are a rarity.	Are a benefit in discourse.
Fundamental tenet when facing tensions	Option of one atop the other. Only one ideal correct way. The aim is to be right.	Reaching an agreement with the larger picture in mind through the consideration of others' wishes, and creating an agreement. The aim is to end right.
Predominant approach	One or the other.	Considering all.
The self and the other	Foremost interest in self.	Foremost interest for others.
Understanding of the collective.	Group of persons.	Group-oriented concern.

3.5.2 African proverbs

African proverbs form the foundation of the Ubuntu philosophy in Africa. These sayings capture the essence of unity among people and encourage a transformative

sense of African identity. African proverbs and metaphors offer frameworks for research that draw upon community values to guide interventions addressing people's needs (Chilisa, 2020).

A proverb is a concise, commonly used saying that conveys a well-known truth or shared experience (Chilisa, 2020). African proverbs depict social and cultural events, practices, and traditions, transmitting a community's cultural heritage and stories across generations. Proverbs also communicate societal expectations regarding behaviour (Chilisa, 2020). In *Indigenous Research Methods* (Chilisa, 2020), African proverbs are described as instruments individuals use to encourage others within their culture to adopt a shared worldview and behavioural standards. These sayings serve an important function in educating, explaining, advising, commending, and supporting individuals on social matters. Additionally, Albert Gerard (Chilisa, 2020) notes that proverbs preserve community religious myths, maintain historical memory, nurture identity and pride, record wisdom from previous generations, and honour leaders and heroes who have contributed to the group's reputation, while also safeguarding the collective sense of pride.

Traditional African philosophical sayings and the wisdom of elders are passed down to younger generations through African proverbs (Sheposh, 2020). African proverbs serve as powerful cultural tools, guiding individuals in navigating social relationships, personal values, and daily challenges while imparting the wisdom and virtues necessary for a fulfilling life (Babalola & Alu, 2019). These proverbs are central to teaching moral standards and shaping social behaviour, embedding cultural norms and ethical principles within communities. To grasp the meaning of African proverbs, one must live in accordance with the guidance of elders (Babalola & Alu, 2019). African proverbs are key to transmitting traditional philosophical wisdom and insights from elders, forming the foundation of African Sage Philosophy. Created by wise community members, these proverbs explore fundamental questions about God, humanity, life, and the afterlife (Babalola & Alu, 2019).

African proverbs and metaphors are invaluable in research and education, particularly for career development (Algra, 2020). African proverbs clarify complex ideas, such as career adaptability, by engaging Indigenous learners through cultural wisdom and insights. By blending traditional knowledge with modern practices, they support the

preservation of cultural heritage while addressing contemporary needs, demonstrating their lasting significance (Algra, 2020).

3.5.3 Self-directed learning

SDL – a method where learners assume full responsibility for their learning process – is a highly relevant concept in the South African educational context. In *SDL*, motivation extends beyond academic success to include resilience, problem-solving abilities, and the capacity to adapt to diverse learning environments. In the South African education system, low academic motivation negatively affects learners' enthusiasm, perseverance, and attainment of educational goals (Siziba et al., 2025). This approach requires learners to set their own goals, select appropriate strategies, and identify resources that meet their learning needs (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021).

Knowles (1975) further describes *SDL* as a process in which individuals take the lead in identifying their learning needs, setting goals, selecting tools, applying methods, and monitoring their progress. According to Dickinson (1992), learners make decisions and take responsibility for their education. Robinson and Persky (2020) assert that *SDL* is defined as a systematic six-step process - goal formulation, evaluation, activities, timeframe, resources, and feedback - in which learners take responsibility for their own education. These steps are designed to be gradually scaffolded over time, beginning in classrooms and advancing to other contexts.

Towle and Cottrell (1996) concur with the above assertions, emphasising that self-directed learning enables learners to proactively assess their learning needs, establish goals, source materials, apply strategies, and evaluate results, which is crucial for ongoing development. *SDL* enables South African learners to develop skills for lifelong learning while fostering independence and self-reliance in reaching educational goals independently or collaboratively (Letseka, Moeketsi & Seeletso, 2021).

SDL enables South African learners to develop skills for lifelong learning while fostering independence and self-reliance in reaching educational goals independently or collaboratively (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021).

Pilling-Cormick (1997) advocates for the integration of SDL within South African educational settings to improve learning outcomes. SDL enables learners to identify, recognise, and address their academic needs through reflective processes. As reflection becomes more profound, it facilitates transformative learning and reshapes learners' perceptions of education. According to Pilling-Cormick (1997), mastery of SDL signifies a developmental progression, shifting learners from passive recipients of instruction to active participants who assume responsibility for their own educational advancement. Such a transition aligns with South Africa's objective of cultivating independent, reflective learners capable of thriving across diverse contexts.

In the study, transformative learning facilitates the decolonisation of the Eurocentric curriculum by fostering critical reflection on cultural assumptions through the integration of Ubuntu and African proverbs, thereby advancing learners' career adaptability and identity formation. Transformative learning, as conceptualised by Mezirow (1991), involves a fundamental shift in individuals' perspectives, allowing for more inclusive, reflective, and adaptive worldviews.

Pilling-Cormick (1997) identifies three core components that link SDL to transformative learning. First, the degree of control learners exercise over their educational journeys is crucial; increased autonomy enhances learning and sustains its impact beyond the classroom. Second, the learner-teacher relationship is significant; learners must engage with their own needs and the value of their education, while teachers facilitate this process through strategies that evaluate the effectiveness of SDL promotion. Third, external influences, such as social challenges, the learning environment (e.g., needs identification, resource discovery, time management), and individual learner characteristics, contribute to this dynamic. Additional factors include the specific requirements of part-time learners, the importance of collaborative activities, and the value of exchanging ideas, even when viewpoints differ.

3.5.3.1 SDL in Africa

A potential theoretical friction exists between SDL's emphasis on individual independence and Ubuntu's emphasis on interdependence. To resolve this, the study proposes a combination of SDL and Communal Self-Directed Learning (or Socially Situated Directed Learning). Du Toit-Brits, Blignaut and Mzuza

(2021) highlight that traditional models of SDL are largely informed by Western assumptions of individual autonomy and independence. They argue that these models are insufficient for African educational contexts and call for an Africanised approach rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu. In this framework, the learner is understood as a relational being whose identity and development are shaped through connection with others. Rather than emphasising solitary goal setting and self-reliance, the authors advocate for a form of SDL in which learners pursue shared educational objectives within a supportive community, guided by principles of interdependence, mutual care, and collective responsibility. This perspective positions Ubuntu as a culturally relevant foundation that enables SDL to flourish through collaboration and communal knowledge systems rather than through isolated individual effort.

3.6. CONCEPTUAL LINKAGES AND THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

This study's conceptual framework relies on the assumption that CCT and IAKS are not oppositional but can be synergistically combined (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Savickas, 2020). CCT's focus on narrative meaning-making corresponds with Ubuntu's relational ontology (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019; Held, 2019), whereas African proverbs offer culturally relevant tools for the reflective processes fundamental to Savickas's life-design paradigm (Savickas, 2020; Kemi & Chijioke, 2021). The conceptual framework asserts that learners are proactive participants in their career development (Savickas, 2020), but their agency is influenced and enhanced by communal values and cultural narratives (Nsamenang, 2002; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). This situates the research within a transformative framework that aims for personal empowerment and culturally sensitive career education (Sefotho, 2017; Chilisa, 2020).

3.7 CONCLUSION

The proposed theoretical framework integrates CCT, Ubuntu, African proverbs, and SDL to foster career adaptability within the South African context. CCT demonstrates how individuals actively construct their career trajectories through personal agency and social interaction. Consequently, career adaptability emerges as a crucial

psychological resource, enabling learners to navigate occupational transitions and personal challenges by utilising concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Furthermore, Ubuntu provides a culturally resonant perspective that foregrounds communal relationships and shared values, offering an alternative to Western individualistic paradigms and endorsing a people-centred educational approach. African proverbs also serve as an accessible means of articulating complex career-related concepts, linking indigenous wisdom to contemporary requirements. In addition, SDL empowers learners to direct their own educational journeys, reflecting South Africa's commitment to cultivating autonomous and adaptable individuals. Collectively, the integrated framework offers a comprehensive, contextually relevant model of career education that is closely aligned with the evolving social and cultural landscape of South Africa.

The subsequent chapter discusses the research methodology, including the research paradigm, design, process, population and sampling strategies, data collection methods, and approaches to data analysis and interpretation. Attention is also given to quality assurance procedures and ethical considerations. The study's limitations are then noted, followed by a brief conclusion to wrap up the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology employed in the study.

The figure below presents a visual overview of the chapter's structure:

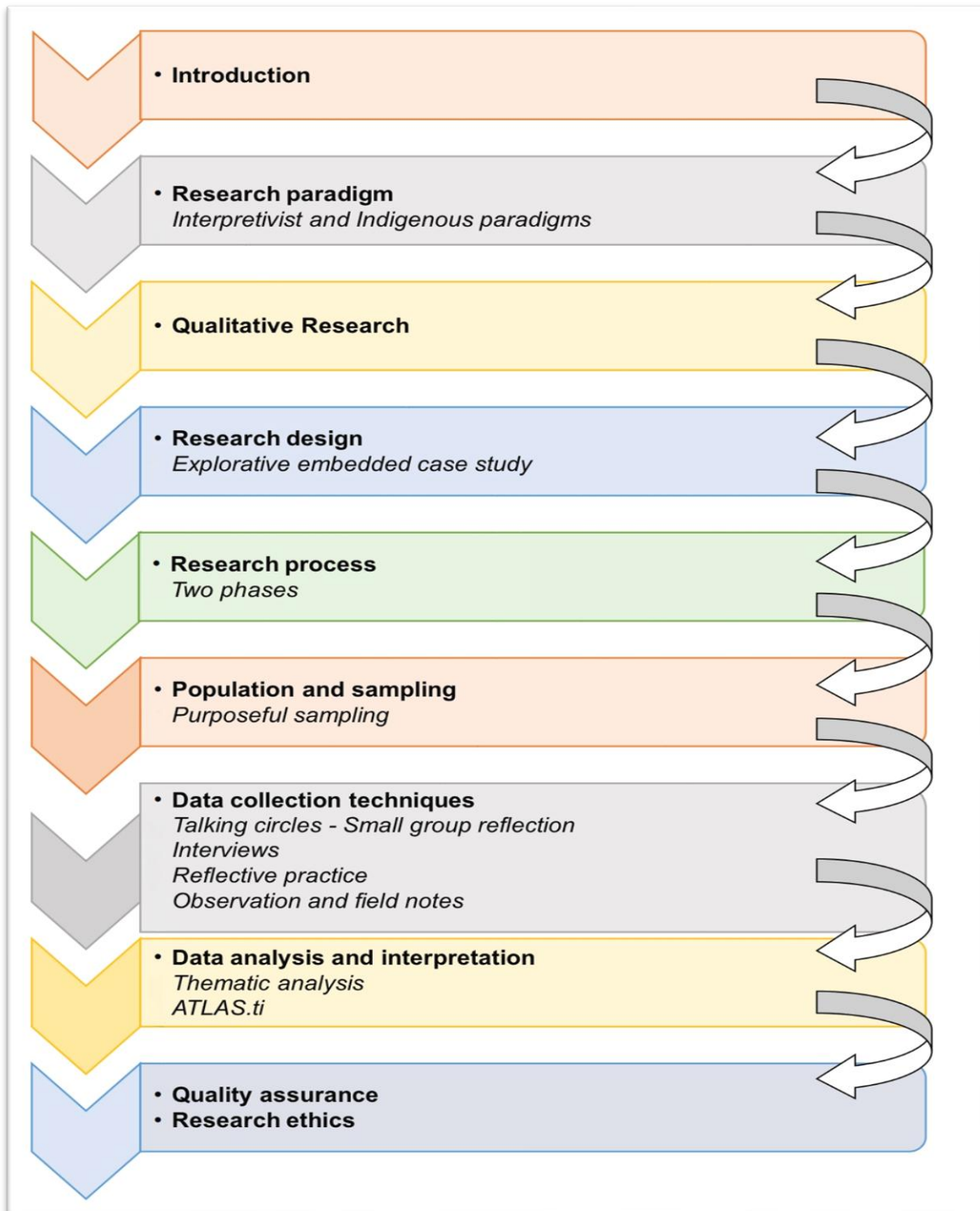


Figure 9: Overview of Chapter 4

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodological framework and research design employed in the study. It begins by explaining the paradigmatic foundations, specifically the interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms, followed by a justification for the use of qualitative research methods. The chapter then clarifies the exploratory embedded single-case study design and details the research process conducted through workshops, including learners' reflections and teacher interviews. Furthermore, it discusses the analytical approach, which employs reflexive thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software, as well as the population and sampling strategies, data collection techniques, and analytical framework. Ethical considerations, limitations, and quality assurance measures are also thoroughly addressed to ensure methodological rigour and trustworthiness.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the term 'paradigm' refers to a researcher's perspective and underlying assumptions about the world beyond their research. This perspective influences the researcher's belief system and shapes how they conduct and interpret various challenges. A paradigm thus provides a lens through which researchers explore the methodological components of a study, guiding them in identifying suitable research methods and data collection techniques for analysis. Furthermore, drawing on Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm is described as a set of personal convictions that guides research. It defines the researcher's philosophical position and illustrates how meaning will be derived from the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

4.3.1 Rationale for selecting the interpretivist and indigenous research paradigms

The researcher employed a dual-paradigm approach, combining interpretivist and Indigenous perspectives, with a focus on subjective meaning-making, cultural relevance, and relational dynamics within the South African educational context (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). Within the context of Indigenous research methodologies, Bagele Chilisa, in an interview with Denborough (2019), explains that Indigenous communities, particularly those that have experienced colonisation, recognise exclusion as a persistent and familiar challenge. Indigenous research methodologies

can therefore be integrative, combining Western theoretical frameworks with IKS to foster a more inclusive and contextually grounded approach to inquiry. Isolating indigenous research methodologies would undermine the core values inherent in Indigenous communities, which prioritise inclusivity and the acceptance of diverse perspectives (Denborough, 2019). The aim of the study was to comprehend and identify the reflections of South African learners on career education in Grade 9, viewed through their unique perspectives (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

The interpretivist paradigm was selected due to its focus on understanding and interpreting learners' subjective realities, which aligns with the study's exploratory qualitative approach. Interpretivism stands in contrast to positivism, recognising that human experiences are distinct from physical phenomena because they are socially constructed and imbued with meaning. Such experiences are influenced by culturally, situationally, and temporally embedded meanings (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The positivist paradigm, grounded in empirical verification, is not inherently appropriate for indigenous and qualitative research, as it presupposes a single, objective reality that distances researchers from participants and contrasts with relational indigenous worldviews (Williams & Shipley, 2023). Furthermore, it disregards cultural subtleties and perpetuates Western dominance, making it inadequate for studies necessitating the subjective interpretation of hybrid identities in African adolescence (Wilson et al., 2022). Such rigidity restricts broader acceptance of indigenous methodologies (Williams & Shipley, 2023).

The interpretivist paradigm, therefore, facilitates meaningful engagement with learners' perspectives, enabling the researcher to extract significance from learners' reflections during talking circles and teachers' interviews.

Key justifications for employing the interpretivist paradigm in this study include:

- Subjective interpretation
The study focuses on interpreting learners' perceptions of career preparation and education, as well as teachers' views on career education, using an interpretivist approach. It aligns with qualitative methodology, utilising non-numerical data such as narratives, artefacts, and transcripts (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

- Qualitative method

Interpretivism views reality as multiple and socially constructed, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds respond to IAKS integration (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

- Contextual relevance

The study is contextually relevant to South African education, as it unpacks cross-cultural diversity and identity formation during adolescence. It fosters a nuanced understanding of how IAKS bridges gaps in career preparation in a post-apartheid context marked by Eurocentric biases and high rates of youth unemployment (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

The study adopts an indigenous paradigm to examine the cultural and relational dimensions of decolonising career education through IAKS, specifically drawing on African proverbs and Ubuntu (Omodan, 2024). Additionally, this approach, which emphasises spirituality and reciprocity, highlights Grade 9 learners' interpersonal responsibility and respectful participation during workshop sessions.

Key justifications for adopting the Indigenous paradigm in this study include:

- Cultural and epistemological inclusion

The thesis aims to Africanise career education by utilising IAKS, which are rooted in communal wisdom and have historically been marginalised. The indigenous paradigm promotes mutual respect across cultures, fostering strong relational ties and a sense of community (Anderson et al., 2025).

- Relational and axiological fit

The paradigm's emphasis on reciprocity and spirituality aligns with the study's objectives, such as exploring how IAKS supports identity formation and self-efficacy amid global shifts. It ensures ethical research

practices, co-creating knowledge with diverse learners and addressing the needs of South African youth (Chilisa et al., 2022).

- Complementarity with interpretivism
By integrating indigenous elements with interpretivism, the researcher creates a hybrid framework that enriches data analysis, enabling culturally grounded interpretations of the findings (Denborough, 2019).

The core principles of the Indigenous and Interpretivist Western paradigms, which may inform our understanding of society, are presented in the following table:

Table 13: Foundational ideas of the Indigenous and Interpretivist Western paradigms that may guide the understanding of society (Held, 2019; Iofride et al., 2014)

Paradigm	Interpretivist	Indigenous
Ontology (What is reality?)	Reality is interconnected, created by shared concepts and beliefs at both social and experiential levels. Individual interactions, contexts, and interpretations create multiple realities. Knowledge, truth, and morality are dependent on	Reality is context-dependent, varying across social, cultural, and historical contexts. Emphasises the value of interactions and interconnectedness. Multiple ways of knowing and experiencing reality.

	culture, society, and historical contexts and are thus not unchanging.	Realities are socially constructed through cultural practices, language, and shared beliefs. Relationships and interactions shape reality.
Epistemology (How do you know?)	Subjective experiences, perspectives, and interpretations significantly contribute to the construction of knowledge. Emphasises individuals' lived experiences as an accurate source of knowledge. Findings are context-dependent and determined by interpretation. Focuses on understanding specific cases or contexts in depth. Knowledge is interpreted.	Intersubjectivity posits that social interactions, shared values, and everyday awareness shape our understanding of the world. Through experiences, individuals understand other people's intentions, feelings, and thoughts, leading to social and emotional growth. Experiential knowledge has a direct connection to the holistic views of indigenous communities. Indigenous social research commences by recognising relationships and the interdependent nature of every living thing and the natural world.

	Reality can be understood.	
Axiology (How do you find it out?)	It recognises that values (personal, cultural, ethical or political) play an essential part in the research process, influencing data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The formative phase involves creating understanding through sense-making, interpretation, and theorisation, thereby shaping the findings.	Purposeful integration of cultural values, morals, and standards throughout the research process. Formative phases involve community input while ensuring that research questions, methods, and objectives align with the community's needs. Relational accountability ensures that research benefits both the community and the research process. Respectful representation entails accurately and authentically depicting Indigenous individuals, communities, and belief systems.
Methodology	Qualitative methods Hermeneutics emphasises understanding and	Participatory research with Indigenous peoples values collaboration among individuals (or the communities they represent) who are interested in the study.

	interpreting complicated phenomena. Hermeneutical approaches reveal more profound meanings, historical context, and levels of interpretation. A dialectical process which involves recognising contradictions, tensions, and multiple perspectives. Carefully consider contextual subtleties to understand how context influences phenomena. Intersubjective agreement and reasoning are achieved through dialogue, shared conversation, and collaborative construction.	Liberatory research seeks to challenge repressive structures, question prevailing narratives, and promote social justice. Fundamentally founded on Indigenous cultural traditions and knowledge systems.

4.3.2 Interpretivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm is a practice of observing the natural world that highlights the significance of interpretation in comprehending the world as it is. In contrast to the conventional positivist paradigm that dominates the social sciences, Wilson (cited in Flick, 2020) introduced the 'interpretative paradigm' in the social sciences, marking a shift from the conventional positivist paradigm. This paradigm combines various theories and qualitative research methodologies, arguing that interpretations are created and exchanged through interpretative processes. Wilson suggested that research should begin by analysing the concepts generated and used within these processes, rather than assuming that all participants understand rules and meanings in the same way (cited in Flick, 2020). Blumer (cited in Flick, 2020) delineates the foundational concepts of symbolic interactionism in three domains: individuals act according to the meanings issues possess for them; such interpretations arise through social interactions; and individuals continuously reinterpret and adapt these meanings through engagement with their environment.

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) summarise the interpretivist research paradigm as follows:

Table 14: Elements directing interpretive research (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020)

Elements of the interpretivist research paradigm	Application in the study
Instead of focusing on specific elements, researchers consider the entire experience as a whole.	The study considers the holistic experiences of learners by exploring contextual factors such as learners' reflections in talking circles and teachers' interviews, situated within the broader socio-historical framework of post-apartheid education and youth unemployment in South Africa.
The researcher's interests, involvement, and dedication influence the development of research	The researcher's interests in career education, shaped by two decades of professional experience as a teacher and recruitment consultant, informed the development of research questions focused on

questions and the identification of issues.	Africanising career education and identifying issues such as Eurocentric biases.
Informal conversations and interviews allow researchers to explore individual experiences.	The study utilised informal conversations in talking circles during workshops with learners, as well as semi-structured interviews with teachers, to explore individual experiences of career adaptability and curriculum challenges.
They thoroughly investigate people's experiences using qualitative designs and methodologies.	The study thoroughly investigated learners' experiences through a qualitative embedded case study design, incorporating methodologies such as reflexive thematic analysis of workshop reflections and interview transcripts.
Researchers emphasise the value of experience as a crucial asset to scientific research.	The study emphasised the importance of experience by drawing on learners' and teachers' lived experiences with IAKS, considering these as vital assets for generating insights into the transformation of career education.
They researched the intricacies of individual experiences, departing from the standardised measurements and expectations of the positivist paradigm.	The study researched the intricacies of individual experiences, such as learners' emotional responses to proverbs and teachers' views on curriculum gaps, departing from standardised measurements by prioritising subjective interpretations over quantitative metrics.
Valuable insights and perspectives can be gained by incorporating experience into subjects and objects.	The study gained valuable insights by incorporating participants' experiences into the subjects of career adaptability and Indigenous African Knowledge Systems, providing perspectives on cultural relevance and empowerment in career education.

Nieuwenhuis (2025b) delineates the interpretivist perspective by highlighting several fundamental beliefs. Interpretivism, as a theoretical perspective, asserts that a proper understanding of existence can only emerge from an individual's subjective experience, as external viewpoints inevitably fail to capture the intricate nuances of a person's life. It emphasises how individuals construct their realities through social interactions and shared meanings (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). The study employed talking circles in Phase 1 workshops to illustrate this interpretivist approach, creating settings in which learners collaborated to construct meanings about career preparation using Ubuntu and African proverbs. These interactions, anchored in shared cultural frameworks, allowed learners to express their lived realities. Similarly, the semi-structured interviews with teachers in Phase 2 enabled the researcher to explore teachers' subjective interpretations of the Eurocentric career education curriculum, thereby revealing systemic barriers.

Moreover, interpretivism contends that reality is socially constructed and intrinsically resistant to objective measurement. Researchers seeking a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive their actions must immerse themselves in the social contexts in which these actions unfold. This approach recognises that meaning emerges from the dynamic interplay of social interactions, with its fundamental component residing within the conscious human mind. By exploring how people create meaning, we enhance our understanding of its significance and deepen our comprehension of all aspects of human experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). In Phase 1 of the study, the researcher conducted workshops with Grade 9 learners using talking circles to explore career construction through the IAKS framework. The researcher actively facilitated these circles, creating a supportive environment in which learners reflected on elements of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence) within a culturally relevant framework. She immersed herself in the process by observing learners' verbal and non-verbal interactions during the workshops, documenting these through an observational protocol and reflective notes. By allowing learners to express their reflections through writing and doodling, the researcher engaged with their creative outputs, thereby deepening her understanding of their identity formation and cultural connections.

Furthermore, interpretivism recognises that events can be understood through interpretations shaped by both singular and multiple realities. These interpretations

may shift according to temporal and spatial contexts, which demonstrates the evolving nature of meaning-making (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). The qualitative embedded case study design utilised in the research accommodated diverse interpretations of career preparation among learners and teachers in both public and private schools in Gauteng. Learners' perceptions of unemployment and the fifth industrial revolution varied in relation to socio-economic circumstances, reflecting the adaptable character of meaning-making.

Lastly, researchers are inevitably influenced by their own comprehension and expertise. In attempting to view the world from the perspectives of others, their knowledge and prior experiences serve as filters that shape their interpretation and understanding of events (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). In this study, the researcher's background as a former teacher and recruitment professional informed both the design and the focus on a decontextualised curriculum. By seeking to appreciate the viewpoints of both learners and teachers, and by employing culturally relevant methods such as talking circles and reflective journals, she filtered her interpretations through her existing knowledge. This approach facilitated a nuanced appreciation of the complexities inherent in career education.

4.3.3 The postcolonial Indigenous paradigm

The ontology (Table 15: Elements directing indigenous research (Hart, 2010) within an Indigenous research paradigm pertains to the nature of reality as perceived in Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. As detailed in Table 15, a paradigm constitutes a foundational element of a broader framework encompassing epistemology, methodology, and axiology, which collectively underpin an Indigenous research paradigm (Mungai, 2022).

Chilisa (2020) advocates for a postcolonial Indigenous paradigm emphasising the lived experiences and perspectives of disenfranchised or historically marginalised communities. Chilisa believes it provides a solid framework for looking into IKS and understanding strategies. Chilisa's (2020) framework supports the study's decolonial intent by challenging Western-dominated educational models that overlook cross-cultural diversity and local realities, as critiqued by Letseka and Pitsoe (2018).

Furthermore, unlike the concept of a single, universal truth, the postcolonial Indigenous paradigm maintains that knowledge is socially constructed and contextualised (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022). It rejects the idea of the truth as absolute and considers that knowledge is fundamentally relative and influenced by cultural, historical, and personal circumstances (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022). Chilisa and Phatshwane’s (2022) views provide a theoretical and methodological foundation for the study by validating the use of IAKS to construct culturally relevant knowledge, challenging Eurocentric universalism, and empowering marginalised learners to navigate career challenges in a contextually meaningful way.

Moreover, Chilisa and Phatshwane (2022) propose a postcolonial Indigenous research paradigm centred on the philosophy of knowledge, axiology, and research procedures pertinent to colonised communities. This framework draws upon the perspectives of researchers from previously colonised regions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as Indigenous populations in the United States, Canada, Australia, and other areas. The central aim is to prioritise ethical principles and values that guide relationships and responsibilities between researchers and participants. The paradigm advocates for cultivating meaningful connections throughout the research process, challenging the dominance of Western perspectives, and amplifying the voices of historically marginalised groups (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022).

Hart (2010), inspired by Shawn Wilson's definition of Atkinson's principles for Indigenous research, has identified significant elements that should direct an indigenous approach. These values, when adapted into practical measures, may foster a respectful and culturally relevant approach:

Table 15: Elements directing indigenous research (Hart, 2010)

Elements directing indigenous research	Application in the study
Actively engage Indigenous participants in all stages of the research process, from conception to implementation.	The study employs talking circles, where learners collaboratively reflect on career adaptability using Ubuntu and African proverbs.

Approach research with humility and respect for culture. Encourage respect for one another by participating in discussions, listening attentively, and adhering to cultural norms and standards.	The study respected African cultural practices by applying talking circles, Ubuntu and African proverbs.
Participate in mutually beneficial information sharing. Share the research objective honestly and collaborate with research participants.	The incorporation of Ubuntu, African proverbs, and talking circles as educational tools demonstrates respect for cultural wisdom, enabling learners to connect career adaptability concepts to their heritage.
Create secure conditions for sharing. Address concerns about privacy according to participants' desires. Ensure both mental and physical security throughout the research process.	The study created a safe environment through talking circles, which provide a supportive space for learners to express their thoughts on career planning without fear of judgment. The study followed a decolonial ethical framework for socially responsible research, emphasising contextual relevance and respect for Ubuntu's communal values.
Silently observe lifestyles, traditions, and everyday activities. Avoid trying to establish external guidelines or interfere with natural processes. Learn through silent observation and nuances.	The researcher employed informal observation during workshop sessions to monitor learners' natural interactions and reflections within talking circles. The researcher used reflective notes and observations to examine learners' non-verbal cues and group dynamics.

Listen deeper than spoken words. Consider the emotional and spiritual aspects. Develop compassion and acknowledge that stories have multiple layers of meaning.	The study employed reflexive thematic analysis combined with Indigenous methodologies, incorporating the principle of listening beyond spoken words by considering emotional and spiritual dimensions. The researcher interpreted learners' reflections, writing and doodling, capturing nuanced meanings about identity, fear, and cultural pride.
Consider the cultural surroundings, historical trauma, and power relationships. Avoid making premature conclusions. Understand that reality is multifaceted.	The study explored South Africa's colonial legacy and its influence on education, emphasising the Eurocentric curriculum's division between coloniser and colonised viewpoints. The study focused on learners who face systemic barriers, such as high unemployment and inadequate career guidance. The use of IAKS, such as Ubuntu and proverbs, mitigated trauma by fostering cultural pride and resilience, as shown by learners' reflections.
Respect the participants' confidence in the researcher. Convert views into actionable ideas that benefit everyone involved. Carry out additional responsibilities in conjunction with data collection and analysis.	The study ensured learner trust through ethical practices, including obtaining consent from various stakeholders and promoting voluntary participation. The researcher's experience as a former teacher and recruitment consultant boosted credibility and confidence among learners, leading to their willingness to share personal reflections.

Combine reasoning and feelings of empathy. Acknowledge that research is not independent of personal experiences. Integrate emotional and cognitive factors into ethical decision-making.	The study employed reasoning and empathy to understand learners' subjective experiences, focusing on their fears and aspirations in a context characterised by high unemployment and technological disruption.
Evaluate own biases, beliefs, and responses. Observe how the researcher's presence impacts discussions. Be mindful of one's feelings, motives, and social placement. Self-awareness encourages respectful participation.	The study utilised a reflective journal to record the researcher's perceptions and biases, promoting self-awareness throughout the research process.
Maintain apparent subjectivity. Engage in thoughtful conversations with participants and other researchers. Subjectivity benefits understanding.	The data analysis employed ATLAS.ti and in vivo quotes, ensuring objective interpretation whilst recognising subjectivity.

The postcolonial Indigenous paradigm supports the study's methodology, findings, and recommendations, offering a culturally grounded way to address educational inequities amid South Africa's socio-economic challenges. It affirms the use of IAKS to decolonise career education and prioritises ethical, relational research practices.

4.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The selection of qualitative research methods is a logical extension of the interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms, prioritising the exploration of meaning over quantitative (Kovach, 2021). Qualitative research requires collecting multiple perspectives, sources of information, and concepts to develop a broad comprehension, called a "bricolage²", derived from participants' verbal and visual contributions (Denzin et al.,

² 'Bricolage' – construction, whether it's a sculpture or a structure of ideas, is achieved using whatever is available (Merriam-Webster, 2025).

2024). The researcher engaged directly with learners and teachers in authentic settings to elicit their perspectives on career adaptability, ensuring that the methodology reflects the paradigmatic emphasis on context and subjectivity.

As a bricoleur, the researcher meticulously constructed a framework by engaging with learners in real-world settings, allowing them to explore their diverse truths and develop fresh insights, enriching the study and deepening their understanding of the learners' experiences. This process enriched the research and deepened the researcher's understanding of the learners' experiences.

The nine common characteristics of qualitative research, as identified by Creswell and Poth (2024), are outlined below and presented in the table without a prescribed order of significance:

Table 16: The nine common characteristics of qualitative research

Characteristics	Description	Application in the study
Natural setting	Data collection occurs in participants' real-life environments, such as homes or schools, rather than controlled or artificial settings, using direct interactions like conversations and observations.	Data were collected at two Gauteng schools (a public high school and a private high school), reflecting the natural educational context of Grade 9 learners and LO teachers.
The researcher is a key instrument.	The researcher personally gathers data through interviews, document analysis, and observation, often designing open-ended	The researcher conducted workshops, facilitated talking circles, observed learner interactions, and interviewed teachers, using

	tools rather than relying on pre-existing questionnaires.	her expertise to interpret data through reflective notes and a journal.
Multiple methods	Various data sources, including interviews, observations, and documents, provide a comprehensive understanding rather than depending on a single method.	The study used talking circles, semi-structured interviews, informal observations, and reflective journals to collect data, ensuring diverse perspectives.
Complex reasoning	Patterns and themes are developed inductively from data, combined with deductive checks, requiring iterative and layered reasoning throughout the study.	Reflexive thematic analysis was employed, moving iteratively between coding, theme generation, and refinement, using ATLAS.ti to organise and interpret data from workshops and interviews.
Participants' perspectives	Emphasis is placed on capturing the diverse meanings and views participants attribute to the issue rather than imposing external interpretations.	The study explored learners' reflections on career adaptability and teachers' perspectives on the curriculum, employing talking circles and interviews to capture their subjective experiences.
Theoretical or interpretative lens	The study is framed by a theoretical or interpretive lens within the participants' social, political, and historical	The study employed a combined indigenous and interpretivist paradigm, utilising IAKS (Ubuntu and

	settings, recognising how these factors shape experiences and outcomes.	African proverbs) to advocate for Africanised career education.
Emergent design	The research plan adapts as data collection unfolds, allowing flexibility in questions, methods, and participant selection based on emerging findings.	The study's design allowed flexibility, with workshop sessions and interview questions adjusted based on participants' responses, reflecting an emergent approach.
Interpretive inquiry	Researchers reflect on and disclose their backgrounds and influences, showing how these shape their interpretations and involvement in the study.	The researcher interpreted learners' reflections and teachers' interviews through the lens of IAKS, acknowledging her role as a former teacher and recruitment consultant.
Holistic account	The goal is to create a comprehensive, interconnected understanding of the problem or issue, incorporating multiple perspectives, identifying various factors, and presenting a holistic context.	The study provided a holistic view by integrating learners' and teachers' perspectives, linking IAKS to career adaptability, and addressing socio-economic and cultural contexts.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher selected an exploratory embedded single-case study design, incorporating multiple embedded units of analysis. Case studies play a pivotal role within interpretive research frameworks (Yin, 2018). This particular design was chosen due to various methodological considerations aligning with the study's objectives and paradigmatic orientation.

The design enabled a comprehensive examination of a bounded phenomenon: the integration of IAKS into career education in South African schools. In so doing, it addresses a specific social issue related to the Eurocentric bias present in the curriculum (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018).

Secondly, the embedded nature of the single-case study design incorporated multiple units of analysis to enrich the investigation, including Phase 1 workshops at a public high school (Unit 1) and a private high school (Unit 2), as well as Phase 2 interviews with teachers at each institution (Units 3 and 4) (Bloomberg, 2018).

Thirdly, case studies play a pivotal role within interpretive research frameworks, as they prioritise subjective meanings and socially constructed realities, aligning closely with the study's interpretivist paradigm (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). The design further aligns with the indigenous research paradigm by fostering relational accountability and cultural inclusion, thereby ensuring respectful representation of diverse South African voices (Held, 2019a; Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022).

Fourthly, the choice of this design ensured feasibility in terms of resources, ethical compliance, and alignment with the study's aim to propose transformative practices for equitable career preparation (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). By employing a single case study with embedded units, the researcher achieved an effective balance between depth and practical constraints, making this approach well-suited to examining the complex interplay of cultural, educational, and socio-economic factors in South African career education (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018).

4.5.1 Case studies

Case study research centres on contexts where participants are systematically monitored and their behaviour documented. Researchers typically begin with a broad

perspective on the case, progressively refining their focus throughout the study. The methodology incorporates constraints relating to both time and space. According to Nieuwenhuis (2025b), case study research aims to achieve a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of a specific entity – such as a person, organisation, behavioural phenomenon, event, or social phenomenon – within its everyday environment. The temporal boundaries of the study (five-week workshops) and spatial parameters (two distinct schools in Gauteng) facilitated an in-depth exploration of learners' and teachers' experiences within authentic educational settings, aligning with the objective to Africanise the career education curriculum.

Nieuwenhuis (2025b) contends that case study research ought to generate new insights and move beyond the analysis of isolated events. In order to prevent overly rigid boundaries and a limited scope, binding a case to its context necessitates considering not only time and place, but also time and activity, alongside definition and context (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). In the present study, this approach is manifested through the integration of IAKS into career education across two Gauteng schools over a five-week period. By anchoring the case within its temporal context (a specific school term), spatial context (public and private schools), and the relevant activities (workshops and interviews), the research aligns with Nieuwenhuis's recommendations. This comprehensive approach facilitates an in-depth examination of the phenomenon, generating nuanced and contextually relevant knowledge that transcends the study of isolated occurrences.

According to Yin (2018), case study research relies on six principal sources of evidence, including direct observations, interviews, and documentation, to facilitate triangulation and strengthen the validity of the findings. In this study, these sources were evident through informal observations of learner interactions during workshop talking circles, semi-structured open-ended interviews with LO teachers, participant written reflections, and group discussions as forms of digital and verbal data exchange. Further analysis of written materials, such as reflective journals and researcher reflective notes, contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon within the bounded context of two Gauteng schools.

Throughout the research process, maintaining the integrity of the evidence was paramount. All records were diligently documented to enable subsequent justification,

clarification, and support of the study's conclusions Harrison et al., 2017). In this exploratory embedded single-case study, the researcher ensured evidentiary integrity by establishing an audit trail through comprehensive documentation of data sources. These included transcripts from semi-structured interviews with LO teachers, the researcher's reflective notes from workshop observations, participant-written reflections, and group discussions within talking circles.

In relation to case study methodology, Schramm (in Yin, 2018) stresses the necessity of comprehending the intricate dynamics of decision-making, implementation, and outcomes. As indicated by Yin (2018), the most pertinent questions to consider when undertaking a case study are presented in the table below:

Table 17: Yin's (2018) most significant questions for case studies

Question	Description	Study
Why were the decisions constructed?	Researchers investigate the factors that influence decision-making, including motivations and circumstances. Comprehending the reasons behind decisions is vital for analysing the case.	The decision to incorporate IAKS into career education was made due to the persistent Eurocentric bias in South African schools, which restricts cross-cultural diversity and marginalises African perspectives, as outlined in the problem statement. This decision addresses youth unemployment and the need for culturally relevant frameworks, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, to support learners' career education in schools.
In what way were the	The development of the narrative is shaped by the techniques, procedures,	The decisions were made through a qualitative embedded case study approach in two

decisions put in place?	and measures employed to make decisions. Researchers examine the specific measures taken to implement their chosen approaches.	phases: workshops with Grade 9 learners using talking circles to explore career adaptability via IAKS, and interviews with LO teachers, as detailed in the research methodology and design and the research plan.
What was the impact of these decisions?	The impact of decisions becomes clear through the outcomes. Researchers examine the results, consequences, and overall effects of the chosen decision.	The impact included increased cultural relevance in career education, promoting SDL and identity development among learners. The findings highlighted the need for a balance between Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives to address unemployment and curriculum gaps, as presented in the findings.

To address these enquiries, researchers work in close partnership with participants. Within naturalistic settings, qualitative data collection methods are employed (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). Acting as a participant-observer, the researcher was tasked with fostering a safe environment that enabled learners to participate in reflective discussions regarding career self-construction, encouraging exploration of the "why", "how", and "what" underlying their decisions in an interactive context.

4.5.2 Exploratory embedded single case study with multiple units

The figure below depicts the selected exploratory embedded single-case study design, incorporating four distinct embedded units of analysis to facilitate a thorough investigation:

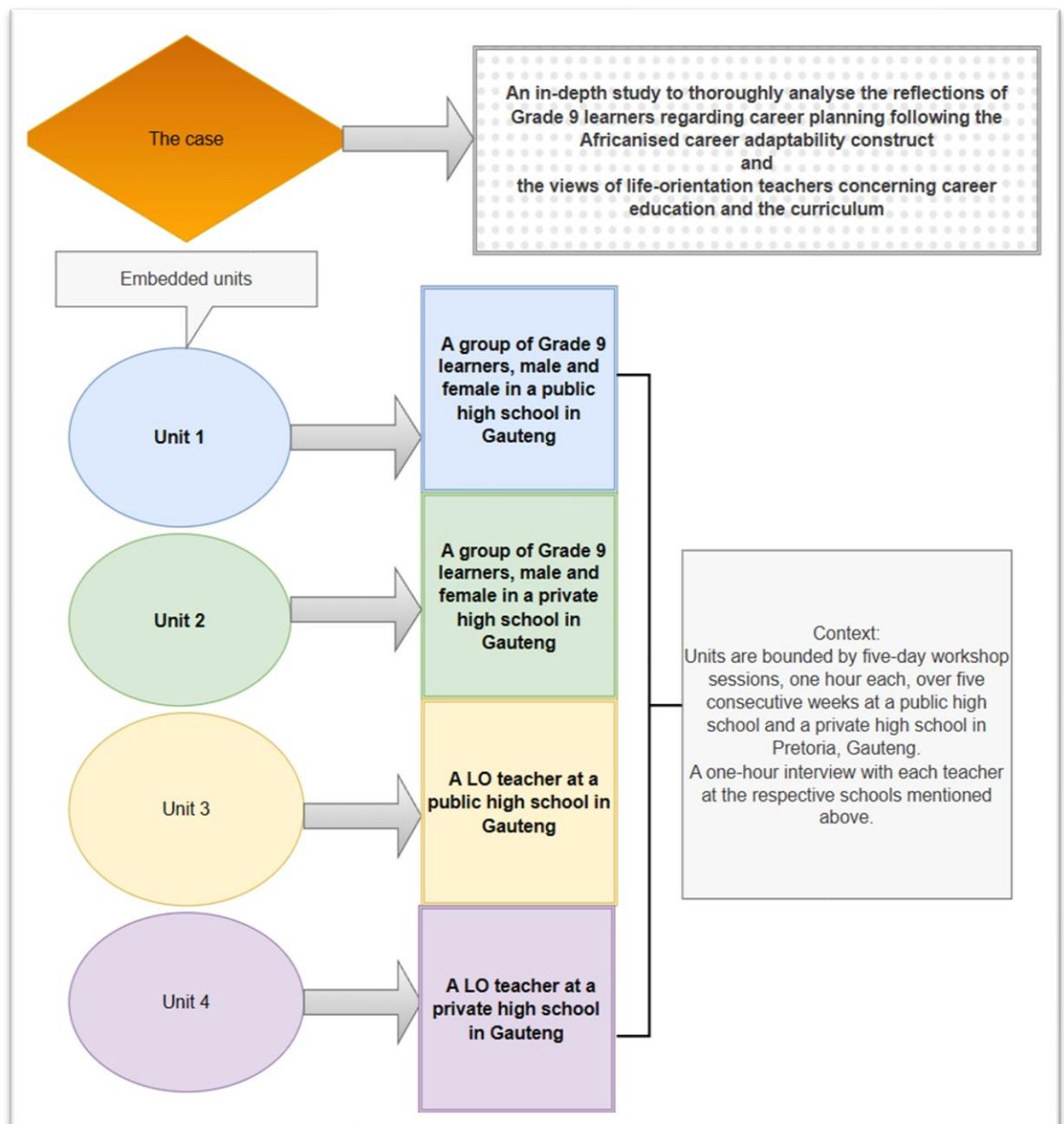


Figure 10: Case study design

Implementing an exploratory embedded single-case study research design is appropriate due to its qualitative orientation, which facilitates a comprehensive and in-depth investigation.

According to Yin (2018), case study research can be classified into four distinct types: holistic, embedded, single-case, and multiple-case designs. Holistic case studies involve an extensive examination of a phenomenon as a whole, whereas embedded case studies focus on specific sub-units within a bounded system. Single-case studies

concentrate on a single entity, while multiple-case studies involve the selection of several entities to forecast similar or contrasting outcomes for clearly defined reasons. Bloomberg (2018) asserts that a single instrumental case study is particularly effective in generating a nuanced understanding of a defined issue, whereas multiple case studies are valuable for capturing diverse perspectives on a common topic.

This study adopted an embedded single case study approach, focusing on distinct sub-units – namely, workshops with Grade 9 learners and interviews with LO teachers – within one bounded context (two schools in Gauteng). The objective was to undertake an in-depth exploration of the process of Africanising the career education curriculum, thereby yielding detailed insights into the experiences of both learners and teachers within a specific socio-educational environment, rather than drawing comparisons across multiple cases. The following table outlines the case study elements and indicators utilised in this research:

Table 18: Chosen elements and indicators of the case study (Thomas, 2019)

Elements	Indicators
The design	Single case with multiple embedded units
The case	Two sets of Grade 9 learners, comprising males and females, and interviews with teachers.
The units	Multiple embedded units of analysis: The unit spanned two phases, conducted at two different high schools, and included two interviews with teachers at each school, which were held over a period of five consecutive weeks. Unit 1: Phase 1 Consisted of five workshop sessions (one hour each per week) at a public high school in Gauteng, South Africa. Unit 2: Phase 1

	Consisted of five workshop sessions (one hour each per week) at a private high school in Gauteng, South Africa. Unit 3: Phase 2 Consisted of an individual interview with a teacher at a public high school in Gauteng, South Africa. Unit 4: Phase 2 Consisted of an individual interview with a teacher at a private school in Gauteng, South Africa.
The context	Phase 1: Two diverse high schools in Gauteng, South Africa. The two schools were a public high school and a private high school in Gauteng, South Africa. Phase 2: Interviews with LO teachers at the respective schools.
The depth of study	Firstly, an intensive study was undertaken to explore the reflection and group interaction of Grade 9 learners using the career adaptability construct, combined with Ubuntu and African proverbs, to deconstruct and Africanise career education in the subject LO. Secondly, the researcher interpreted and reported on the content from the interviews with teachers regarding career education at their respective schools. Thirdly, the researcher interpreted and reported on the variances in reflections between the public and the private high schools.
The sources for validation	Approaches to gathering data comprised: -Talking Circles (Small Group Reflection) -Interviews -Researcher observation

The data analysis process entailed organising and presenting findings through case themes and descriptive narratives. Over a period of two months, the researcher collected data using multiple methods, including observation, field notes, group reflections, and reflective writing during the initial phase, followed by teacher interviews in the subsequent phase. The study involved two groups of learners and teachers at two distinct site locations.

Case studies are characterised by the consistent and systematic observation of participants, allowing the researcher to deliver a thorough, in-depth analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). The table below outlines the group of participants for this case study:

Table 19: Case study participants

Factor for this study	The case	
Description	A diverse group of learners	LO teachers
Grade/qualification	Grade 9	Teaching qualification SACE registered
Participants	Male and female	Female
Age/experience	14 - 17	3+ years

The table below outlines the sources utilised to validate the case study, providing a detailed basis for its verification:

Table 20: Sources utilised to validate the case study

FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY	Validation sources
DESCRIPTION	Methods of data collection: ○ Talking circles and small group discussions with learners in Phase 1 of the study. ○ Observation of learners by the researcher ○ Interviews with teachers from each school in Phase 2 of the study. ○ Researcher's reflective journal

4.6 RESEARCH PROCESS

In the initial phase of the workshop (Phase 1), the primary aim was to foster critical engagement among learners with African proverbs related to each dimension of career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Through reflection on these proverbs, participants were encouraged to engage in critical thinking and deliberate on decisions regarding their prospective career trajectories.

Within the framework of this qualitative embedded case study, the workshop content was structured to serve multiple purposes, consistent with the interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms informing the research. In particular, the workshops provided a platform for learners to reflect on career adaptability by incorporating IAKS, including Ubuntu and African proverbs, while also serving as a valuable tool for data generation. Flick (2025) asserts that qualitative data collection involves the systematic acquisition of language-based or visual artefacts, which allow researchers to explore social phenomena, lived experiences, and contextual factors. In the present study, the workshops yielded a range of artefacts, including verbal reflections from talking circles, written responses and doodles, as well as researcher field notes, thereby offering substantial and reliable materials for thematic analysis. These artefacts emerged from

naturally occurring interactions during the five workshop sessions with Grade 9 learners from both public and private schools in Gauteng, alongside subsequent teacher interviews, ensuring an authentic depiction of participants' perspectives on the Africanisation of career education.

The dual purpose of the workshops is consistent with the study's methodological framework, in which data collection encompassed not only information extraction but also relational and reciprocal processes, acknowledging the Indigenous paradigm's emphasis on intersubjectivity and collective knowledge (Flick, 2025). Employing African proverbs as frameworks for examining the four elements of career adaptability – concern, control, curiosity, and confidence – corresponds with Asimeng-Boahene's (2018) argument that these proverbs function as more than mere linguistic devices; they act as literal, metaphorical, and psychological catalysts for critical reflection.

During Phase 1 of the study, the selection of proverbs aimed to stimulate innovative thinking and creativity among the multicultural participants, cultivating an environment in which learners could engage with diverse perspectives on career trajectories. Translating each proverb into the participants' home languages enhanced both accessibility and cultural relevance, thereby countering the Eurocentric biases embedded within the National CAPS and advancing a decolonised approach to SDL. Integrating indigenous wisdom with contemporary career education challenges promoted a culturally resonant approach to learning. Furthermore, the study produced empirical evidence regarding the ways in which IAKS assists learners in managing the uncertainties associated with the fifth industrial revolution, as reflected in findings that indicate heightened cultural pride and adaptability among participants.

4.6.1 Phase 1: Workshop

The workshop in this qualitative embedded case study was deliberately structured to align with interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms, facilitating both learner reflection and robust data collection to investigate the integration of IAKS within South African career education. The following elements demonstrate the workshop's alignment with the study's objectives.

Five one-hour sessions: The workshop consisted of five one-hour sessions, offering a systematic environment in which learners engaged with career adaptability concepts

through IAKS, including Ubuntu and African proverbs. This approach fostered meaningful reflection on their prospective career trajectories.

Worksheets for reflection: At the beginning of each session, learners received worksheets to record their thoughts and reflections. These worksheets generated substantial textual data, capturing individual perspectives on career adaptability, and were subsequently analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Flick, 2025).

Submission of worksheets: Learners submitted their completed worksheets at the end of each session, yielding valuable qualitative data that revealed patterns in their engagement with IAKS, such as enhanced cultural pride and the development of adaptive strategies for navigating the fifth industrial revolution.

Audio-recorded conversations: All class and group discussions conducted within talking circles were audio-recorded, transcribed, and systematically analysed, capturing the communal and relational ethos of Ubuntu while yielding a comprehensive dataset of verbal interactions (Held, 2020).

Researcher observations and field notes: The researcher's observations and field notes documented non-verbal cues and group dynamics, thereby enriching the dataset and contributing to a nuanced understanding of learners' responses to the Africanised career education framework in both public and private schools in Gauteng.

Culturally resonant proverbs: African proverbs were translated into learners' native languages to enhance cultural relevance. Although learners in both schools predominantly preferred English as the medium of communication, this approach facilitated shared understanding and inclusivity in multicultural discussions.

The figures below summarise the workshop sessions of Phase 1:



SESSION ONE

TOPIC: CAREER ADAPTABILITY

AFRICAN PROVERB: *Where you will sit
when you are old shows where you
stood in your youth.*

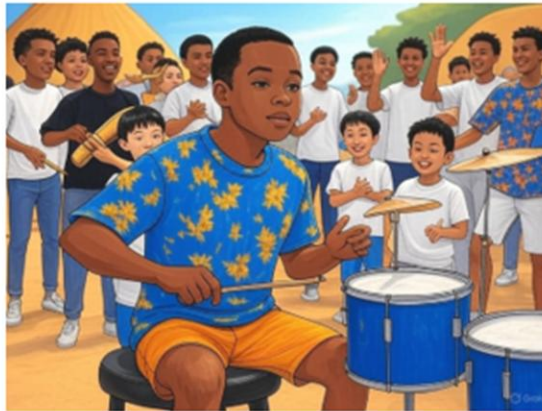
Learners: In class and small groups,
reflect on the proverb and its meaning
regarding career development. Written
reflection: drawing, writing.

Researcher: An overview of career
adaptability. Facilitate group activities.
Participant observer.

Figure 11: Session 1 (Algra, 2020)

For each session, the researcher designed a worksheet for learners to assist with reflection on the proverb:

"If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt".



Group discussion – **RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER UBUNTU!**

1. I wonder ... if you knew about the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa. Will this influence me personally?
2. I wonder ... if you knew what it meant to be employable? What can I do to empower myself?
3. I wonder ... if you knew about the 5th Industrial Revolution? How can I prepare myself?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

Hey there! So, reflection is like taking a moment to think about something more deeply. Imagine you're looking into a mirror—that's kind of what reflection does, but for your thoughts or experiences. It's when you pause and ask yourself : "**HOW DID THE PROVERB HELP ME UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY?**"

Figure 12: Worksheet for learners

The researcher provided information sheets on the key focus areas after reflecting on the African proverb:

SESSION 1

CAREER ADAPTABILITY – “If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt”.



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The unemployment rate for youth aged 18 – 34 lingers at 55% – a seemingly new, ‘structural’ post-Covid norm. Compared to a decade ago, this is a decline of 9%, or between 200,000 and 500,000 less youth actually working. NEETS (youth not in employment, education or training) aged 18-34 years are up from 8.6 million to 8.8 million compared to the same quarter in 2023, and both male and female youth employment rates remain mostly flat.

Source: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Release – 18 February 2025



WHAT IS THE 5TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

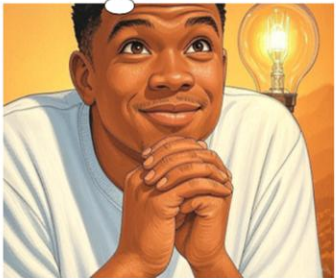
So picture this: the Fifth Industrial Revolution, or 5IR, is like the ultimate team-up between humans and machines. Way back, machines sometimes took over jobs—like when a robot arm started building cars instead of people. But now, in 5IR, it's not about replacing us; it's about machines being our sidekicks. They help us while we focus on being creative and caring for the planet and each other.

Here's the cool part: 5IR uses super-smart tech like artificial intelligence (AI)—think of it as a brainy computer buddy—robots, and something called the Internet of Things (IoT). IoT is when everyday stuff, like your phone, gaming console, or even a smart fridge, connects to the internet and talks to other things. This tech isn't just random—it's designed to match what you like and make your life and work way more fun and easier.

AI is the star player in 5IR, especially stuff like GPT, which is this crazy-smart program that can chat, write, and solve problems. It's not just some boring tool—it's more like a partner that helps you think sharper, work smarter, and come up with dope ideas. Imagine having a friend who's always got your back with the perfect advice or a quick fix.

So, 5IR is about building a future where AI and tech help us make better choices, get creative, and vibe with the world in a chill, sustainable way. It's like living in a sci-fi movie, but it's real—and you're part of it!

Employability is about having the skills, attitude, and know-how that make you someone a boss would want to hire. Think of it like levelling up in a game—you've got to be good at stuff like teamwork, problem-solving, or maybe even coding or drawing, depending on what you're into. It's not just about school grades; it's also about showing you're responsible, can learn new things, and get along with people. Basically, it's what makes you ready to land a job you'd enjoy and be awesome at!



© Marlene Algra

Figure 13: Learner information sheet

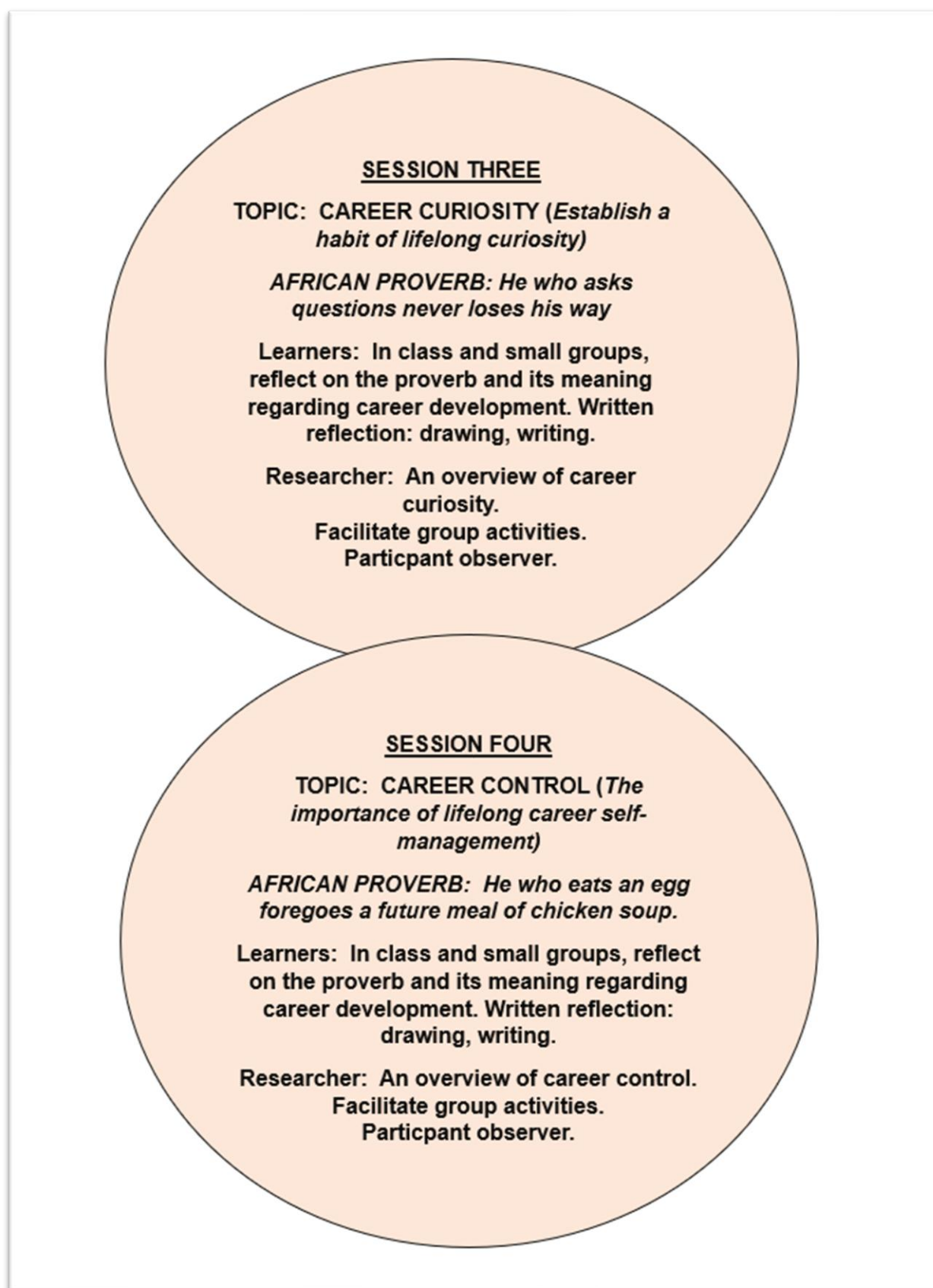


Figure 14: Sessions 2 and 3 (Algra, 2020)

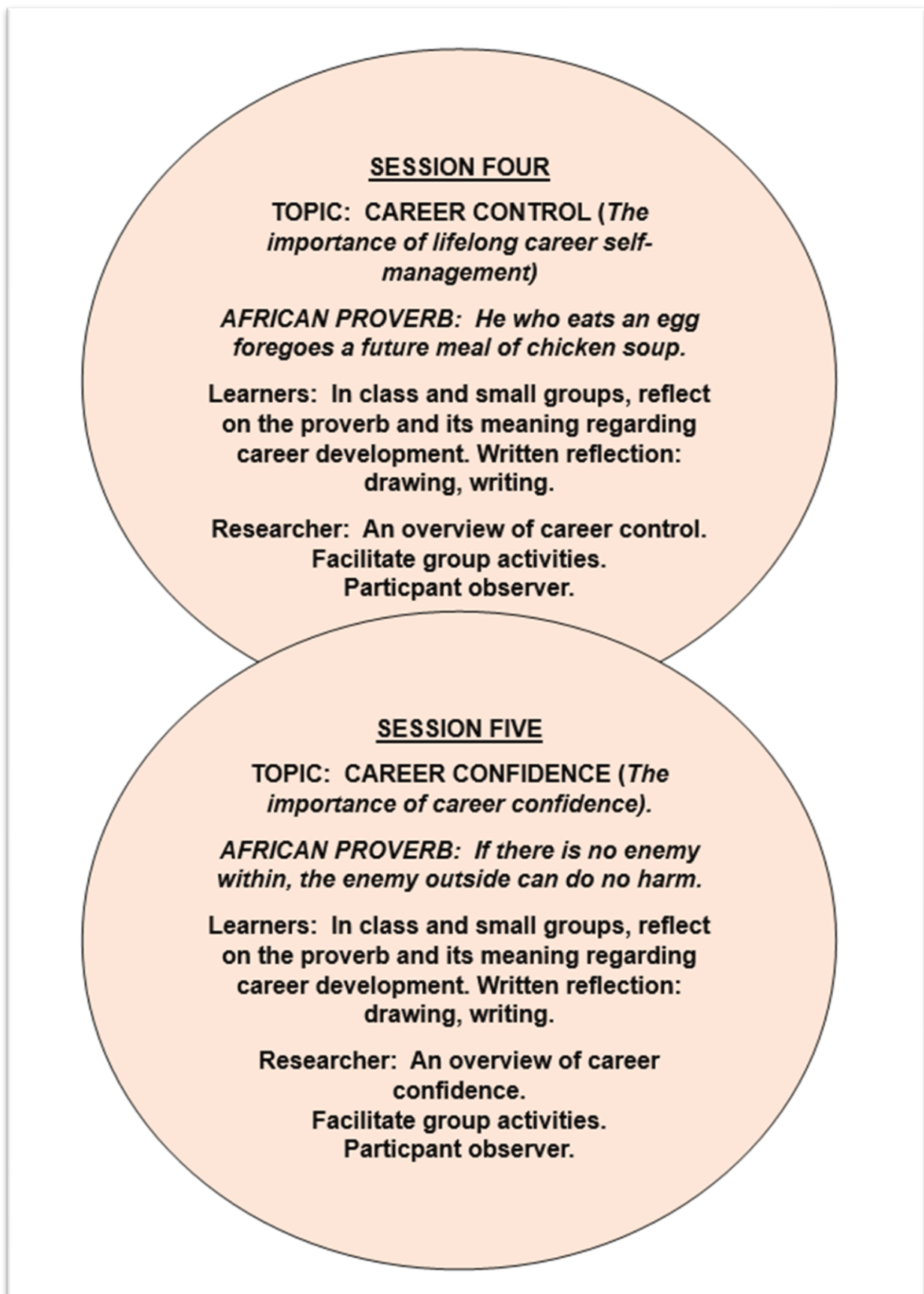


Figure 15: Sessions 4 and 5 (Algra, 2020)

4.6.2 Phase 2: Teacher interviews

Phase 2 consisted of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with LO teachers at both schools, each lasting one hour. The following table outlines the questions that were asked:

Table 21: Interviews with teachers

INTERVIEWS WITH LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS	
The researcher posed the following questions.	• What is your view of career education in South African schools? • Have learners discussed or offered opinions regarding the effectiveness of the career education syllabus? • What content would you like to see in a future career education syllabus, or are you satisfied with the existing syllabus? • What are your thoughts on Africanising the syllabus, i.e., integrating IAKS into the syllabus, would encourage learners to explore the world of work better?

4.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

In qualitative research, ensuring data saturation is a crucial factor that must be addressed throughout the planning stage of a study. Nieuwenhuis (2025a) emphasises the significance of saturation in high-quality qualitative research, while also highlighting a significant limitation: the lack of defined standards or methodologies for determining the appropriate number of respondents required to achieve it. The

concept of "saturation" is frequently employed in various forms within qualitative research, often with meanings that shift or overlap depending on the circumstances (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a).

Selecting a modest sample size accords with the principles outlined by Nieuwenhuis (2020b), who contends that small samples can yield comprehensive and accurate insights within a specific cultural context when participants demonstrate high levels of cultural competence. In this study, purposive sampling of 30 Grade 9 learners – 15 from a public high school and 15 from a private high school in Gauteng – alongside convenience sampling of two experienced LO teachers, was deemed sufficient to obtain rich and varied data on learners' reflections and teachers' perspectives. Learners' embedded expertise within the South African educational and cultural landscape, shaped by post-apartheid experiences and indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu, deepens the quality of the insights generated. This strategy eliminated the necessity for larger samples that might compromise analytical depth, thereby facilitating a focused and reflective thematic investigation of career adaptability and Africanisation, while producing credible findings regarding the disconnect between Eurocentric curricula and local requirements. The chosen approach enabled detailed interpretations consistent with the interpretive paradigm's focus on context-specific understanding.

4.7.1 Purposeful sampling

For this study, purposeful sampling was employed to select participants aligned with the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study population consisted of 30 Grade 9 learners (aged 14–17, both male and female) and their LO teachers, drawn from a public high school and a private school in Gauteng. The specific South African schools were selected because they reflect the typical experiences of Grade 9 learners in public and private high schools. The particular age group was chosen due to their developmental readiness for career-related decision-making (Patterson, 2018). Grade 9 learners are required to make crucial subject choices at the end of their school year according to the South African school curriculum (DBE, 2025a), which significantly impacts their career paths. The schools were chosen for their proximity and representativeness of South African educational contexts.

Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting participants to reflect a specific phenomenon, group, event, place, or category aligned with a central reference point. The effectiveness of this approach depends on the criteria used to guide the selection process (Nieuwenhuis, 2025b). Nieuwenhuis (2025b) draws attention to the key principles identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Curtis et al. (2000) as sound criteria for purposeful sampling:

Table 22: Key principles in purposeful sampling

Description of the criteria	Application in the Study
The sampling approach should be consistent with the research plan and questions to ensure it remains relevant to the study's objectives.	The study intentionally selected 15 Grade 9 learners from a public high school and 15 from a private high school in Gauteng to address the main research question: "How might Indigenous African Knowledge Systems be integrated to Africanise the career education curriculum within South African schools?" Learners were chosen for their ability to engage with career adaptability concepts through IAKS (Ubuntu and African proverbs) in workshops, which directly supports the study's aim of exploring Africanised career education.
The strategy should provide rich, meaningful data about the phenomena under investigation.	By selecting committed and actively engaged Grade 9 learners, the study facilitated a nuanced exploration of how IAKS cultivates career adaptability. Learners participated in small-group reflections and engaged in reflective writing and doodling, which enabled thorough consideration of career planning, cultural relevance, and identity formation. These activities yielded substantial insights into the process of Africanising career education. Phase 2 comprised semi-structured, open-ended interviews with experienced LO teachers, aiming to

	examine their perspectives on the CAPS career education framework. The interviews revealed systemic barriers, such as the allocation of untrained teachers to teach LO.
The sampling should enable findings to be applied or generalised to other relevant contexts.	Including learners from both public and private schools in Gauteng ensured a diverse representation of socio-economic and educational backgrounds, thereby strengthening the applicability of the findings across a range of South African school contexts. The study's focus on universal themes, such as career adaptability and cultural identity – demonstrated in learner reflections from both educational settings – facilitates the transferability of the results to other contexts seeking to integrate IAKS.
The strategy must yield accounts that accurately reflect reality and are credible.	The purposive selection of engaged learners and experienced LO teachers facilitated the collection of authentic reflections, given their direct involvement in the career education process. Contributions from both groups offered credible, real-world insights into the challenges posed by Eurocentric career education, as well as the potential of IAKS.
The strategy must consider participant vulnerability, informed consent, and other ethical issues.	The study conformed to ethical standards through the acquisition of written consent from the Gauteng DoE, school principals, teachers, and parents, as well as assent from learners. Ethical approval was granted by Unisa's Research Ethics Committee, thereby ensuring alignment with established ethical guidelines and regulations.

	Participants comprised 30 Grade 9 learners (15 males and 15 females from each school) drawn from both a public and a private school, purposively selected for their commitment and capacity to attend all five workshop sessions. In addition, two LO teachers (one from each school) participated, chosen via convenience sampling based on accessibility and relevant experience in career education. Learners unable to attend all sessions or those who did not provide consent were excluded in order to protect vulnerable individuals.
The strategy must be feasible within time, cost, and accessibility constraints.	The study took place during a specific school term in Gauteng, South Africa, across two distinct sites: one public and one private high school. Phase 1 involved workshops conducted in classrooms at both schools. Schools were chosen based on proximity to the researcher's residence and access to transportation, facilitating logistical practicality. Workshops occurred after school hours over five weeks, and lunch was provided to encourage participation. Phase 2 comprised face-to-face interviews with teachers at each school, ensuring both accessibility and relevance to the South African educational context. Convenience sampling was employed for the teacher interviews, selecting accessible LO teachers to further support the study's feasibility.

4.7.2 Sampling – Phase 1: Workshops

Creswell and Creswell (2023) discuss strategies for informing participants in research contexts, stressing the importance of aligning communication methods with both ethical and logistical considerations. They further argue that researchers must carefully determine an appropriate sample size and select study sites that correspond with the research design and objectives.

The process began with an invitation extended to all Grade 9 learners from the selected schools. Subsequent selection was based on demonstrated commitment and participation, while those unable to attend sessions or lacking completed consent forms were excluded. This procedure refined the sample to 30 learners (15 from each school), thereby ensuring both logistical and ethical adherence, and resulting in a manageable sample size suited to in-depth qualitative analysis. Nieuwenhuis (2020a) maintains that purposive sampling techniques, such as criterion-based selection, enable researchers to intentionally select participants most capable of enriching understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, thereby enhancing depth and relevance in qualitative research.

The selection criteria were as follows:

- The study solely involved Grade 9 learners, corresponding with the crucial adolescent transition stage in the South African school system.
- Learners were expected to attend all five after-school sessions to maintain continuity and deepen their reflective engagement with career adaptability concepts.
- Ensuring that learners and their parents made suitable transportation arrangements was crucial for safe journeys home after the sessions, particularly in overcoming logistical challenges in urban environments.
- Only those learners who had completed and signed informed consent or assent forms were included in the sample, upholding ethical standards for voluntary participation.

- Learners were selected based on their enthusiasm and dedication to participation, as evidenced by teacher recommendations and initial expressions of interest, to maximise meaningful contributions.

The final sample comprised learners from each of the selected schools:

Table 23: Participant number, demographics, and group allocation

Number	Demographics	Group
20	Grade 9 learners, mixed gender (male and female)	Public school in Gauteng
20	Grade 9 learners, mixed gender (male and female)	Private school in Gauteng

The schools selected for the study were identified using a purposive approach to facilitate access. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) articulate the principles of purposive sampling, noting the necessity of aligning participant selection with research objectives and practical considerations. The selection process incorporated the following criteria and procedures:

Geographical proximity: Schools were chosen based on their closeness to the researcher's residence in Gauteng, South Africa, to ensure logistical feasibility. The sample included one public high school and one private high school in Pretoria, allowing for comparative analysis across differing socio-economic contexts.

Access through gatekeepers: The researcher established effective relationships with key gatekeepers at each school, such as principals and LO teachers responsible for Grade 9 learners, utilising communication channels including email and social media platforms. These connections facilitated entry into the research sites and secured the necessary cooperation.

School type diversity: The selection process intentionally included one public and one private school to capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences. This approach reflects differences in resources, curriculum implementation, and learner

backgrounds, aligning with the study's aim to examine both commonalities and distinctions in learner reflections.

Alignment with research objectives: Schools were selected based on their willingness to participate and their capacity to accommodate the five-week workshop schedule for Grade 9 learners, as well as interviews with LO teachers. Such criteria ensured that the selection remained relevant to the study's focus on integrating IAKS into career education.

Practical considerations: The selection also accounted for practical constraints, including each school's ability to provide an appropriate environment for after-school workshops and the availability of teachers for interviews. Schools unable to meet these logistical requirements – such as those restricted by DoE regulations regarding post-school hours or those facing learner transportation challenges – were excluded from the study.

4.7.3 Sampling – Phase 2: Interviews

In Phase 2 of the study, the researcher utilised purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) to deliberately select one LO teacher from each of the two schools, both of whom were responsible for delivering Grade 9 career education. This approach ensured coherence with the research objectives. The selected teachers, each possessing a minimum of three years' relevant experience, provided signed consent forms confirming their voluntary participation. They engaged in semi-structured interviews, responding to open-ended questions aimed at eliciting comprehensive insights into the career education curriculum. The data collected contributed to a deeper understanding of the integration of IAKS within the career education curriculum.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Flick (2018) emphasises the importance of qualitative data collection in identifying and addressing issues specific to a particular field. He further explains that data can be gathered organically using methods such as narratives, observations, analysis of audio materials, and digital media sources. This section describes the data collection methods used in this study, providing a detailed analysis of how they were applied and their relevance to the research objectives.

4.8.1 Talking circles – small group reflection

Pedagogical talking circles seek to decolonise educational settings by foregrounding Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge systems, perspectives, languages, cultures, and pedagogies (Rieth, 2023). This approach centres Indigenous modes of understanding and being, using a narrative-focused, discourse-based method that supports conflict resolution, decision-making, and data gathering. The circles aim to create an inclusive and safe space for each learner to engage in dialogue (Rieth, 2023).

In turn, talking circles in schools contribute to decolonisation by integrating and normalising Indigenous pedagogies and methodologies, even when the subject matter is non-Indigenous (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). Drawing on the work of Running Wolf and Ricard, Kaminski et al. (2021) contend that talking circles foster dialogue and cultivate mutual respect in social discourse. They offer an instructional alternative that encourages participants to listen openly and consider viewpoints different from their own.

Consequently, pedagogical talking circles provide an effective means of reshaping dialogue in Eurocentric educational contexts, where learners are supported to share personal experiences related to complex ideas and issues (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). This approach builds cultural awareness among diverse participants, advancing diversity and intercultural competence. Talking circles nurture important qualities often overlooked in Eurocentric educational practices, including a strong sense of self and cultural competence (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021).

Talking circles were utilised in the five workshops with Grade 9 learners from Gauteng to facilitate reflective discussions on career adaptability. The talking circles encouraged learners to share their personal experiences and challenges related to career planning, including youth unemployment and subject choices. This approach also increased cultural awareness and cultivated diversity among participants, who came from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. By integrating IAKS, Ubuntu, and African proverbs, learners were guided to explore intercultural skills, such as communal interdependence and respect for differing viewpoints. The approach nurtured self-awareness and cultural competence, with learners reporting greater pride in their African heritage and stronger connections to community values. The

circles provided a supportive environment for building relationships, exchanging perspectives, and adapting to real-world circumstances, reflecting Barkaskas and Gladwin's (2021) supportive learning environment. This integration connected Indigenous epistemologies with career education, enabling learners to build resilient career identities within South Africa's socio-historical context.

Used as a means of communication, understanding, and learning, talking circles offer an alternative teaching method that encourages the open reception of differing viewpoints and perspectives. Barkaskas and Gladwin (2021) identify three principal methods rooted in Indigenous epistemological knowledge: Johnston's (2018) contextual interconnectedness and attentive listening, and Clark (2016) and Hunt's (2018) thoughtful consideration.

Firstly, situational awareness encourages individuals to perceive themselves in relation to others. It requires each participant in the circle to consider and acknowledge their distinct personal histories and the ways in which this awareness shapes their perspectives, particularly when compared to those of individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences within the group (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). The study's implementation of talking circles prompted learners to reflect on their personal histories and socio-cultural contexts in the context of career planning, which is consistent with Johnston's (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021) articulation of situational awareness. Learners were encouraged to take into account their specific backgrounds, especially considering South Africa's significant youth unemployment rate and prevailing socio-economic challenges. Reflection encompassed not only individual thoughts and emotions, but also responses elicited by the contributions of other participants. The process aimed to facilitate examination of personal ideas and viewpoints, investigate the origins of feelings or interpretations concerning specific situations, and critically assess any prejudices or assumptions that might emerge.

Secondly, listening constitutes an active engagement, requiring focused attention on the speaker's words as well as their underlying meanings, while simultaneously managing one's immediate reactions and responses. Such an approach enables listeners to create a genuine environment in which speakers can articulate their thoughts, ensuring that their perspectives are acknowledged without prejudice or defensiveness (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). The talking circles facilitated a context

for attentive listening, encouraging learners to concentrate on their peers' perspectives without resorting to immediate judgment. By integrating Ubuntu's principles of respect and communal values, the talking circles promoted authentic engagement with a range of viewpoints, thereby diminishing bias and cultivating a supportive space for addressing career-related concerns. When the talking object (such as a stick) was passed around, only the learner holding it was permitted to speak, while the rest listened intently without interruption. Learners were also informed that they could "pass" if they chose not to contribute to the discussion.

Thirdly, reflective witnessing encourages individuals to consider different perspectives and to be mindful of the feelings and thoughts evoked by the interpersonal act of listening to another person's real-life experience. Reflective witnessing is closely associated with responsibility and accountability (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). The study's use of reflective practices within talking circles, including both verbal discussions and doodling, is consistent with the concept of reflective witnessing. Before beginning the talking circle in this study, learners were asked to commit to refraining from immediate disagreement or expressing differences when discussing the thoughts or views of other participants. Learners were invited to reflect on the experiences of their peers. This process cultivated responsibility and accountability, as learners were encouraged to focus on their own life events and to think critically about their opinions and ideas.

4.8.2 Observation and field notes

Observation is a systematic technique for gathering information on the actions and behaviours of individuals, objects, and events, typically without direct involvement or conversation. This approach is part of everyday life, as we use our five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) alongside intuition to obtain information (Nieuwenhuis, 2020b). Observational research is often conducted in natural settings with people as participants, offering several benefits compared to experimental studies, which require strictly controlled laboratory environments. However, this method is subject to a range of unpredictable factors that may affect the validity of the data collected (Allen, 2017). Research has drawn attention to these unpredictable elements, which could have compromised the credibility of the findings in observational studies (Allen, 2017; Nieuwenhuis, 2025b).

Participant reactivity: Learners and teachers may have changed their behaviour or responses because they were aware of being watched, potentially distorting their contributions in talking circles and interviews.

Researcher bias: The researcher's personal interpretations during observation or reflective journaling may have shaped data collection and analysis, despite efforts to minimise bias through reflexivity.

Contextual variability: Factors outside the researcher's control in natural school environments – such as interruptions from after-school activities, differing levels of learner engagement, or external events (e.g., school detentions) – may have influenced the consistency of data across sessions.

Group dynamics: In talking circles, interpersonal behaviours such as dominant voices or peer pressure could have limited authentic contributions from some learners, affecting the depth and reliability of reflections.

Scheduling constraints: Challenges in arranging sessions, including restricted time due to after-school commitments or transport issues, may have limited the richness of data collected and affected consistent learner attendance.

These factors, inherent to qualitative research in dynamic environments, were managed through rigorous methods such as triangulation, reflective journals, and strict adherence to ethical guidelines, thereby strengthening the credibility and reliability of the findings.

An advantage of observation is that when the researcher occupies the same physical environment as the participants, it is conceptually expected that those being studied will exhibit typical behaviours, as though the researcher were not present. The notes generated through these observations should accurately represent the topic under examination (Allen, 2017). The researcher utilised triangulation and reflective journaling, thereby ensuring that observations were corroborated with other data sources, including group reflections and interviews. Another benefit of observational research lies in the depth and detail of the data acquired. An experienced field researcher records meticulous and nuanced observations, which can elucidate attitudinal and interpersonal behaviours in ways that surveys, interviews, or

experimental methodologies cannot. Additionally, the process of observation has the potential to challenge the researcher's preconceptions regarding the subject group, potentially leading to new and engaging research questions (Allen, 2017). Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying observational data with learner reflections, teacher interviews, reflective writing, doodling, and the researcher's reflective journal. These strategies contributed to the trustworthiness of the rich data collected, aligning with Allen's (2017) assertion regarding the unique insights that rigorous observational research can generate.

Allen (2017) further explains that a primary drawback of observational research is the necessity of entering the research environment. Time is also an important factor; without complete control over the research context, researchers may need to spend considerably more time collecting, interpreting, and analysing field data than with other research methods. Although specific research questions should guide observations, the natural setting can provide a diverse range of participants, interactions, behaviours, and dynamics. As a result, researchers may miss key aspects of the environment that could be relevant to answering their research questions. The study adopted a qualitative, single-case study design to examine learners' and teachers' experiences with IAKS in career education. It used interpretivist and indigenous research paradigms, drawing on observational data, learner reflections, and teacher interviews. Quality assurance measures were implemented, including triangulation, reflexive thematic analysis, and a reflective journal to mitigate potential biases and ensure comprehensive interpretation. This approach sought to address the drawbacks identified by Allen (2017) and to ensure confirmability.

During colonialism, observation served as a primary method for gathering information. Through this approach, anthropologists in Africa transformed accounts of daily African life into theories about Africans' intellectual abilities, depicting them as naïve, careless, and passive. In many cases, colonisers regarded themselves as the ultimate authorities on African societies, excluding Africans from interpreting the evidence collected. Consequently, Africans often find these anthropological writings difficult to accept, as they frequently portray their cultures as primitive or lacking humanity (Chilisa, 2020). The study's methods were designed to capture genuine learner behaviour in natural school environments, with the researcher recording interactions, non-verbal communication, and reflections in a way that honoured learners' cultural

backgrounds. Reflective journaling and triangulation, which included learner reflections and teacher interviews, helped ensure that interpretations reflected learners' lived experiences, rather than imposed assumptions.

In light of the above, Billups (2021) advises that researchers should endeavour to comprehend language and cultural barriers to enhance the precision of their observations and honour the research environment's distinctive attributes. The perspective of the observer plays a fundamental role in shaping the understanding of the environment, events, and actions of participants, especially when observations are made directly in the field, where immediacy and context are most apparent. Moreover, those involved in observational research require a high level of reflexivity, recognising that their interpretations are inevitably influenced by their own perspectives, assumptions, and biases (Billups, 2021).

The guidance provided by Billups (2021) is evident in the study's findings, which demonstrate the transformative potential of IAKS in career education. The culturally sensitive approach revealed learners' positive engagement with African proverbs and Ubuntu, fostering critical thinking, cultural pride, and SDL. The researcher's thoughtful methodology supported learners' reflections on cultural contexts. The reflexive method also allowed the researcher to recognise systemic barriers, such as inadequate teacher training, without imposing Eurocentric assumptions, in line with the study's decolonial ethical framework.

4.8.3 Interviews

In Phase 2 of the study, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with LO teachers from both a public and a private high school in Gauteng. These interviews were held in person at each school, with the intention of eliciting in-depth perspectives from Grade 9 LO teachers regarding the current CAPS career education curriculum.

Interviewing is widely regarded as a significant and recognised method of data collection, particularly within qualitative research. Indigenous African research methods are designed to reflect African cultural values, placing particular importance on respect, participation, and oral traditions (Khupe & Keane, 2017). Such approaches embody a deliberate move towards decolonising research by grounding methodologies in the community's own ethos, rather than adhering strictly to Western

paradigms. Khupe and Keane (2017) further state that, in some African contexts, interviews may incorporate sessions with traditional healers or the inclusion of games, practices not usually found in Western research but essential for engaging with IKS.

Below is a table summarising the interviewing methods often used in IAKS research. The table reflects the participatory, culturally sensitive, and community-centred approaches in a synthesised manner (Khupe & Keane, 2017).

Table 24: Interview methods for IAKS research

Interviewing method	Context	Features
In-depth Interviews over multiple visits	Rural community	Arranged with community leaders (e.g., school principals, elders). Flexible to accommodate community events (e.g., illness, deaths). Conducted over extended periods (e.g., 2 years, 10 visits). Respect local protocols and build trust.
Interviews within participatory frameworks	Rural community	Part of broader data collection (e.g., workshops, school visits). Focuses on community aspirations (e.g., poverty alleviation). Involves participatory design with community input. Conducted in the local language (e.g., isiZulu).
Focus group discussions	Structured, e.g., Traditional Council meetings	Culturally aligned with communal practices. Involves the elders and the community leader. Facilitates collective dialogue. Ensures respectful representation of knowledge.

Informal dialogue	Community settings, workshops, and meetings (e.g., both projects)	Spontaneous and natural interactions. Builds rapport with participants. Captures lived experiences. Complements formal methods in a relaxed setting.

According to Phatshwane (2024), researchers utilise structured, semi-structured, or unstructured formats to gather data from individuals or groups relevant to the study's focus. In structured interviews, all questions are prepared in advance. Conversely, unstructured interviews often commence with a single open-ended question, which prompts further discussion. Phatshwane (2024) further indicates that semi-structured interviews use an organised set of questions as a framework, with the sequence of enquiries varying based on the dynamics of the interview and the participant's responses. Unstructured interviews are generally less formal and more flexible than structured or semi-structured formats, allowing participants to address questions as they arise. Such flexibility frequently produces richer responses, as participants are not constrained by specific instructions or predetermined phrasing (Phatshwane, 2024).

The researcher utilised the open-ended, semi-structured interview technique to gather data from teachers for this study. As noted by Ruslin et al. (2022), open-ended questions within semi-structured interviews offer several advantages:

Comprehensive and nuanced responses: This approach enabled teachers to articulate detailed accounts of their experiences and perspectives regarding the Eurocentric bias present in the CAPS career education framework. By facilitating open dialogue, the technique fostered a more thorough understanding of complex issues, including systemic barriers and opportunities for Africanising career education.

Exploration of emergent themes: The adaptability of open-ended questions permitted the researcher to identify unexpected themes, such as the lack of specialised training in LO among teachers. This enriched the data by capturing insights beyond the initial scope of the questions and aligned with the study's interpretivist paradigm.

Minimising researcher bias: Providing teachers with the opportunity to express their views freely, without restrictive prompts, reduced the potential influence of researcher bias compared to closed-ended formats. This approach was crucial in ensuring that teachers' narratives, including their perspectives on Ubuntu's cultural relevance, authentically represented their professional realities.

Adaptive inquiry: The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to modify questions in response to teachers' answers, allowing for a more thorough examination of pertinent issues, such as budget constraints affecting LO delivery, while remaining consistent with the study's focus on Africanising career education.

Contextual sensitivity: Open-ended questions captured the situational and cultural subtleties within teachers' responses, in keeping with the qualitative principle that knowledge is context-dependent. This approach was particularly relevant in the South African context, where the integration of IAKS addressed colonial legacies in education and provided a deeper understanding of how culturally rooted methods could enhance learner preparedness for the workforce.

These advantages were realised through in-person interviews conducted at the respective schools, with transcripts analysed using reflexive thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software. This strategy ensured that the data represented the teachers' lived experiences, strengthening the study's aim of proposing a balanced Afrocentric-Eurocentric career education framework.

4.8.4 Reflective practice

The researcher chose reflective practice as a data collection technique, adopting a deliberate and structured approach in which participants and researchers engage in critical introspection to deepen their understanding of lived experiences (Candy, 2020).

Candy (2020) further explains that reflective practice encourages participants to revisit their thoughts and feelings about a phenomenon, often using journals or questionnaires to enhance understanding and foster self-awareness. Researchers extend this process through reflexivity, critically examining personal biases to improve accuracy and integrity. Grounded in empathy, trust, and openness, the practice connects hidden perceptions with explicit knowledge. This connection supports

individual growth, upholds ethical standards, and strengthens the depth and rigour of qualitative research (Candy, 2020). In this study, reflective practice was used as a key data collection method during Phase 1, in which Grade 9 learners from both a public and a private school in Gauteng took part in workshops organised around talking circles. These circles encouraged group reflection, allowing learners to explore the psychosocial concept of career adaptability, which includes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, through the lens of Ubuntu and African proverbs. The reflective practice enabled learners to relate abstract career concepts to their cultural contexts, fostering a sense of agency and cultural pride.

Additionally, Zwozdiak-Myers (2024) proposes that for researchers or teachers, reflective practice entails a thorough examination of teaching methods, core beliefs, and theoretical foundations, driven by a curious mindset that values openness, responsibility, and enthusiasm. Rather than being a passive process, it involves the active reorganisation of knowledge and practice through critical analysis and evidence-based data, often informed by dialogue with peers, mentors, or other researchers (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2024). The researcher maintained reflective notes in a journal after each workshop, documenting participants’ engagement as well as her own interpretations of the data. These journals served as a tool for reflexivity, allowing the researcher to interrogate her assumptions and potential biases shaped by her experience as a former teacher, recruitment consultant, and narrative counsellor. Through careful consideration of her positionality, she ensured that the perspectives of learners and teachers were prioritised above her own preconceptions.

Lawrence-Wilkes and Ashmore (2014) differentiate between reflection and reflexivity in the following table:

Table 25: Differences between reflection and reflexivity

Reflection	Reflexivity
Deliberate thinking about past experiences.	Inside-out process.

Considering multiple perspectives, including one's own and others. Uncovering underlying truths by looking beyond surface-level observations. Building new knowledge from these insights to draw meaningful conclusions	Taking a step back from our involvement in a situation. Gaining a broader, detached perspective on ourselves. Assessing personal values, assumptions, behaviours, and connections with others. Tracking our personal growth and enhancing skills in self-management and relationships with others.

The integration of reflection and reflexivity directly supported the study's aim to Africanise career education by incorporating IAKS. Reflection enabled learners to connect culturally relevant tools, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, to their career planning, fostering empowerment and identity development in a context where Eurocentric curricula often marginalise African perspectives. Reflexivity ensured that the researcher's analysis remained sensitive to the socio-historical context of South Africa, including the legacy of apartheid and ongoing socio-economic challenges. Together, these practices addressed the main research question.

Billups (2021) contends that reflective practice involves recording ideas during discussions, which fosters enthusiasm and a sense of fulfilment. Journals and diaries are valuable tools for capturing the perspectives, situations, and perceptions of both participants and researchers. Journals typically focus on researchers' impressions of the study environment, while diaries capture participants' personal thoughts and feelings. These open-ended formats enable participants to articulate their experiences freely, whether through words, drawings, imagery, or other creative methods. As first-hand accounts, they provide rich, evolving narratives that offer distinctive insights into

the lived experiences of those involved (Billups, 2021). Wallace (2020) explores the importance of drawing in the processes of idea generation and reflection. Reflective doodling offers a design-centred approach that combines drawing with reflective practice, grounded in both theoretical understanding and practical ability. This method engages with multiple layers of implicit meaning, encouraging active engagement with theoretical concepts and a range of perspectives (Wallace, 2020).

For this study, learners shared their thoughts and opinions. They created doodles on worksheets prepared and distributed by the researcher during each session, allowing Grade 9 learners to reflect on career adaptability through Ubuntu and African proverbs throughout the Phase 1 workshops. These worksheets facilitated both written and visual reflections, encouraging self-awareness and connecting cultural knowledge with career planning, as seen in learners' responses relating to patience and cultural pride. Simultaneously, the researcher practised reflexivity by recording reflective notes and considering personal biases influenced by her experience as a former teacher and recruitment consultant, to preserve the authenticity of participants' narratives. Rooted in empathy, trust, and transparency, this approach connected underlying perspectives with conscious understanding, aligning with the Indigenous research paradigm's commitment to relationality and respectful representation.

Research on the impact of reflection on learners in a decolonised school is limited. A study by Mugumbate et al. (2021) examining African university students identified considerable challenges encountered when engaging with Western constructs. Several factors contributed to these difficulties, including a limited grasp of the theoretical foundations of reflection, challenges in applying Western-centric theories, unfamiliarity with prescribed methods such as diaries, and a scarcity of culturally relevant literature. Nonetheless, the principal factor identified was the cultural dissonance between Western reflective models and African epistemologies, which privilege spontaneous, communal, and contextually rooted reflection rather than structured, individualistic approaches (Mwende et al., 2024).

In this study, the researcher's findings on the use of reflective practice diverge from those of Mugumbate et al. (2021):

- The study employed worksheets, talking circles, and doodles as culturally relevant methods in South Africa, promoting communal participation and creative expression over traditional Western approaches. This method reduced cultural dissonance and enabled meaningful reflection.
- The study addressed a lack of culturally relevant literature and frameworks by grounding reflective practice in IAKS, particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs, which resonated with learners' cultural identities. For example, learners' reflections on proverbs fostered an understanding of career adaptability concepts, making reflection accessible and meaningful.
- The use of talking circles, rooted in Indigenous methodologies such as situated relatedness and respectful listening, fostered a communal environment where learners could share insights. This approach aligned with Ubuntu's emphasis on interdependence, supporting a more natural and effective reflective process.
- The study involved younger Grade 9 learners (14–17 years old). These learners were more receptive to culturally grounded methods, such as worksheets and African proverbs, which supported their identity development and career planning, thereby bypassing some of the theoretical barriers noted by Mugumbate et al. (2021).
- The study employed a structured yet adaptable approach, combining worksheets with open-ended reflective prompts and doodling, which allowed learners to engage creatively without the strict limitations of Western methods. This adaptability, supported by the researcher's reflexive practice to reduce biases, enabled learners to produce meaningful reflections.
- The study specifically focused on career education, utilising IAKS to address practical challenges, including high youth unemployment and the fifth industrial revolution. The worksheets and talking circles were designed to connect

reflection with career adaptability, allowing learners to apply proverbs to real-world career planning. This practical approach made reflection more relevant and less abstract.

- The study integrated reflexivity as a central element, with the researcher recording reflective notes to explore her biases, influenced by her background as a former teacher and recruitment consultant. The approach ensured that interpretations of learners' worksheet responses and talking circle discussions were analysed using ATLAS.ti stayed true to the participants' voices. By following the principles of the Indigenous research paradigm, the researcher's reflexive method reduced the cultural disconnections highlighted by Mugumbate et al. (2021), thereby enhancing the study's credibility and cultural relevance.

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Qualitative data analysis is grounded in an interpretative philosophical framework that explores the meaningful and symbolic aspects defining qualitative data. It seeks to understand how individuals make sense of a particular phenomenon by examining their perspectives, mindsets, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings, and experiences, thereby aligning with their interpretation of that phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a).

Nieuwenhuis (2025a) maintains that the approach to data analysis in case study research depends on the specific type of case study undertaken. He references Yin (1994), who argued that a sound research design for case studies comprises five essential components: the research questions, any propositions formulated, the identified unit(s) of analysis, the logical links between the data and the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Collectively, these components establish a systematic basis for rigorous case study analysis.

The study examines the integration of IAKS into career education within South African schools, concentrating on the extent to which IAKS can address Eurocentric biases in post-apartheid education. The research design employs Yin's (1994) five critical

components to ensure methodological rigour and interpretive depth. Research questions, focused on the Africanisation of the career education curriculum through IAKS, provide a central framework for investigating Eurocentric influences. The exploratory orientation of the interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms allows for emergent, relational, and contextual understandings to develop organically, rather than imposing pre-determined hypotheses. Analysis is conducted within a single case, encompassing multiple dimensions: Phase 1 workshops with Grade 9 learners from both public and private high schools in Gauteng, and Phase 2 interviews with LO teachers. Reflexive thematic analysis, facilitated by ATLAS.ti, establishes logical connections between the data and the study's objectives. Quality assurance is maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, ensuring that interpretations remain consistent with Indigenous relationality and contribute to transformative educational practices in South Africa. The structured methodology not only enhances analytical robustness but also advances the decolonisation of career education by linking Indigenous epistemologies to contemporary educational challenges.

Secondly, Nieuwenhuis (2025a) examines the quality of the analysis process and identifies Yin's four key principles that researchers should prioritise. Firstly, analysis must clearly draw upon all pertinent evidence. Secondly, it should address all significant rival interpretations to facilitate a comprehensive evaluation. Thirdly, attention should be given to the most salient features of the case study. Lastly, researchers are encouraged to utilise their prior expertise to enhance both the depth and rigour of the analysis. Observance of these principles contributes to a thorough and credible analytical outcome.

The study examines the integration of IAKS within South African career education, utilising a range of data sources and addressing inherent Eurocentric biases. It incorporates alternative perspectives, including the Eurocentric framework and technological challenges posed by the fifth industrial revolution, while considering the significance of Ubuntu and African proverbs in cultivating career adaptability and identity formation. The research draws attention to the need for bridging gaps in learner preparedness, particularly in light of the 58.5% youth unemployment rate for the third quarter of 2025 (Maluleke, 2025). The researcher's two decades of experience as a teacher, recruitment consultant, narrative counsellor, and owner of a

recruitment agency contribute to the depth and trustworthiness of the analysis. This approach generates practical insights for transforming career education to better reflect South Africa's socio-historical context and contemporary labour market requirements.

Thirdly, Nieuwenhuis (2025a) identifies Yin's five distinct techniques for analysing data within case studies: pattern matching, connecting data to hypotheses, constructing explanations, analysing time series, utilising logic models, and synthesising across cases. These approaches enable a systematic interpretation of data and are particularly compatible with computer-assisted analysis tools. The application of these techniques allows researchers to organise and examine complex data sets with greater rigour, thereby enhancing the credibility of their conclusions. The present study utilises these five techniques for case study analysis – pattern matching, connecting data to hypotheses, constructing explanations, analysing time series, and synthesising across cases. In addition, reflexive thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring themes and cultural relevance, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, which contribute to career adaptability. The research further adopts a two-phase design to monitor learner engagement and employs time series analysis to capture temporal changes in the understanding of career adaptability through IAKS. The use of ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted data analysis tool, increases the efficiency and accuracy of these techniques, presenting a transformative approach to Africanising career education in South Africa.

4.9.1 Reflexive thematic analysis

For this study, the researcher employed reflexive thematic analysis to complement indigenous research. This analytical approach, as utilised in the study, is closely aligned with the reflective practice embedded within the data collection techniques described in section 4.8.4.

Reflexive thematic analysis requires the researcher to critically engage with their own biases, cultural positioning, and interpretive processes during the development of themes, thereby ensuring congruence with the relational and reciprocal principles of indigenous research methodologies (Smith, 2021). Such an approach enriches data interpretation by fostering a reflective practice that is sensitive to the cultural and communal contexts of participants. Smith (2021) further maintains that researchers –

particularly those who are non-Indigenous – must engage in ongoing critical reflection regarding their assumptions and positionalities to avoid perpetuating colonial harm. The reflexive process in thematic analysis is dynamic and cyclical, moving between stages to facilitate experiential insights and intuitive thinking. Incorporating indigenous theorising within a thematic approach creates space, lends legitimacy, and enables indigenous ideas and theories to address the specific realities of indigenous communities. This foundational principle informs every aspect of research projects grounded in indigenous methodology (Kovach, 2021).

The following table represents reflexive thematic analysis as a dynamic, researcher-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Table 26: Ten core assumptions of reflexive thematic analysis

Assumption	Description	Link to the Study
Researcher subjectivity as a strength	Subjectivity is central to reflexive thematic analysis, given that data are influenced by context and personal experience. Rather than representing a problem to be eliminated or rectified, subjectivity can be regarded as advantageous in the process of analysis.	The study employed interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms, utilising the researcher's background as a former teacher and recruitment consultant to analyse learner reflections and teacher interviews.
No absolute objectivity	Analysis and interpretation are not entirely objective or exact. Results could prove less robust (e.g., superficial and unconvincing) or more riveting (e.g., profound, persuasive).	This study adopts interpretivist and Indigenous perspectives to examine data from workshops and interviews, allowing for varied interpretations and drawing attention to contextual

		nuances in South African career education.
Coding flexibility	Coding can be undertaken independently or collaboratively. Collaborative attempts aim to improve understanding and self-examination, rather than trying to force agreement.	The study employs ATLAS.ti software to code learner reflections, group discussions, and teacher interviews, integrating collaborative components via a reflexive journal alongside the researchers' reflexive thematic analysis.
A twofold process for quality	Applicable codes and themes emerge from a thorough review of the data, followed by a step back to understand the broader context. Stepping back typically requires time, comparable to taking a moment to regroup.	The study employs a twofold process for quality: generating codes from workshop transcripts and reflective doodles, and situating findings within the socio-historical context of post-apartheid education and youth unemployment in South Africa.
Themes as conceptual patterns	Themes are patterns associated with an identifiable meaning, idea, or concept. Themes are not merely summaries of a topic but demonstrate the connections between concepts.	The study examines the role of IAKS in career education, exploring its cultural relevance and the impact on SDL, based on responses from public and private high schools.
Themes as built outcomes	Themes originate from codes, representing a key component of the analytical	The study uses data from talking circles and interviews to identify themes, including the

	process. Systematic interaction with the dataset actively shapes the themes.	gap between Eurocentric career education and the potential for Africanisation.
The researcher's active role	Themes are not merely discovered in data. The researcher systematically engages with the data and structures it.	The researcher makes a significant contribution to the study by analysing data drawn from observations, learner and teacher reflections, as well as a reflective journal. Through this process, connections are established between career adaptability and aspects of IAKS, including the use of African proverbs.
Grounded in theory	Analysis is always based on some theoretical ideas. These ideas must be recognised and rigorously reviewed.	The study employs the career adaptability and IAKS frameworks to explore the Africanisation of career education through thorough data collection and analysis.
Reflexivity as an essential component	Quality analysis depends on reflexivity. Researchers must intentionally assess and accept oversight of their viewpoints.	Reflexivity serves as a crucial element in the study, with the researcher maintaining a reflective journal to critically examine personal perspectives and ensure rigour in interpreting data concerning learner identity formation and teacher viewpoints.
Analysis as creative work	Data analysis can be considered more of a creative	The study utilises innovative analysis techniques,

	undertaking than a strictly scientific activity. Creativity, supported by methodological rigour, is vital for interpretation.	incorporating Indigenous methods such as talking circles alongside reflexive thematic analysis, and conducts a thorough interpretation of data collected from workshops, interviews, and observations concerning career preparation.

For reflexive data analysis, Braun and Clarke (2022) propose six phases for data analysis:

- **Phase 1: Getting acquainted with the data**
 - Thoroughly engage with the data by repeatedly reading and listening, in the case of audio transcripts.
 - Write down initial analytical ideas about individual data pieces and the overall dataset.

The process involved reading transcripts, listening to audio-recorded interviews, identifying preliminary insights, and analysing data excerpts. This process aided in identifying patterns and developing subsequent themes.

- **Phase 2: Coding**

- Carefully examine the dataset, identifying key sections that connect to the research question.
- Attach concise, analytical code labels that reflect specific meanings, ranging from clear and direct (semantic) to hidden and underlying (latent).
- Apply codes thoroughly to all data, then sort them, along with their related sections.

The researcher systematically analysed the dataset, identifying segments pertinent to the research question on integrating IAKS into South African career education. Concise, analytical code labels were assigned to encapsulate both explicit and latent meanings. These codes were consistently applied across the dataset using ATLAS.ti (see 4.9.2), ensuring accuracy and uniformity. Subsequently, the codes were grouped into themes, each linked to specific sections of the dataset, with in vivo quotations included to maintain a robust and transparent connection to the research objectives.

- **Phase 3: Generating themes**

- Cluster codes share a central idea to form provisional themes addressing the research question.
- Actively construct themes – not merely uncover them – using data, research aims, and personal insights.
- Gather all relevant coded data for each candidate theme identified.

The researcher organised codes into provisional themes to address the research question. Themes were systematically developed by integrating codes with the research aims and an understanding of South Africa's post-colonial context, thereby ensuring precision and minimising assumptions. Data such as learner reflections on African proverbs, Ubuntu, and gaps in teacher training were gathered to construct themes focused on Eurocentric bias, learner empowerment, systemic barriers, and contextual differences. This provided a robust framework for culturally relevant curriculum transformation.

- **Phase 4: Building and refining themes**

- Assess potential themes by comparing them to coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they are coherent and remain relevant.
- Refine themes by merging, splitting, retaining, or discarding them as needed to tell a compelling story.
- Evaluate the main idea of each theme, how it connects to other themes, and what is already known.

The themes were evaluated for coherence using codes, which were refined through merging, splitting, or discarding to construct a compelling decolonial narrative. Their interconnections, as well as their alignment with existing literature, were also assessed. Drawing on evidence from the dataset, the themes demonstrate culturally relevant, context-specific strategies for curriculum enhancement.

- **Phase 5: Adjusting, clarifying, and labelling the themes**

- Strengthen each theme to maintain a clear central idea and well-defined limits.
- Write a summary for each theme and choose concise, impactful names that effectively convey the essence of each theme.
- Remain open to further adjustments if refining the analysis reveals gaps.

The researcher refined themes to address the integration of IAKS into South African career education, ensuring clear boundaries and alignment with codes. The themes, succinctly named for maximum impact, were assessed for potential gaps and remained open to further development. Anchored in both dataset evidence and the literature, they contribute to a robust decolonial narrative.

- **Phase 6: Writing up**

- Begin informal writing.
- Craft a coherent narrative integrating vivid data extracts to answer the research question.
- Finalise the report with an introduction, method, and conclusion section, emphasising thorough editing.

Throughout the iterative six-phase process (familiarisation with the data, creating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and publishing the report), I consistently scrutinised my interpretive choices. While analysing coding learners' views on career concerns and proverbs, I contemplated whether my perspective favoured Western concepts of individual agency over social resilience. Peer debriefing meetings with my supervisor, Dr Hermien Olivier, and informal member validation with workshop participants (via follow-up talks) ensured external accountability.

4.9.2 Core organising concept and theme interpretation

Braun and Clarke (2021) emphasise that thematic analysis is never a neutral, descriptive exercise that merely “finds” themes lying in the data. It is an active, interpretive process in which the researcher constructs patterns through sustained engagement with the dataset, research questions, theoretical resources and socio-political context. Themes as stories must explain, theorise and answer the research questions rather than summarise. The researcher’s subjectivity is not a bias to be eliminated but an engine of meaning-making.

The core organising concept is: South African Grade 9 learners (public and private) are actively constructing career adaptability (concern, control, curiosity, confidence) by repurposing African proverbs and Ubuntu as cultural-psychological scaffolds that simultaneously compensate for and critique the Eurocentric, under-resourced LO curriculum within the National CAPS. This hybrid construct (Figure 7) equips learners to navigate 58.5 % youth unemployment (Maluleke, 2025) and 5IR automation anxieties while asserting epistemic agency against the colonality of knowledge that persists post-1994 (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). The six research questions and six themes are successive layers of this single arc: from theoretical Africanisation (Research question 1, Theme 1), through learner perceptions (Research question 2, Theme 2), practical operationalisation (Research question 3, Theme 3), relational enactment (Research question 4, Theme 4), institutional blockage (Research question 5, Theme 5), to contextual differentiation and equity (Research question 6, Theme 6). Figure 16 and the comparison tables visually encode

this layering; the abstract and Chapter 6 recommendations translate it into policy and practice.

4.9.3 *ATLAS.ti*

The application of ATLAS.ti to qualitative data analysis is a systematic process that includes data preparation, coding, analysis, and reporting, all facilitated by the software's comprehensive features (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025). Using ATLAS.ti involves the following steps:

- Various data types, including text files, PDFs, audio, and video files, are imported into a project to enable effective organisation.
- To assign codes, select a data segment – such as text, images, audio, or video – and drag it to the Codes branch.
- Codes may be grouped to establish a systematic coding scheme, thereby improving the manageability of the coding process.
- The Code Query and Query Tool can be used to identify patterns and relationships within the data, with Boolean operators facilitating more complex queries.
- Networks may be constructed to visualise connections between codes, quotations, and projects.

During the qualitative analysis phase of this study, reflection data from 30 learners were systematically coded and processed using ATLAS.ti, Version 25.0.1 software. In vivo phrases, drawn directly from learner responses to retain their original voices, were selected for thematic relevance and incorporated into the findings to demonstrate key patterns without alteration. Each quotation is referenced in-text with an identifier and the ATLAS.ti quotation ID in parentheses to ensure authenticity and reliability (e.g., Quotation 3:12, lines 7-9). The quotation IDs specify the document and quotation numbers, along with positional details such as line or paragraph ranges in the original transcript. This notation allows for cross-referencing with the raw data stored in the study's supplementary sources, while upholding anonymity by excluding any personally identifiable information (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025).

The use of ATLAS.ti in the study examining the integration of IAKS into South African career education facilitated a comprehensive and systematic qualitative data analysis. Learner reflections, teacher interviews, and observational notes were imported into a single project space for efficient organisation. Data segments were coded and arranged within a coherent framework, which enabled the identification of patterns, including the impact of Ubuntu and African proverbs on career adaptability.

Through the application of code queries, the query tool, and network visualisations, ATLAS.ti enabled a transparent analysis that aligned with interpretivist and Indigenous research paradigms. The resulting findings are robust and culturally relevant, providing valuable insights for the advancement of career education practices.

4.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE

In educational research, it is crucial that insights derived from qualitative studies inform and effectively shape educational policies and practices. Within the South African context, trustworthiness holds particular significance for research addressing issues such as learner achievement or curriculum effectiveness, ensuring that findings are robust enough to support evidence-based policy implementation. Reliability in this context is defined by four central components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, each of which collectively strengthens the trustworthiness and reliability of the study (Stahl & King, 2020).

4.10.1 Credibility

Credibility represents a fundamental element of rigorous qualitative research. A range of strategies can be employed to establish credibility. Utilising established research methods, selecting a research design appropriate to the research question, and developing a theoretical framework aligned with both the question and methods are essential (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a). Early engagement with participants and organisations, clearly defined purposive sampling, robust data collection techniques, and triangulation all contribute to enhancing credibility. Member checks allow participants to review transcripts or field notes and correct factual inaccuracies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, during subsequent interviews, participants may be invited to confirm data gathered in earlier sessions. Engaging in discussions with participants can assist in

assessing initial interpretations and verifying the accuracy of findings. Providing a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied further strengthens credibility (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a).

In the study, credibility was achieved by adhering to recognised qualitative research methods, including the use of an embedded case study design aligned with the research question concerning the integration of IAKS into career education. The theoretical framework, which drew on career adaptability and IAKS principles such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, was deliberately selected to complement interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms. Early engagement with participants and organisations was facilitated through purposeful connections with school gatekeepers. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of Grade 9 learners, while convenience sampling targeted accessible LO teachers. Data collection comprised talking circles, semi-structured interviews, informal observations and reflective journals, with triangulation across these methods enhancing validity. Member checks involved providing participants with transcripts to verify factual accuracy, and discussions during follow-up sessions confirmed initial interpretations and conclusions. A thorough description of the phenomenon, including contextual accounts of workshops and interviews, further reinforced the credibility of the findings.

The following table summarises the key aspects of credibility in qualitative research (Yadav, 2022).

Table 27: Key aspects of credibility

Key Aspect	Description	Application in this Study
Triangulation	Cross-verification: ensuring the reliability of data through multiple sources. Utilisation of diverse data collection techniques, data sets, researchers, or theoretical frameworks.	Triangulation was achieved by utilising multiple data sources, including talking circles with Grade 9 learners, semi-structured interviews with LO teachers, informal observations during workshops, and the researcher's reflective notes. This cross-verification supported a thorough interpretation of how IAKS, such as Ubuntu and African proverbs, could Africanise career education. By reducing reliance on any one method, the credibility of the findings on learners' career adaptability was strengthened.
Respondent validation	Offering preliminary analysis to participants for feedback. Seeking input from participants to refine the interpretation of findings.	Preliminary themes derived from learner reflections and teacher interviews were presented to a subset of participants – for example, 15 learners from each school and two teachers – during follow-up sessions to validate the interpretations. Engaging participants in this manner facilitated a more nuanced understanding of cultural relevance in career education, ensuring that representations of

		Ubuntu's influence on identity formation corresponded with participants' lived experiences and reduced the potential for researcher misinterpretation.
Collecting data up to saturation	Data accumulation until no new insights are uncovered. No additional data can be realistically identified. Exploring both supportive and contradictory evidence.	Data collection was conducted over five workshop sessions and interviews, continuing until thematic saturation was achieved and no new insights regarding the themes emerged. Both corroborating evidence, such as favourable learner responses to proverbs, and dissenting perspectives, including some learners' uncertainty about Ubuntu, were examined. This approach offered a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Eurocentric biases present in South African career education.
Reflexivity	The researcher's critical self-evaluation of their role. Consideration of preconceptions, assumptions, and potential biases.	The researcher kept a reflective journal throughout the study, recording personal biases arising from her experience as a former teacher and recruitment consultant. Such ongoing self-evaluation informed the interpretation of data, promoting a more objective analysis of the transformative potential of IAKS.

Peer review	Engaging in discussions with fellow academics and colleagues. Incorporating feedback on research findings to minimise researcher bias.	Draft findings were discussed with the researchers' supervisor at Unisa. Her feedback refined themes, minimising bias in linking IAKS to career adaptability and strengthening the study's alignment with interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms.
Prolonged engagement	Extended interaction with the research context to build trust. Facilitating deeper insight through sustained presence.	Engagement occurred over five consecutive weeks, consisting of five one-hour workshops per school and subsequent follow-up interviews, which cultivated trust among Grade 9 learners and teachers. The sustained involvement facilitated deeper understanding of adolescents' identity formation within the context of the fifth industrial revolution, revealing subtle responses to African proverbs that might have remained unnoticed during briefer engagements.
Persistent observation	A relentless pursuit of identifying key themes and leveraging the benefits of extended engagement in the study.	Ongoing observations during talking circles and workshops facilitated the consistent tracking of key themes, including the disconnect present within Eurocentric curricula and the contribution of IAKS to empowerment. Prolonged engagement allowed for the

		recognition of evolving patterns, such as learners' progression from fear to optimism regarding career planning, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of both the similarities and differences between public and private school contexts.

4.10.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research pertains to the extent to which findings may be applicable to alternative settings or contexts. In contrast to quantitative research, which utilises statistical techniques to demonstrate generalisability, transferability relies on thick description – comprehensive, nuanced accounts of the research context and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such detailed descriptions allow readers to determine the applicability of the findings to their own circumstances. Researchers enhance transferability by carefully selecting pertinent participants and systematically documenting the research environment, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Rather than positing universal claims, transferability invites readers to connect the research to their particular contexts, thereby integrating contextual specificity with the potential for broader significance (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a).

Transferability in this qualitative study was strengthened by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, including comprehensive accounts of two Gauteng high schools (one public and one private), alongside the 30 Grade 9 learners and two LO teachers who participated. The study carefully delineates the socio-historical context, shaped by a Eurocentric curriculum and high youth unemployment, and details the incorporation of Ubuntu and African proverbs within workshop settings. Such thorough contextualisation enables teachers and policymakers in comparable African environments to assess the applicability of the findings. The approach, consistent with Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Nieuwenhuis (2025a), facilitates the transfer of insights to other contexts while acknowledging the distinct cultural dynamics present in South African schools.

The following table describes the key aspects of transferability in qualitative research (Yadav, 2022):

Table 28: Key aspects of transferability

Key Aspect	Description	Application in this Study
Maximum variation	Examining a range of characteristically distinctive samples to enhance generalisability. Boosting the potential for broader application of findings.	The study achieved maximum variation by selecting participants from two distinct settings: a public high school and a private high school in Gauteng, South Africa. This diversity in school types and socio-economic backgrounds enabled a broader range of experiences for Grade 9 learners with IAKS in career education. By including a variety of perspectives, such as public school learners' concerns about unemployment and private school learners' focus on high-income skills, the findings increase their applicability to various South African educational contexts that contend with challenges related to the Eurocentric curriculum.
Typical sampling	Selecting samples that represent the broader population accurately.	A standard sampling approach was used, selecting 30 Grade 9 learners (15 from each school) who reflect the typical demographic profile of South African high school students, particularly those participating in career education within the LO curriculum. The sample included both male and female learners, as well as LO teachers with more than three years of experience, ensuring representation of the wider population of South African adolescents and educators. This approach strengthens the relevance of

		the findings to similar groups facing high youth unemployment and the challenges associated with curriculum decolonisation.
Thick description	Employing detailed descriptions and narratives to illuminate the study's context. Enabling readers to grasp the context and apply findings to their settings.	The study provides thorough descriptions of the research setting, incorporating the socio-historical context of South Africa's Eurocentric education system, the 58.5% youth unemployment rate, and the deliberate integration of Ubuntu and African proverbs within workshop activities. Reflections drawn from talking circles, teacher interviews, and reflective notes vividly convey learners' engagement with IAKS and their concerns regarding career adaptability. These detailed contextual insights allow teachers in other African or post-colonial settings to assess the applicability of incorporating IAKS into career education frameworks.

4.10.3 Dependability and confirmability

Qualitative research prioritises dependability over reliability, situating it within the broader framework of trustworthiness, as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Dependability is contingent upon an adaptable research design, precise documentation of data collection, and ongoing critical reflection. Rigour is enhanced when researchers adjust their methods and integrate supplementary data sources or techniques as required (Nieuwenhuis, 2025a).

An audit trail facilitates transparency by systematically recording procedures, decisions, reflections, and other pertinent elements. Additionally, triangulation

strengthens the trustworthiness of qualitative findings by interrogating the research question from various perspectives, employing diverse methods, data sources, researchers, theoretical frameworks, and contexts (Stahl & King, 2020).

Nieuwenhuis (2025a), drawing on Lincoln and Guba (1985), defines confirmability as the extent to which findings reflect participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's biases or interests. Triangulation and strategies to reduce researcher bias are employed to enhance confirmability. Acknowledging personal predispositions is essential for minimising bias; greater engagement with research participants and the subject matter increases the potential for bias to influence the study.

To ensure transparency and replicability, an audit trail was maintained by meticulously documenting workshop procedures, data collection choices, researcher reflections, and analytic steps using ATLAS.ti, thereby providing a verifiable account of the interpretive process.

Triangulation enhanced the validity of the findings by cross-referencing multiple data sources and paradigms, thereby providing robust evidence for themes such as cultural relevance in career education and the development of learners' identities.

Confirmability was ensured by prioritising participants' perspectives above researcher bias, employing triangulation to substantiate results, and utilising reflexive practices, such as journaling, to maintain a neutral portrayal of diverse school contexts and to address Eurocentric limitations within South African education.

Yadav (2022) identifies the principal aspects of dependability and confirmability as outlined in the table below.

Table 29: Key aspects of dependability and comfortability

Key Aspect	Description	Link to the Study
Dependability	Ensuring the consistency and reliability of the research process through flexible methods, accurate documentation, and continuous reflection, supported by audit trails, peer debriefing, and triangulation.	The study maintained reliability by implementing consistent data collection methods during structured workshop sessions with Grade 9 learners, along with thorough documentation of procedures such as talking circles and interviews. The researcher engaged in continual reflection utilising a reflective journal. Triangulation was employed to establish the trustworthiness of findings regarding IAKS integration in career education.
Audit trail	Providing detailed documentation of procedures, decisions, and reflections.	The study maintained an audit trail by keeping comprehensive records of workshop procedures, data collection methods – including talking circles, interviews, and observations – the researcher's reflective notes, and analysis conducted with ATLAS.ti. Such documentation ensured transparency and replicability throughout the research process, while investigating IAKS integration in career education.
Triangulation	Investigating and confirming the trustworthiness of	The study utilised triangulation by integrating a range of data sources

	qualitative findings by exploring a research question from multiple perspectives.	(learner reflections, teacher interviews, and researcher observations), methods (semi-structured interviews, informal observations, and talking circles), and paradigms (interpretivist and Indigenous). This approach strengthens the confirmation of findings related to cultural relevance and identity formation in career education.
Methodological Triangulation	Using different methods to explore the same phenomenon.	The study employed semi-structured interviews with LO teachers, informal observations of learner interactions, and talking circles to examine IAKS's contribution to the Africanisation of career education, thereby ensuring rigorous findings through a multifaceted methodological approach.
Data Triangulation	Using multiple data sources to confirm findings.	The researcher triangulated data from Grade 9 learners in both public and private high schools, teacher interviews, and reflective notes to validate themes, including the influence of Ubuntu on SDL and career planning. This approach enhanced the reliability of the study's findings.

4.11 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical considerations constitute the foundation of research involving human participants, ensuring adherence to principles such as voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality (Billups, 2021). In qualitative research, the evolving nature of the researcher-participant relationship introduces particular challenges, including the risk of perspective distortion and breaches of boundaries. To address these issues, researchers are required to implement reflexive strategies, such as keeping reflective journals and consistently articulating their perspectives, thereby promoting transparency and maintaining objectivity throughout the study (Billups, 2021).

Segalo and Molobela (2019) advocate for a shift towards an Africanist and decolonial ethical framework that prioritises contextual relevance and values the diversity of ethical traditions, such as Ubuntu's emphasis on communal respect and care. They question the Eurocentric foundations of principles like autonomy and compassion, arguing that these often overlook collective decision-making and diminish the agency of groups designated as vulnerable. Segalo and Molobela (2019) further recommend a pluriversal ethical approach to encourage socially responsible research that benefits communities and integrates their knowledge systems and perspectives. Pluriversality involves a decolonial perspective on knowledge, existence, and worldviews, seeking to transform global perspectives and modes of engagement. It rejects the hierarchical and divisive tendencies of multipolarity, although multipolarity is recognised as a preliminary challenge to Western dominance (Chattopadhyay, 2024).

In this study, which explores the integration of IAKS such as Ubuntu and African proverbs into South African career education through a qualitative embedded case study, ethical considerations were central to ensuring respectful and culturally sensitive engagement with participants. Following Billups (2021), the research maintained principles of voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality, while applying reflexive practices, including reflective journals, to navigate the dynamic relationships between researchers and participants and address potential biases.

Additionally, in accordance with Segalo and Molobela's (2019) Africanist and decolonial framework, the approach incorporated Ubuntu's focus on communal care and relational accountability, challenging Eurocentric notions of autonomy and

cultivating a pluriversal ethic that acknowledges diverse knowledge systems and amplifies marginalised voices in educational transformation (Chattopadhyay, 2024). A pluriversal perspective, as distinct from the hierarchical tendencies of multipolarity (Walsh, 2018), enabled socially responsible research that connected Indigenous paradigms with interpretivist methodologies, ultimately advancing equitable insights into the Africanisation of career education.

Chilisa and Phatshwane (2022) describe eight ethical considerations for Indigenous research, also called the 'eight R's'. These considerations are illustrated in the table below:

Table 30: Ethical considerations in indigenous research (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022).

Eight considerations in Indigenous research	Clarification of the considerations	Link to the study
Relationality	Emphasising interdependence	In this study, relationality was maintained through the use of talking circles during Phase 1 workshops, where Grade 9 learners from public and private high schools participated in group reflections on career adaptability. This approach fostered interdependence and shared understanding, grounded in Ubuntu principles, as evident in learners' comments on peer support and collaborative learning.
Responsibility	The researcher's role in promoting unity and harmony	The researcher promoted unity and harmony by integrating Ubuntu as a moral framework throughout both phases, guiding interactions with learners and teachers to emphasise

		communal warmth and balanced relationships, thereby aligning the research process with Indigenous African values and supporting harmonious career identity formation.
Reverence	Respect for spiritual practices and places	Reverence was demonstrated by acknowledging the spiritual aspects of IAKS, such as the ancestral philosophy embedded in Ubuntu and African proverbs, during workshops held in school environments, thereby ensuring cultural sensitivity and respect for participants' spiritual contexts in discussions on career planning.
Reciprocity	Who benefits from the research?	Reciprocity was maintained, as the study benefited participants through workshops that fostered learners' SDL and career adaptability, while teachers gained valuable perspectives on Africanising the curriculum. The findings were disseminated to support South African youth facing high unemployment by proposing transformative educational practices.
Respectful representation	The participants guide the process and are an integral part of it.	Participants directed the process through semi-structured interviews with teachers and learner-led reflections in talking circles, allowing them to influence the interpretation of Ubuntu and proverbs. Such an approach ensured their perspectives

		were authentically reflected in the thematic analysis and informed recommendations for Africanising career education.
Reflexivity	Researchers' continuous reflection to prioritise the participants' needs	Reflexivity was maintained through the researcher's reflective journal following each session, with participants' needs taking precedence by tailoring workshops to ensure cultural relevance and address emotional maturity. Ongoing modifications were made to facilitate adolescent identity development in the context of Eurocentric challenges.
Responsivity	The researchers' ability to learn from the research process and be culturally sensitive	Responsivity was demonstrated through the researchers' adaptation to cultural sensitivities, informed by feedback from both learners and teachers, which facilitated more effective integration of IAKS. Incorporating proverbs to explore career concepts further advanced cultural sensitivity, reflecting an awareness of South Africa's complex socio-historical landscape.
Rights and regulations	The rights of the participants to prioritise their needs and take part in the research design	Participants' rights were protected through voluntary assent, informed consent obtained from parents and schools, and ethical approval granted by the University of South Africa. Learners and teachers contributed to shaping the research design by articulating their requirements for

		culturally relevant career education within the embedded case study framework.

4.12 LIMITATIONS

Several limitations must be acknowledged in this study. First, the use of talking circles may have been susceptible to group conformity, which could have constrained the articulation of individual perspectives.

Second, although efforts were made to maintain reflexivity, the researcher's presence may have unintentionally shaped participants' responses.

Third, while ATLAS.ti enabled efficient data analysis, it may not have adequately captured the nuanced cultural meanings embedded in proverbs. These challenges were addressed through participant validation and the establishment of cultural context; however, they illustrate the positioned nature of the research within its distinct South African context.

Fourth, the study concentrated on Grade 9 learners and LO teachers from two urban schools in Gauteng, South Africa, thereby limiting its generalisability to rural settings, other provinces, or varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Fifth, time and logistical constraints – such as institutional timetables, DBE regulations, and learner transport requirements – necessitated an expedited data collection process and resulted in a partial exploration of key themes.

Sixth, ethical issues and power dynamics proved complex due to the inherent imbalances between researchers, teachers, and learners.

Seventh, the sampling approach, which combined purposive and convenience sampling, may have introduced selection bias. Integrating interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms demanded careful attention to minimise researcher bias.

Eighth, teacher interviews provided useful but constrained perspectives on the feasibility of curriculum Africanisation, potentially reflecting the limitations teachers themselves face.

Finally, the exploratory design of the study does not permit examination of the long-term impact of IAKS integration on career trajectories, suggesting the need for more comprehensive, longitudinal investigations.

4.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodological foundations and research design underpinning this qualitative embedded case study, which is rooted in interpretivist and Indigenous paradigms and seeks to examine the integration of IAKS into South African career education. By justifying the dual-paradigmatic approach, the exploratory embedded single-case study design with multiple units of analysis, and the purposive and convenience sampling strategies, the chapter demonstrated how these elements collectively support a culturally sensitive and contextually relevant investigation into the Eurocentric biases that continue to shape the post-apartheid curriculum.

A detailed account of the research process was provided, encompassing Phase 1 workshops with Grade 9 learners that employed talking circles, Ubuntu, and African proverbs as reflective data collection methods, as well as Phase 2 semi-structured interviews with LO teachers. This design highlighted the relational and reciprocal nature of Indigenous methodologies. At the same time, reflexive thematic analysis, supported by ATLAS.ti, ensured a systematic and thorough interpretation of the data.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study thoroughly addressed quality assurance measures, including credibility through triangulation and member checks, transferability via thick description, dependability through audit trails, and confirmability by mitigating researcher bias. Ethical considerations, grounded in a decolonial pluriversal approach and the eight R's of Indigenous research (e.g., relationality, reciprocity and reflexivity), further supported the study's commitment to respectful representation and participant empowerment, especially in a context characterised by youth unemployment and technological disruption. This methodological framework not only combines Western interpretive traditions with African epistemologies but also opens the way for transformative insights that challenge colonial legacies in education.

The following chapter presents the empirical findings, organised thematically with sub-themes and categories derived from reflexive analysis and supported by in vivo participant quotes, to demonstrate the potential of IAKS in fostering culturally resonant career preparation for South African learners.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION & DISCUSSION

5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The themes below illustrate the themes, sub-themes, and categories derived from the data analysis.

THEME 1: THE CAREER ADAPTABILITY CONSTRUCT AS A SCAFFOLDING INSTRUMENT FOR SHAPING SUSTAINABLE CAREER TRAJECTORIES	
Sub-theme	Categories
1.1 Career concern	1.1.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.1.2 Future challenges in the world of work 1.1.3 Motivation for early planning 1.1.4 Concerns about systemic gaps in the curriculum
1.2 Career curiosity	1.2.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.2.2 Exploration of career options 1.2.3 Openness to new perspectives 1.2.4 Curiosity as a driver for success
1.3 Career control	1.3.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.3.2 Balancing guidance and autonomy 1.3.3 Responsibility for career decisions
1.4 Career confidence	1.4.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.4.2 Self-efficacy in career tasks 1.4.3 Confidence in skills and abilities 1.4.4 Resilience against external doubts
THEME 2: LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY	
Sub-theme	Categories
2.1 Youth unemployment and career indecision	2.1.1 Fear of unemployment 2.1.2 Lack of career guidance 2.1.3 Subject choice dilemmas
2.2 Understanding employability	2.2.1 Skills and knowledge 2.2.2 Personal attributes 2.2.3 Workplace requirement
2.3 Impact of the 5IR	2.3.1 Technological changes 2.3.2 Job market concerns 2.3.3 Adaptation strategies

THEME 3: THE ROLE OF IAKS IN CAREER EDUCATION

Sub-theme	Categories
3.1 Ubuntu and African proverbs as educational tools	3.1.1 African proverb and critical thinking 3.1.2 Applying proverbs to career concepts 3.1.3 Cultural connection
3.2 Cultural relevance and identity formation	3.2.1 Identity development 3.2.2 Cultural pride 3.2.3 Community values
3.3 Self-directed learning and empowerment	3.3.1 Taking initiative 3.3.2 Problem-solving skills 3.3.3 Building confidence

**THEME 4: LEARNERS' INTERACTION AND RESPONSE TO GROUPWORK
IN THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

Sub-theme	Categories
4.1 Group dynamics and peer learning	4.1.1 Collaboration 4.1.2 Peer support 4.1.3 Shared learning
4.2 Emotional responses and personal growth	4.2.1 Confidence vs. insecurity 4.2.2 Fear vs. empowerment 4.2.3 Reflection and insight
4.3 Suggestions for curriculum integration	4.3.1 Curriculum enhancement 4.3.2 Practical application 4.3.3 Teacher training

THEME 5: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER EDUCATION	
Sub-theme	Categories
5.1 Teachers' readiness and professional development	5.1.1 Training and qualifications 5.1.2 Assignment to LO classes
5.2 Potential for Africanisation	5.2.1 Cultural familiarity with Ubuntu 5.2.2 Integration of IAKS into the career education curriculum
5.3 Current challenges in career education	5.3.1 Systemic barriers 5.3.2 Learner preparedness for the world of work
THEME 6: EXPLORING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS ACROSS A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL	
6.1 Awareness of employment challenges	6.1.1 Fear of unemployment 6.1.2 Systemic gaps in career preparation 6.1.3 Optimism and adaptation
6.2 Engagement with IAKS	6.2.1 Cultural relevance and pride 6.2.2 Application to African proverbs 6.2.3 Community values via Ubuntu
6.3 Self-efficacy and confidence in career planning	6.3.1 Self-doubt and insecurity 6.3.2 Proactive initiative 6.3.3 Resilience against doubts

Figure 16: Overview of Chapter 5

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This section presents empirical data from learner reflections, workshop discussions, and teacher interviews in a South African public and private high school. The findings are organised thematically, drawing on CCT integrated with IAKS, Ubuntu philosophy, and African proverbs to provide insight into Grade 9 learners' career preparation amid youth unemployment rates of 58.5 % and the disruptions of the 5IR.

5.3 EMERGED THEMES

Six themes emerged from the qualitative data to unpack Grade 9 learners' career perceptions in the context of South Africa's high youth unemployment and the 5IR. These themes highlight career adaptability as an instructional scaffold, systemic educational gaps, cultural relevance, and stakeholder perspectives, informing recommendations for decolonised career education practices in South African schools.

- Theme 1: The career adaptability construct as a scaffolding instrument for shaping sustainable career trajectories

This theme clarifies how learners engage with the fundamental elements of CCT – concern, curiosity, control, and confidence – as psychosocial instruments for addressing modern workplace challenges in South Africa, marked by technological disruptions and a youth unemployment rate of 58.5% (Maluleke, 2025). Sub-themes elucidate learners' interpretations through African proverbs, emphasising proactive readiness in the context of Eurocentric curricular biases (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018), apprehension about employment transitions prompted by the 5IR (Zahidi, 2025), and the development of resilience through IAKS for culturally relevant career planning (Mthembu, 2021).

- Theme 2: Learners' perceptions of career education and employability

Learners' viewpoints highlight the relationship among youth unemployment, career uncertainty, and employability requirements in South Africa's unstable job market. Sub-themes include concerns about unemployment (StatsSA, 2025), insufficient guidance exacerbating subject selection difficulties (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024), and the need for skills that include adaptation and mental resilience (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Reflections on the implications of the 5IR highlight technological uncertainties and adaptive strategies, along with the need for enhanced career education to reconcile educational and practical gaps (Maree, 2013).

- Theme 3: The role of IAKS in career education

IAKS, which incorporates Ubuntu and African proverbs, serves as a decolonising framework that promotes cultural relevance in career education within South Africa's

Eurocentric system (Olaitan, 2024). Sub-themes examine proverbs as mechanisms for critical thinking and identity development (Kemi & Chijioke, 2021), fostering self-directed learning, communal values, and empowerment (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021). Learner insights validate IAKS's capacity to foster pride, enhance problem-solving skills, and build confidence, thereby addressing marginalisation and promoting holistic development (Nsamenang, 2002).

- Theme 4: Learners' interaction and response to group work in the workshop sessions

This theme explores workshop interactions, demonstrating how group activities promoted peer learning and emotional development within the framework of Ubuntu's shared philosophy (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Sub-themes emphasise collaboration for collaborative insights (Vygotsky in Main, 2021), emotional responses that alternate between confidence and insecurity (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021), and recommendations for curriculum integration to enhance real-world preparedness (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). Reflections encourage practical solutions and teacher education to mitigate marginal disadvantages in learning outcomes.

- Theme 5: Teachers' perspectives on career education

Teachers' perspectives reveal systemic limitations in the delivery of LO, underscoring the need for Africanisation to enhance contextual relevance (Dama et al., 2020). Sub-themes emphasise insufficient training and arbitrary assignments due to financial limitations (Francke, 2024), limited cultural awareness of Ubuntu despite its limited implementation, and challenges such as learner immaturity that impede employment preparedness (Mashilo, 2025). These emphasise the need for professional growth to connect learning outcomes with integrated approaches to IAKS, thereby enhancing emotional support (Mahwai & Ross, 2023).

- Theme 6: Exploring similarities and differences in learner reflections between a public and a private school

This theme identifies socio-economic factors influencing career perceptions in schools (Wills et al., 2025). Sub-themes on employment concerns highlight common anxieties about unemployment and educational gaps, with public learners demonstrating

increased vulnerability (Cloete, 2015). Engagement with IAKS reflects uniform cultural pride but fluctuating purposes, whereas self-efficacy varies, with private learners exhibiting enhanced proactive resilience (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). Findings emphasise the need for equitable interventions to promote agency in the face of systemic disparity.

The themes are discussed in more detail below under their own sub-headings.

5.3.1 Theme 1: The career adaptability construct as a scaffolding instrument for shaping sustainable career

Theme 1 explores learners' perspectives on the four key elements of career adaptability: concern, curiosity, control, and confidence.

Table 31: Theme 1: The career adaptability construct as a scaffolding instrument for shaping sustainable career trajectories

THEME 1: THE CAREER ADAPTABILITY CONSTRUCT AS A SCAFFOLDING INSTRUMENT FOR SHAPING SUSTAINABLE CAREER TRAJECTORIES	
Sub-theme	Categories
1.1 Career concern	1.1.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.1.2 Future challenges in the world of work 1.1.3 Motivation for early planning 1.1.4 Concerns about systemic gaps in the curriculum
1.2 Career curiosity	1.2.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.2.2 Exploration of career options 1.2.3 Openness to new perspectives 1.2.4 Curiosity as a driver for success
1.3 Career control	1.3.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.3.2 Balancing guidance and autonomy 1.3.3 Responsibility for career decisions

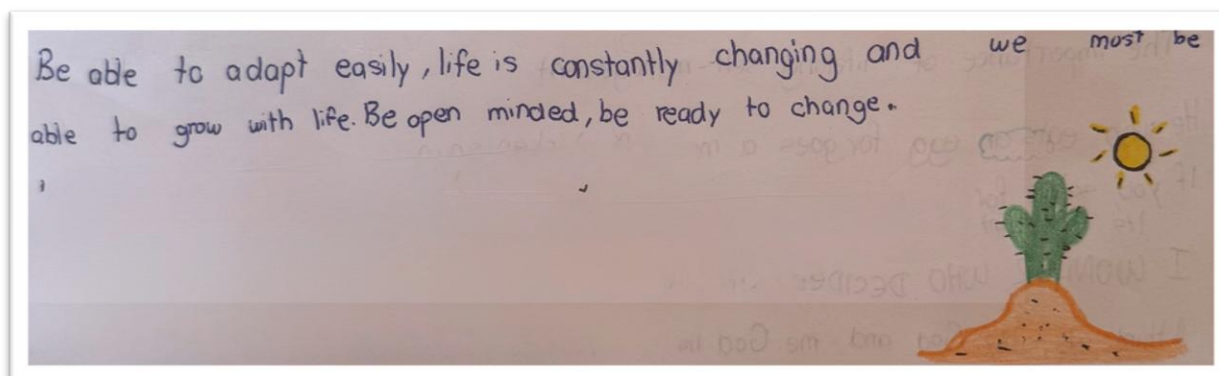
1.4 Career confidence	1.4.1 Learners' meaning-making of the proverb 1.4.2 Self-efficacy in career tasks 1.4.3 Confidence in skills and abilities 1.4.4 Resilience against external doubts

Table 31 and the four sub-theme blocks in 5.3.1 visually diagram a clear interpretive hierarchy from proverb to learner meaning-making, CCT construct and Africanised scaffold. The proverb concerning sitting in old age according to one's youthful stance functions as a narrative affordance that enables learners to indigenise career concern as anticipatory cultural agency (Savickas, 2020). Learners connected present educational commitment to future material security, thereby transforming Savickas's psychosocial construct from an imported Western trait into a culturally grounded capacity rooted in African oral wisdom (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018).

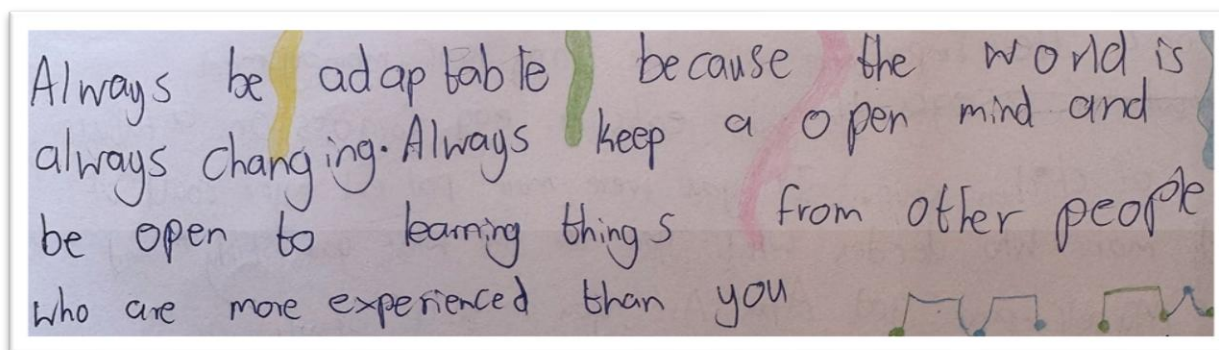
The same visual framework reveals a productive dialectical tension between immobilising anxiety and mobilising resolve. Learners articulated fear of technological disruption and structural unemployment alongside proactive strategies for early planning and adaptation, demonstrating that concern operates simultaneously as a source of distress and a catalyst for agency (Zahidi, 2025). This pattern is interpreted through Braun and Clarke's (2022) lens as the active construction of meaning, where African proverbs serve as decolonising mirrors that reflect learners' lived precarity back to them as actionable wisdom, directly addressing Erikson's identity-versus-role-confusion crisis within the hybrid identities of South African adolescents (Nsamenang, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Career adaptability is a pivotal psychosocial construct within career development, offering a framework to understand how individuals respond to the challenges of contemporary work environments marked by rapid change and uncertainty. Savickas (2020) asserts that career adaptability focuses on the psychological and social competencies that empower individuals to manage career trajectories, address developmental tasks, and effectively handle work-related difficulties. The concept is rooted in CCT, foregrounding the deliberate involvement of individuals in shaping their career paths through adaptive and reflective processes. It prioritises self-agency and

the construction of narrative meaning, moving beyond traditional, rigid occupational models (Savickas, 2020).



(Ms Bobson jr, line 3243).³



(Salah, line 3245).

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Career concern

African proverb: Where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth

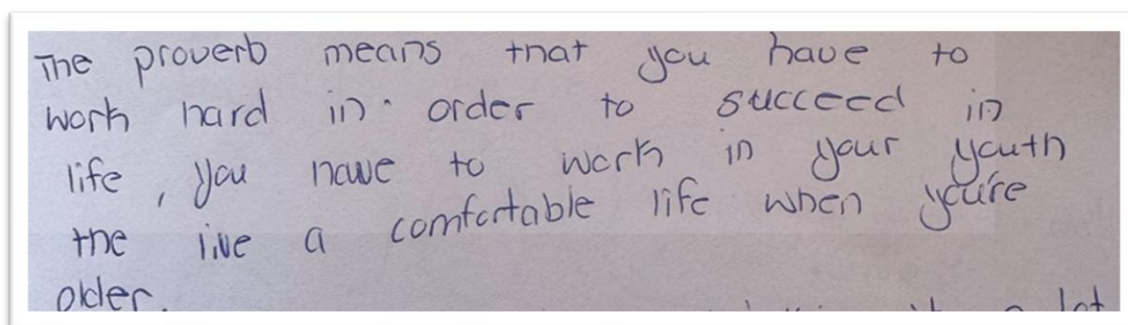
Savickas (2020) defines *career concern* as learners' awareness of future career demands and their proactive preparation. This sub-theme gains particular significance in South Africa, where technological disruptions associated with the 5IR coincide with a youth unemployment rate of 58.5% (Maluleke, 2025). According to the Department of Science and Technology (2021), these developments necessitate adaptability in career trajectories. The persistent Eurocentric bias within South African education

³ The highlighted text within the brackets indicates, first, the pseudonym, and second, the line where it appears in the original transcript. Refer to Addendum 11.

frequently overlooks local socio-economic realities (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018), leading to calls for the integration of IAKS such as Ubuntu and African proverbs to foster culturally relevant career preparation (Mthembu, 2021). Learners' reflections illustrate their recognition of these complexities and their aspiration to address systemic disparities through early planning and curriculum reform.

5.3.1.1.1 Category 1.1.1: Learners' meaning-making of the proverb

I employed an African proverb as a scaffold for learners' understanding of "career



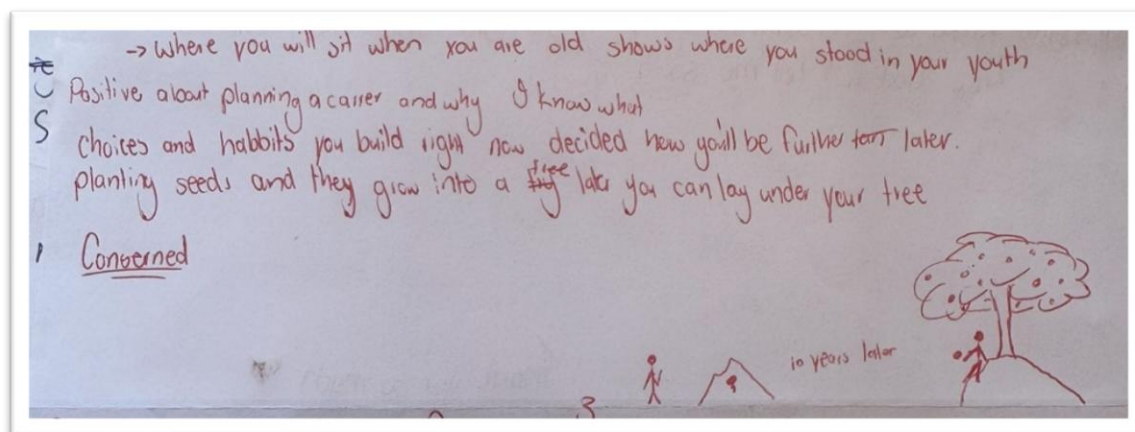
concern" within CCT, integrating life design with IAKS and the concept of Ubuntu. Learners were instructed to reflect on the proverb and relate it to the concept of "career concern". I deliberately withheld any initial interpretation, encouraging learners to utilise their critical thinking skills to interpret its significance within the context of career planning. Learners articulated a range of perspectives on career concern, frequently linking future-oriented considerations to prevailing economic, social, and cultural factors (Savickas, 2020).

"... means that where you are when you're older shows how you were in your youth. If you come out to be a rich person, wealthy, with a good home and a good car, it probably means you took your education seriously, thought about your future, and worked hard in your youth so you can be better when you're older".

(Lisa, lines 597 – 600; 3:46/106).⁴

⁴ The highlighted numbers denote in vivo quotes extracted from ATLAS.ti, with each one referencing the specific ID assigned to it. Refer to addendum 12.

(Applesauce, line 3247).



(Mitsha, line 3249).

5.3.1.1.2 Category 1.1.2: Future challenges in the world of work

The 5IR represents a significant shift in the global employment landscape, characterised by enhanced personalisation, AI, and human-machine collaboration (Mishra, 2020). In South Africa, this transformation presents unique challenges, including shifts in employment, skill shortages, and a youth unemployment rate of 58.5% among those aged 15-24 (Maluleke, 2025). In this context, understanding learners' perceptions concerning the future of work is necessary for tailoring career education to address these needs.

Learners exhibited significant anxiety regarding future employment prospects, largely due to concerns about digitisation and prevailing economic conditions in South Africa. The 5IR may lead to the obsolescence of traditional roles, including administrative and managerial positions, as automation becomes more widespread (Zahidi, 2025). In the South African context, these apprehensions are exacerbated by a youth unemployment rate of 58.5% and an increasing proportion of NEETs (Maluleke, 2025).

"But I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth unemployment crisis?"

(Martha, lines 114–115; 2:36/43).

Amid fear, several learners showed optimism and took initiative, demonstrating resilience and adaptability (Stead & Subich, 2024). These qualities are crucial for

meeting the inevitable challenges of the 5IR. Learners acknowledged the importance of adapting to change.

“What I’m saying about that is that now machines are taking over, we as a youth now, we’re supposed to think about things that machines in the future won’t be able to do”.

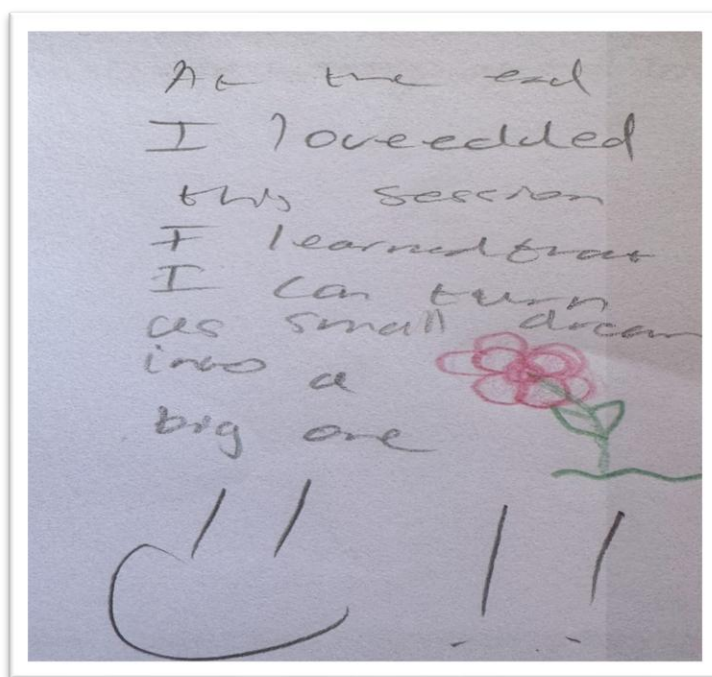
(Fluffy, line 321–323; 2:51/125).

5.3.1.1.3 Category 1.1.3: Motivation for early planning

In the group reflections, learners engaged in meaningful discussions, while some conveyed their ideas through creative doodling, illustrating the significance of proactive early career planning for sustained success and fulfilment (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024).

“The subjects you choose will determine your future, but not only subjects – other life decisions you make in high school have a chance to affect your future too”.

(Chantelle, line 486–488; 3:28/66).

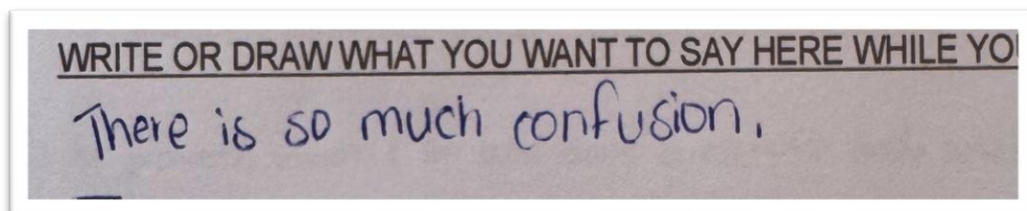


(Fluffy, line 3253).

A few learners revealed their confusion and a lack of motivation for early planning.

“I am still confused on what I want to be”.

(Mia, line 222; 2:48/89).



(Jada, line 3255).

5.3.1.1.4 Category 1.1.4: Concerns about systemic gaps in the career curriculum

Learners criticise the educational system for inadequately preparing them for future employment, drawing attention to deficiencies in career education and a lack of cultural relevance. Letseka and Pitsoe (2018a) contend that the Eurocentric curriculum fails to recognise cross-cultural diversity, a limitation that IAKS may address (Mthembu, 2021b). Several learners advocate for the inclusion of the IAKS-adapted career adaptability framework within the curriculum. Their concerns reveal a disconnect between formal education and practical career preparation, indicating the necessity for systemic change.

“I think that this workshop is really necessary, especially for, like, Grade 9 learners, because it really teaches them about how, like, subject choices are very important, and how we should really put a lot of effort and research into what subjects you’re going to need for whatever job you want to do. And, like, it helps people avoid the mistakes of picking subjects and not really being informed about their job and saying they want to do this, but they pick the wrong subjects for it, even though, like, yeah, it can really help people”.

(Learner 15, lines 2624–2647; 7:19/51).

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Career curiosity

African proverb: He who asks questions never loses his way

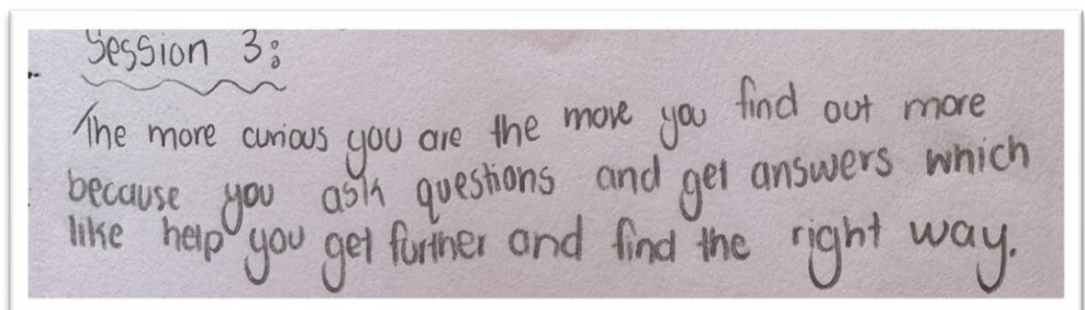
Career curiosity, as described by Cadaret and Hartung (2021), entails the exploration of career options and the adoption of diverse perspectives, which is a vital competency within South Africa's evolving employment landscape. The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011) affirms the shift towards inclusive education, where curiosity equips learners to navigate uncertainty. IAKS, particularly through African proverbs, cultivates creative introspection (Babalola & Alu, 2019), while self-directed learning promotes originality (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021). Learners' reflections reveal their active engagement in exploration, openness to new ideas, and recognition of curiosity as a fundamental element of success.

5.3.1.2.1 Category 1.2.1: Learners' meaning-making of the proverb

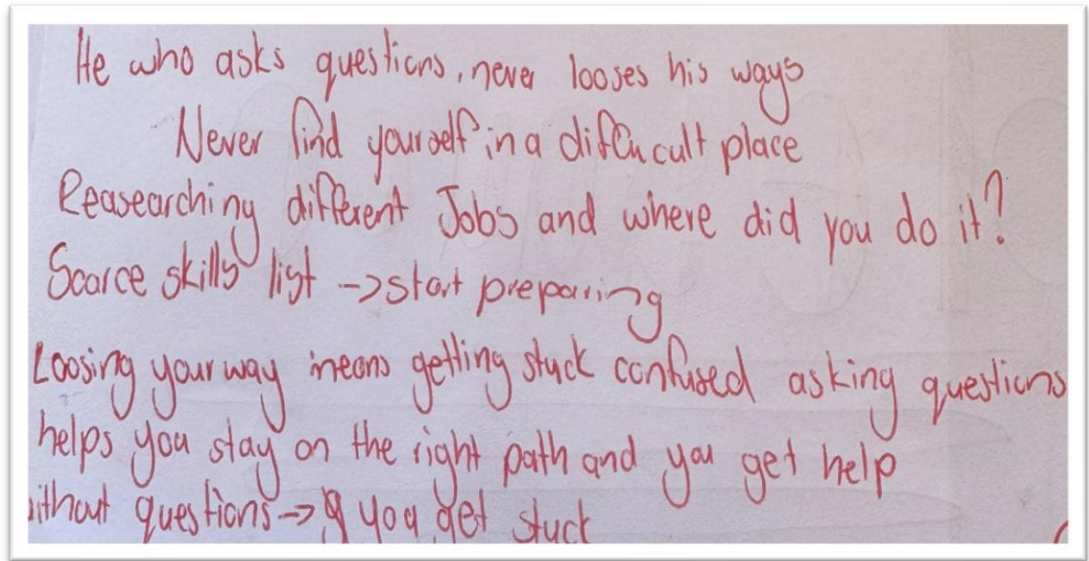
In CCT, career curiosity – a central component of career adaptability – denotes an individual's proactive engagement in exploring career options and receptiveness to novel experiences and learning opportunities (Savickas, 2020). Learners were invited to independently reflect on the relevance of the proverb, linking it to "career curiosity" without any prior guidance from me.

"I think having curiosity and wanting to learn more will make you a better candidate when you're looking for a job. You shouldn't be ignorant and have no curiosity at all because chances are you only know surface level. It's better to know in depth"

(Tony Stark, lines 2045–2048; 10:4/10).



(Lebo, line 3257).



(Applesauce, line 3259).

5.3.1.2.2 Category 1.2.2: Exploration of career options

Learners are encouraged to actively consider potential career paths, balancing enthusiasm with a realistic understanding of limited employment opportunities (Statistics South Africa, 2025). Such exploration is essential for making informed decisions, as noted by Maree (2020c). Several learners mentioned that they are now planning and researching future career options.

“... the most important thing is to research. You need to be in that space”

(Nolo, lines 1060–1061; 6:6/15).

A number of learners expressed that they have not attempted to explore potential career trajectories.

“I haven’t been researching what’s going on. So yeah, I think I should be doing more research, not just about jobs, but also, like, universities, courses, and all that, yeah”.

(Sean Combs, lines 2076–2077; 10:10/20).

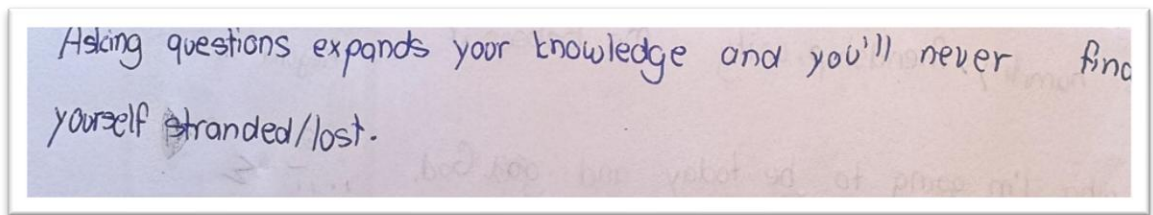
5.3.1.2.3 Category 1.2.3: Openness to new perspectives

Exposure to African proverbs during the workshops broadened learners' career perspectives, promoting innovative thinking and creative problem-solving. Asimeng-

Boahene (2018) contends that such cultural skills cultivate critical thinking, making them highly relevant in educational settings. Such openness cultivates adaptability, aligning with Cadaret and Hartung's (2021) perspective that curiosity facilitates resilience.

"...they [proverbs] gave a different perspective to how I looked at things in terms of my career"

(Learner 3, lines 2538; 7:4/15).



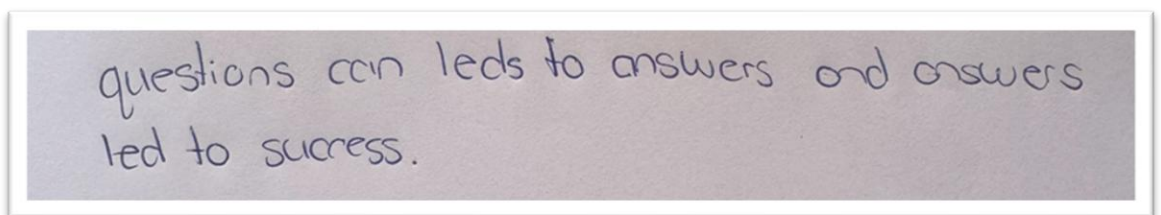
(Ms Bobson Jr, line 3261).

5.3.1.2.4 Category 1.2.4: Curiosity as a driver for success

Career curiosity refers to an individual's desire to comprehend their relationship with the work environment, facilitating both self-awareness and deeper career insight (Bal & Arikan, 2020). According to Bal and Arikan (2020), cultivating a curious mindset promotes exploration, which allows for engagement in real-world experiences and the development of objectivity in making career decisions, thereby increasing the likelihood of alignment with one's environment. Numerous learners exhibited a strong grasp of the link between curiosity and career achievement.

"That tells me we should always ask questions, no matter what. Being curious will probably help you in the future".

(Fluffy, lines 673–674; 4:1/4).



(Chantel, line 3263).

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Career control

African proverb: He who eats an egg foregoes a meal of chicken soup

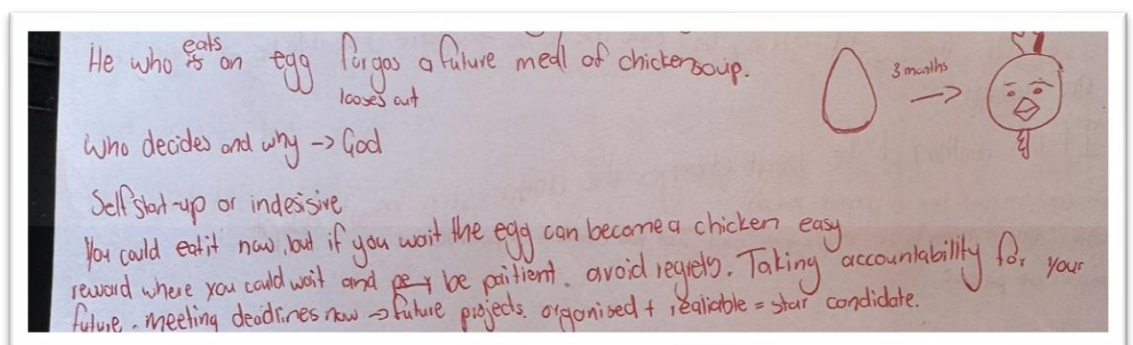
Career control involves employees taking charge of their career trajectories while navigating external factors that shape their professional development. In South Africa, socio-economic challenges demand self-directed learning (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021), a process aligned with the communal decision-making tenets of Ubuntu (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Learners' reflections revealed deliberate attempts to negotiate a balance between supervision and autonomy, accept responsibility, and cultivate systemic support.

5.3.1.3.1 Category 1.2.1: Learners' meaning-making of the proverb

Career control, as conceptualised in CCT, denotes an individual's capacity to deliberately shape their career trajectory through intentional decision-making, strategic planning, and sustained effort (Savickas, 2020). Learners reflected on the significance of the proverb, associating effort with prospective rewards.

"The egg's like raw, unnurtured potential, and the chicken soup? That's what you get when you put in hard work and grow that talent".

(Tony Stark, lines 2228-2230; 11:4/10).



(Applesauce, line 3265).

5.3.1.3.2 Category 1.3.2: Balancing guidance and autonomy

Learners face considerable external pressures from both family and societal expectations as they navigate the pursuit of independence, a dynamic process associated with African adolescence (Nsamenang, 2002). The diversity of learner perspectives indicates a pressing requirement for structured guidance that acknowledges and respects learner autonomy.

Several learners expressed appreciation for their parents' involvement in their career development endeavours.

"I think you can let others guide you – like if your parents say, "Hey, you're good at biology." Take their input, your friends' input, whoever's, but at the end of the day, it's your future. You're the one living it, so you've gotta choose something you love".

(Annabeth, lines 2256–2259; 11:9/20).



(Lethabo, line 3266).

Other learners expressed frustration about their parents' involvement in their career development activities.

"So, this quote also makes me think about how parents push us sometimes. They'll pressure you into a job they think's good for you, and

they're not totally wrong, they're just trying to look out for you. But you've gotta think for yourself too. What do you like? We all hide stuff from our parents they don't know about. Sure, they want you to succeed, but it's your life, your future. You know yourself best, so you've gotta figure out what fits your talents and what you want".

(Sean Combs, lines 2244–2249; 11:7/16: Addendum 12).

One learner was entirely in favour of parents determining his/her career path.

"If you can't decide on your career path, just let your parents do it".

(Nolo, lines 1072; 6:8/19).

5.3.1.3.3 Category 1.3.3: Responsibility for career decisions

Learners acknowledged their responsibility to shape their futures, aligning with Knowles' self-directed learning framework (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021). A sense of ownership proves vital for career adaptability.

Several learners recognised that the responsibility for selecting their career paths rests with them.

"I think it should be our decision because it's our future. Yes, we know they're [parents] concerned about us, but it should be our decision".

(Letta, lines 875–876; 5:8/11).

5.3.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Career confidence

African proverb: If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm

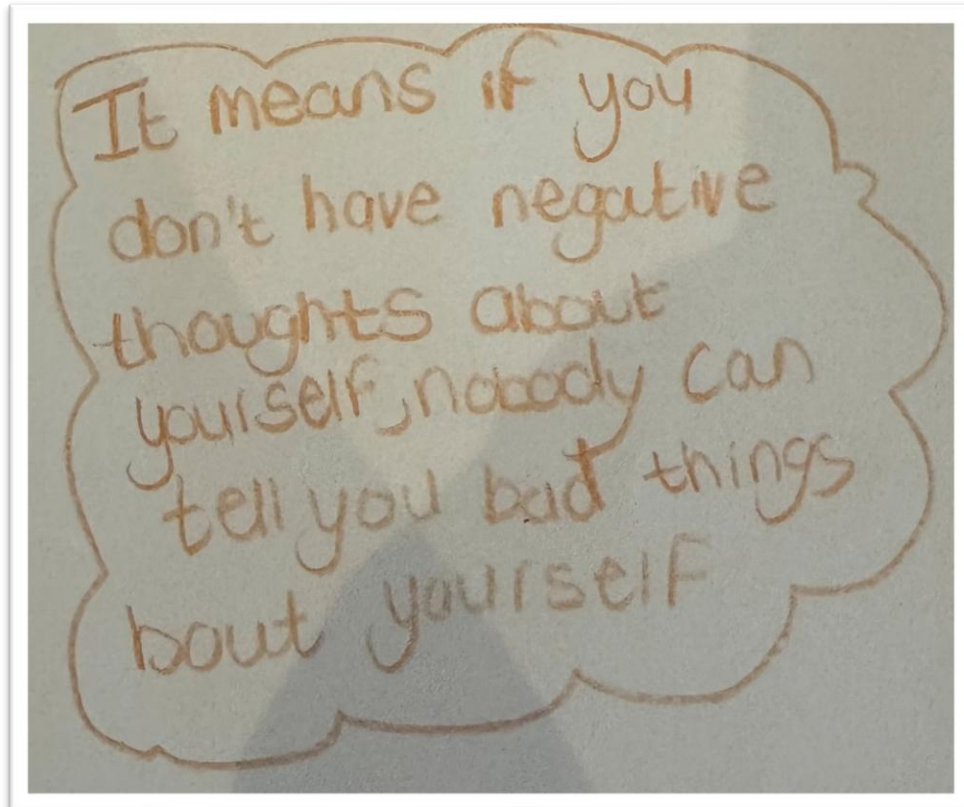
Career confidence, as conceptualised by Savickas (2020) in CCT, refers to learners' belief in their ability to build their careers. In South Africa, where employment barriers are widespread (Pillay, 2020), such confidence fosters resilience, further reinforced by communal support rooted in Ubuntu (Mugumbate et al., 2024). This perspective accords with the career adaptability framework, which positions confidence as a pivotal component enabling individuals to navigate job transitions through narrative reflection and the construction of meaning (Savickas, 2020).

5.3.1.4.1 Category 1.4.1: Learners' meaning-making of the proverb

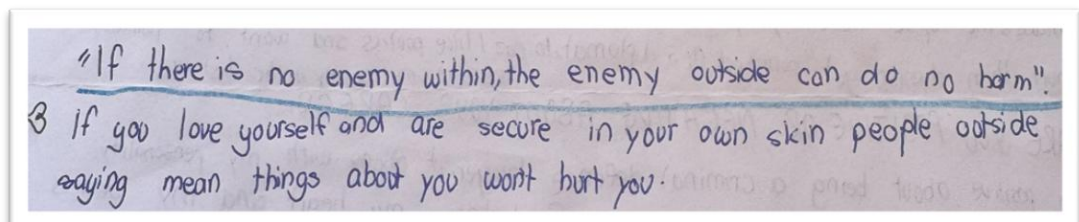
Anchored in African oral traditions, the proverb prompted learners to contemplate internal self-confidence as a means of confronting external challenges and fostering individual resilience (Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). Learners engaged with the proverb despite lacking prior familiarity with it. The proverb conveys that cultivating internal career confidence facilitates more effective decision-making by lessening dependence on external influences. Learners identified career confidence as a pivotal motivator, acknowledging that self-assurance enables them to navigate uncertainties within their career trajectories.

"... it means if there are no enemies in your house – teaching yourself confidence to overcome those inner enemies – and you no longer see them as enemies, then when you go outside, the enemies outside won't harm you. You've learned to ignore the inner enemies and treat them as no longer enemies".

(Bruce, lines 1045–1048; 6:2/9).



(CeCe, line 3267).



(Ms Bobson jr, line 3269).

5.3.1.4.2 Category 1.4.2: Self-efficacy in career tasks

Learners' confidence in engaging with career planning demonstrates Bandura's (1977) association between self-efficacy and task performance. Such belief motivates proactive participation. Self-efficacy remains integral to career adaptability (Savickas, 2020). Learners displayed assurance in their abilities, competencies, and resilience when confronted with external challenges and doubts.

“And for job opportunities, if you're confident during interviews and discussions, your employer will see you're serious about what you're doing and why you want the job”.

(Bruce Wayne, lines 2456–2458; 12:20/44).

Other learners exhibited difficulties with self-efficacy and were unclear on how to advance.

“On my side, I'm negative because living in South Africa is already tough, looking at the youth unemployment rate and how fast it's growing. It's worrying to think about choosing a career that won't take you anywhere or last long-term. It's scary. On top of that, what makes it worse for me is that I don't know where I'm going in terms of careers. I don't have a passion, and it's hard to think about”.

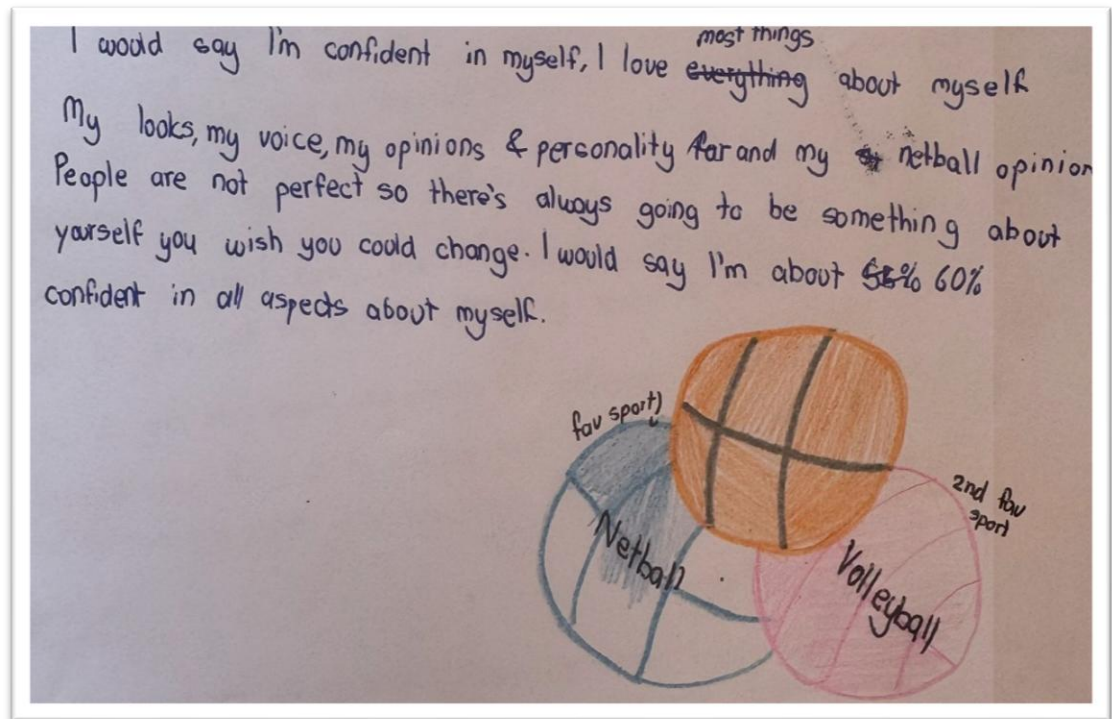
(Jada, lines 648–653; 3:55/126).

5.3.1.4.3 Category 1.4.3: Confidence in skills and abilities

Learners stress the importance of particular abilities, such as problem-solving and initiative, which Maree (2020b) regards as crucial for successful employment in evolving contexts. Career confidence equips learners to manage the complexities of South Africa's dynamic job market.

“... because I take the initiative to get things done, especially when it comes to my career”.

(Uncle LeBron, lines 2440–2441; 12:17/34).



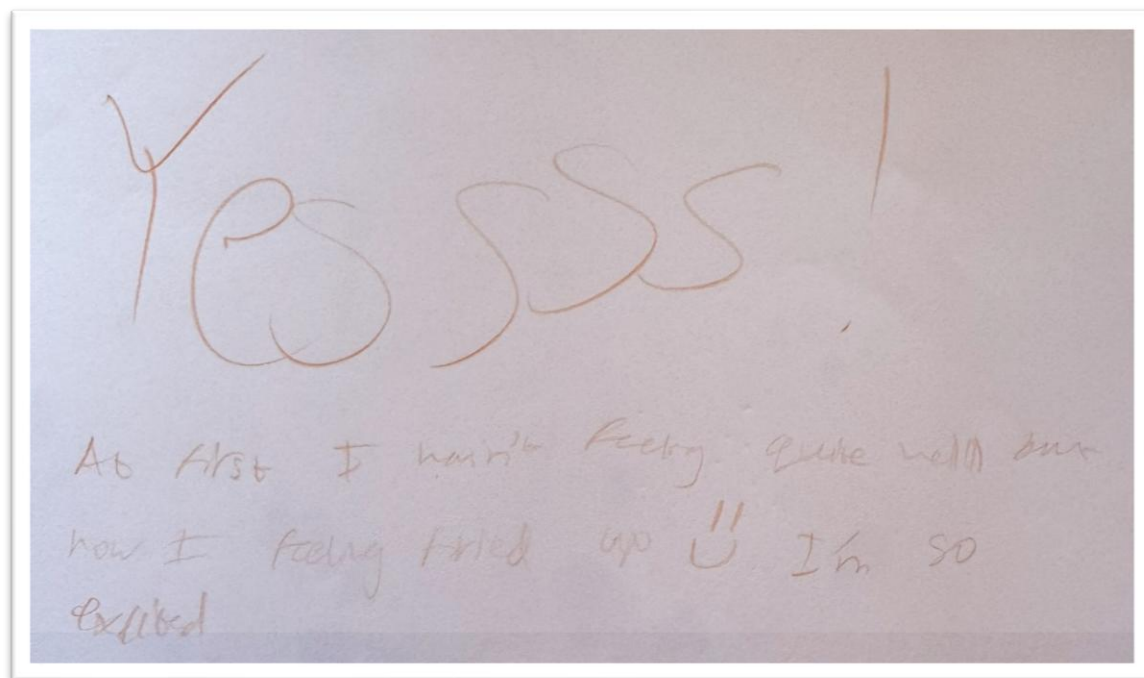
(Ms Bobson jr, line 3271).

5.3.1.4.4 Category 1.4.4: Resilience against external doubts

The development of resilience through reflection and peer support, as indicated in CCT (Savickas, 2020), is crucial for sustaining career aspirations amid external challenges. Learners exhibited resilience by utilising inner strength to confront negativity, a quality further cultivated by Ubuntu's communal ethos (Sefotho, 2021).

"I'm actually positive about planning my career because I believe I can get the career I want and pursue my dreams, even though it's not realistic in South Africa. I don't have high expectations, but I do have dreams, and I'm planning to pursue them no matter what challenges come".

(Lisa, lines 655–658; 3:51/28).



(Fluffy, line 3273).

5.3.2 Theme 2: Learners' perceptions of career education and employability

Theme 2 explores how Grade 9 learners in South Africa view career education and employability, highlighting the link between widespread youth unemployment, career indecision, and the 5IR demands for the development of adaptable skills, in the face of structural curriculum challenges.

Table 32: Theme 2: Learners' perceptions of career education and employability

THEME 2: LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY	
Sub-theme	Categories
2.1 Youth unemployment and career indecision	2.1.1 Fear of unemployment
	2.1.2 Lack of career guidance
	2.1.3 Subject choice dilemmas
2.2 Understanding employability	2.2.1 Skills and knowledge
	2.2.2 Personal attributes
	2.2.3 Workplace requirements

2.3 Impact of the 5IR	2.3.1 Technological changes 2.3.2 Job market concerns 2.3.3 Adaptation strategies

Table 32 and the sub-theme structure in 5.3.2 represent the researcher's active construction of meaning, in line with Braun and Clarke's (2022) view of reflexive thematic analysis as an interpretive rather than purely descriptive process. Table 32 and the sub-themes delineate a landscape of systemic challenges that the thesis's problem statement and literature review have identified. The prevalent fear of unemployment serves as a diagnostic indicator of a CAPS Life Orientation curriculum that dedicates insufficient instructional time to career education and inadequately prepares learners for human-machine interaction in the Fifth Industrial Revolution (DBE, 2011; Mishra, 2020). Learners identified the decline of traditional roles while simultaneously also emphasising the necessity for uniquely human abilities such as creativity and emotional intelligence, thereby demonstrating critical thinking influenced by their socio-historical context (Babalola & Alu, 2019).

The visual comparison tables (37–42) provide critical interpretative insight by revealing multilayered manifestations of this anxiety. Public-school learners perceived unemployment as a concrete socio-economic threat associated with crime, poverty, and social instability. In contrast, private-school learners regarded unemployment as a strategic risk that could be mitigated through academic achievement and early skill development (Cloete, 2015). This pattern illustrates that although learners from both public and private schools are exposed to the same technological and economic disruptions associated with the Fifth Industrial Revolution and high youth unemployment, these pressures are experienced differently according to socio-economic context (Wills et al., 2025).

South African learners' perceptions of career education and employability are influenced by their awareness of youth unemployment, career indecision, and the shifting demands of the labour market. The following sub-theme explores how Grade 9 learners interpret career education and employability, drawing on reflections gathered during a workshop conducted as part of this qualitative case study.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Youth unemployment and career indecision

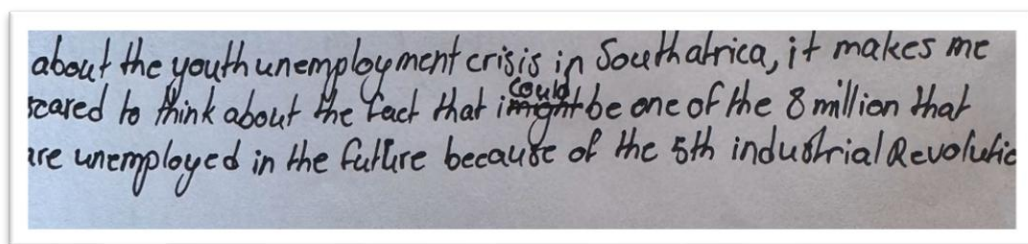
This sub-theme explores learners' perceptions of youth unemployment and the career indecision it fosters, focusing on the categories of fear of unemployment, lack of career guidance, and subject choice dilemmas.

5.3.2.1.1 Category 2.1.1: Fear of unemployment

Learners voiced significant apprehension about unemployment, mirroring anxieties linked to South Africa's elevated youth unemployment rate and its implications for future prospects (StatsSA, 2025). Reflections indicate that learners are uncertain about their ability to secure employment upon completing their education.

"I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth unemployment crisis? That makes me think more about what I'll expect in the future. It makes me feel nervous, anxious, and it makes me question what the future holds for me if machines are taking over what we can do".

(Martha, lines 114–117; 2:36/43).



(BunBun, line 3274).

5.3.2.1.2 Category 2.1.2: Lack of career guidance

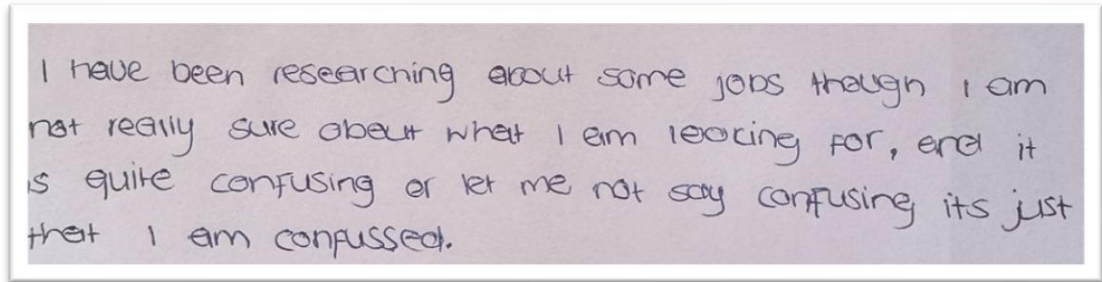
Learners indicated that insufficient career guidance contributes to their indecision and uncertainty. Maree and Mahlalela (2025) propose that appointing school counsellors in public high schools would strengthen career counselling within the current career education framework of the South African education system. Learners also commented on the lack of structured support in career education.

"I'm confused and uncertain, and I feel unguided".

(Jada, line 841: Addendum 11; 4:34/67).

"I even don't know where to start or where to end with my career or which career would I choose".

(Tando, lines 191–192; 2:41/75).



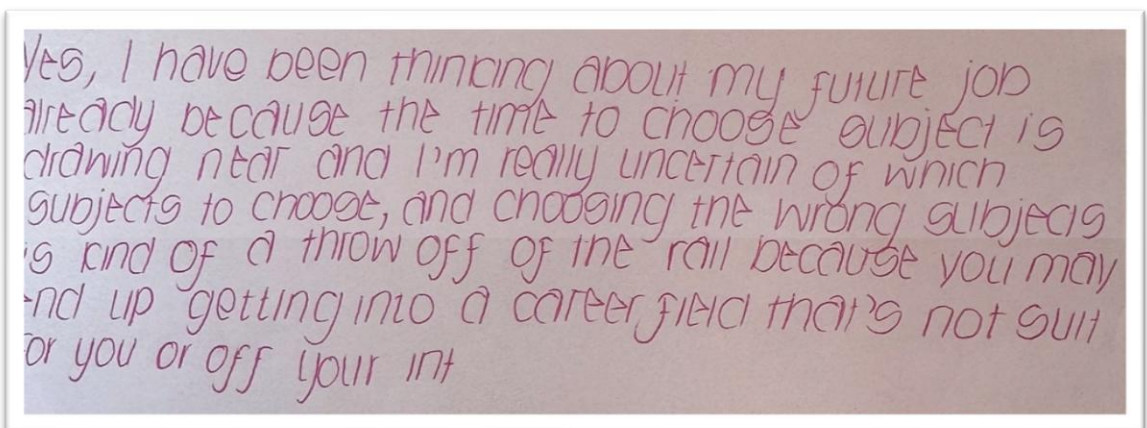
(Lerato, line 3279).

5.3.2.1.3 Category 2.1.3: Subject choice dilemmas

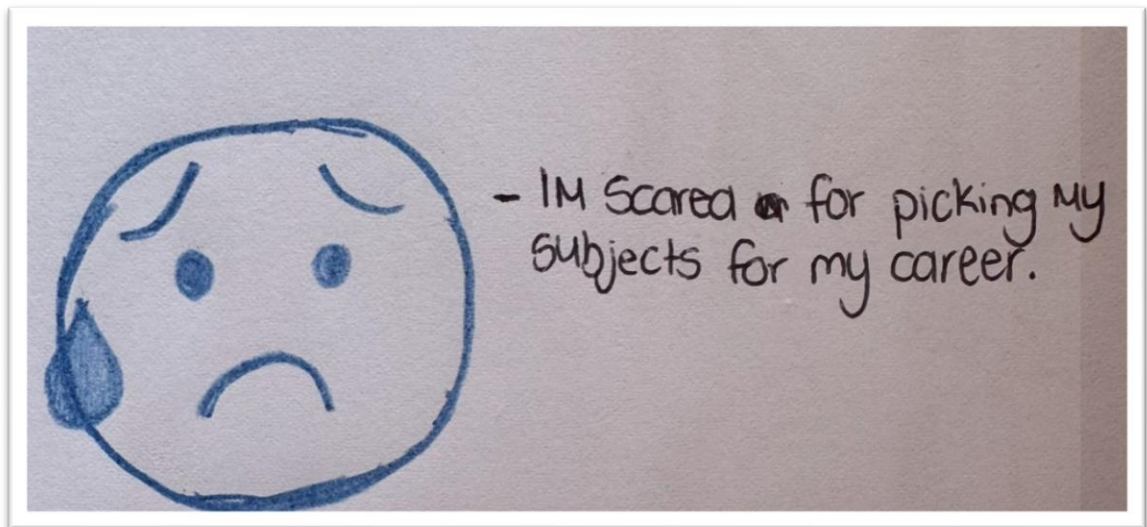
Career guidance and counselling services offer practical support; however, many learners face difficulties in making informed decisions regarding their futures, stemming from limited awareness of available opportunities (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024). The expectation to select subjects for Grade 10 in the absence of sufficient guidance intensifies feelings of anxiety and frustration among learners.

"I'm still stuck with... I still don't know what subjects I'm gonna take".

(Hefa, line 215; 2:47/87).



(Martha, line 3281).



(Ola, line 3281).

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Understanding employability

This sub-theme examines learners' perceptions of employability, focusing on skills and knowledge, personal attributes, and readiness for work.

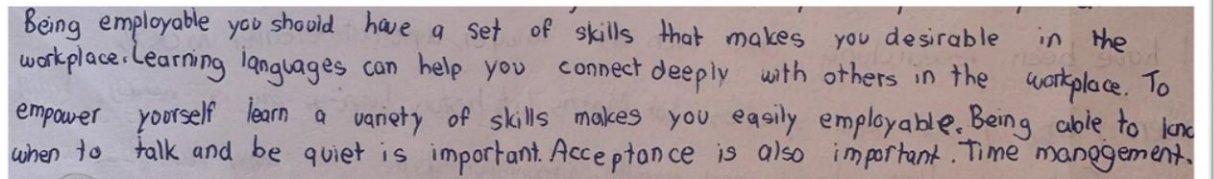
5.3.2.2.1 Category 2.2.1: Skills and knowledge

Successful career navigation encompasses the development of employability competencies, improved adaptation to professional roles, the encouragement of entrepreneurial mindsets, and the advancement of organisational performance (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Learners were prompted to reflect individually on the concept of "employability", with no preceding group discussion or facilitation influencing their interpretations.

Learners identified particular skills and knowledge as fundamental to employability:

"To be employable is to be well-educated, skilled, and able to be open-minded".

(Georgia, lines 76–77; 2:29/31).



Being employable you should have a set of skills that makes you desirable in the workplace. Learning languages can help you connect deeply with others in the workplace. To empower yourself learn a variety of skills makes you easily employable. Being able to know when to talk and be quiet is important. Acceptance is also important. Time management.

(Ms Bobson jr, line 3285).

Some learners were unsure about the characteristics of employability:

"I don't think I really have the knowledge to be employable or anything".

(Lisa, lines 72–73; 2:28 /29).

5.3.2.2.2 Category 2.2.2: Personal attributes

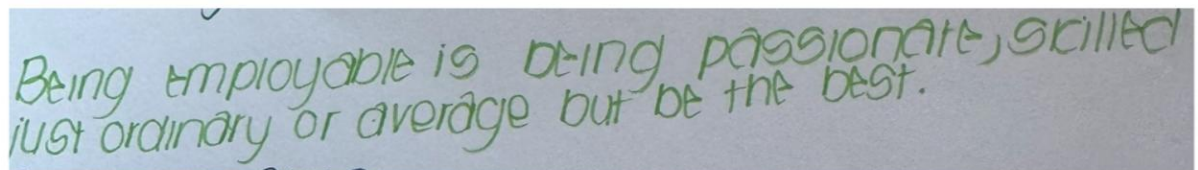
Learners also recognised the role of personal attributes, such as employability skills and adaptability, in future employment:

"You have to develop those critical skills in order to maintain stability".

(Uncle LeBron, line 1556–1557; 8:7/48).

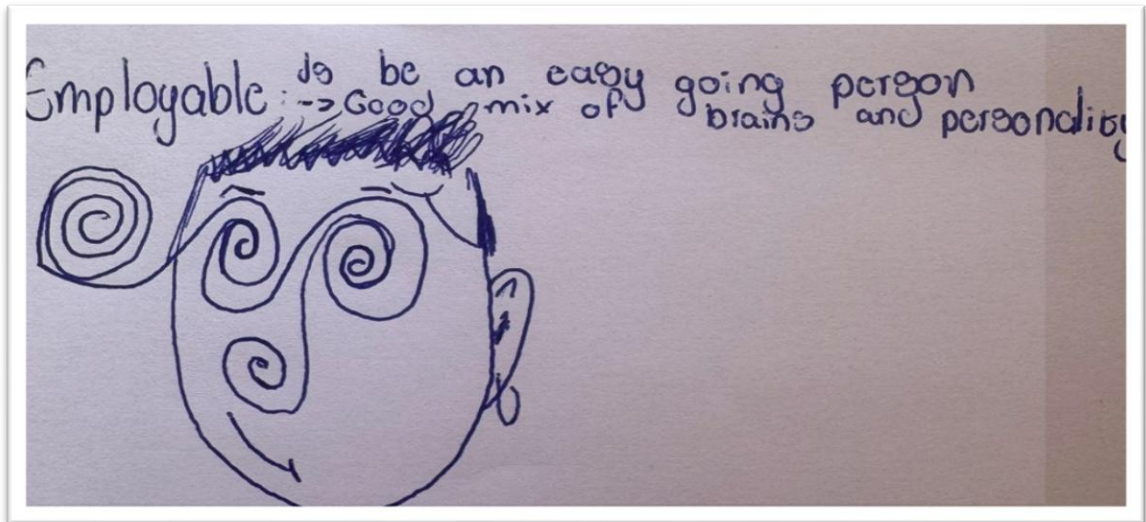
"Being employable also means that you have to be mentally prepared for challenges".

(Sean Combs, lines 1632–1633; 8:17/77).



Being employable is being passionate, skilled just ordinary or average but be the best.

(No name, line 3287).



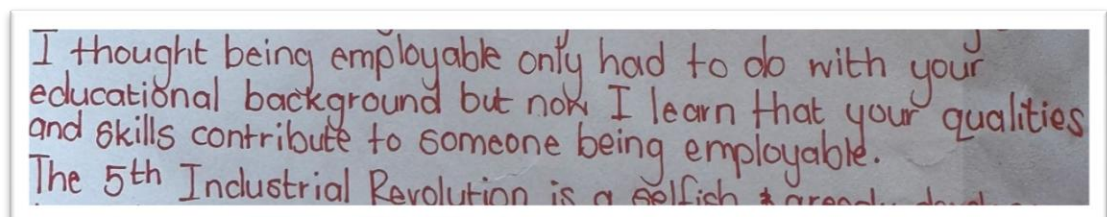
(Thembs, line 3287).

5.3.2.2.3 Category 2.2.3: Workplace requirements

South African learners frequently lack practical exposure to the workplace, which impedes their preparedness for employment (Maree, 2013). Many reported being unaware of the skills demanded by the workforce.

"I don't feel like I'm employable yet, and I don't have the attitude for the career that I want".

(Scarlas, line 210; 2:45/85).



(Jada, 3291).

5.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Impact of the 5IR

This sub-theme examines learners' perceptions regarding the impact of the 5IR on their career prospects, with particular attention to technological advancements, concerns about the job market, and strategies for adaptation. Learners articulated their

views on the 5IR's emphasis on personalisation and AI, which are transforming workplace requirements (Anil, 2025).

5.3.2.3.1 Category 2.3.1: Technological changes

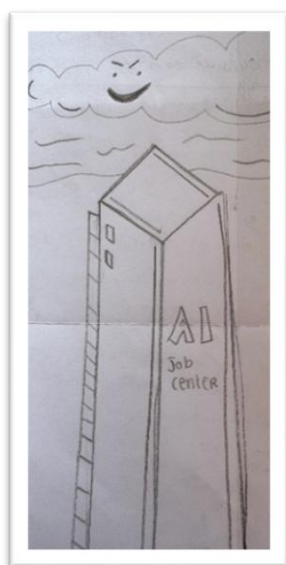
The 5IR may lead to workplace automation, eliminating administrative and management roles, and making various jobs unnecessary (Mishra, 2020). Learners reflected on technological advancements and their implications for future careers:

“As youth, we’re going to grow up with this Fifth Industrial Revolution, and it’s scary”.

(Jada, line 93–94; 2:33/37).

“... now machines are taking over, we as a youth now, were supposed to think about things that machines in the future won’t be able to do”.

(Fluffy, lines 321–323; 2:51/125).



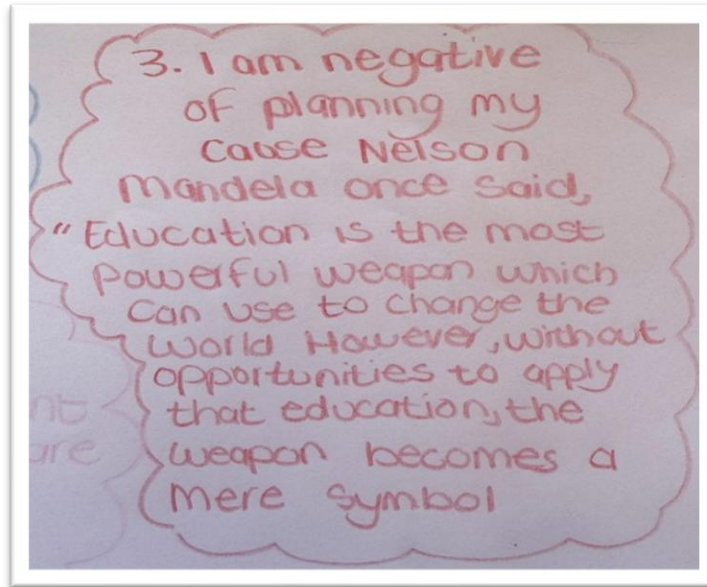
(LeBron James, line 3291).

5.3.2.3.2 Category 2.3.2: Job market concerns

Learners voiced concerns about how these changes might affect their career opportunities:

“don’t think there will be many jobs available within like the next 10 years”.

(Participant 6, lines 1550–1551; 8:6/46).



(Cece, line 3293).

5.3.2.3.3 Category 2.3.3: Adaptation strategies

The complex and diverse landscape of occupations necessitates that individuals actively manage their careers by navigating multiple transitions and adapting to evolving job expectations to achieve success and satisfaction in the workplace (Hartung & Savickas, 2024). Although concerns persist, some learners described strategies for adjusting to the shifting demands of the job market:

“So as things change, I think that we also have to learn to adapt to the new environment”.

(Sean, lines 1581–1582; 8:11/55).

I am positive because i have dreams to be a ~~doctor~~ lawyer and as much as things arent looking good in terms of job opportunities in South Africa. I will still fight for my education and i will persue my dreams regardless.

(Lisa, line 3297).

Becoming our own bosses. small businesses.

(Lethabs, 3299).

5.3.3 Theme 3: The role of IAKS in career education

Theme 3 examines the role of IAKS, including Ubuntu and African proverbs, in decolonising career education within South Africa's Eurocentric framework, thereby fostering cultural relevance, identity formation, and SDL.

Table 33: The role of IAKS in career education

THEME 3: THE ROLE OF IAKS IN CAREER EDUCATION	
Sub-theme	Categories
3.1 Ubuntu and African proverbs as educational tools	3.1.1 African proverb and critical thinking 3.1.2 Applying proverbs to career concepts 3.1.3 Cultural connection
3.2 Cultural relevance and identity formation	3.2.1 Identity development 3.2.2 Cultural pride 3.2.3 Community values
3.3 Self-directed learning and empowerment	3.3.1 Taking initiative 3.3.2 Problem-solving skills 3.3.3 Building confidence

Table 33 and section 5.3.3 present Ubuntu and African proverbs as corrective measures that are theorised within the conceptual framework (chapter 3) and literature study (chapter 2). Learners interacted with proverbs by reinterpreting abstract career concepts like self-efficacy and resilience via culturally relevant perspectives, thus indigenising Bandura's and Savickas's theories (Bandura, 1977; Savickas, 2020). This involvement fostered identity-making processes that challenged the coloniality of being inherent in LO, allowing learners to express cultural pride and a sense of belonging within a predominantly Eurocentric framework (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). The interpretive benefit lies in the interplay between personal empowerment and collective responsibility. Ubuntu redefines career success as a contribution to collective well-being rather than individual competition (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Table 33's visual hierarchy, featuring three sub-themes centred on empowerment, illustrates how IAKS provides the essential relational ontology that CCT, when utilised independently, lacks (Mthembu, 2021).

This theme explores the ways in which IAKS, encompassing Ubuntu and African proverbs, enriches career education by making it culturally resonant and empowering for learners. Drawing on learners' reflections from the workshops, the discussion demonstrates how IAKS addresses limitations within South Africa's Eurocentric career education model. The analysis is organised into three sub-themes: Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs as pedagogical resources, cultural relevance and identity formation, and self-directed learning and empowerment. Integrating IAKS within educational frameworks facilitates holistic development by integrating Indigenous practices alongside Western epistemologies, thereby strengthening entrepreneurship and fostering sustainable career trajectories in African settings, including South Africa (Olaitan, 2024).

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Ubuntu and African proverbs as educational tools

Ubuntu and African proverbs function as significant instruments for reflection and learning (Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). Within the workshop, these elements enabled learners to connect cultural knowledge with career concepts, presenting a practical alternative to the abstract, Eurocentric frameworks frequently encountered in South African schools.

5.3.3.1.1 Category 3.1.1: African proverbs and critical thinking

The indigenous development approach to decolonisation utilises indigenous systems, resources, knowledge, and language, incorporating proverbs to facilitate meaningful learning (Kemi & Chijioke, 2021). Reflections from learners indicate that African proverbs cultivate critical thinking, perseverance, and keen analytical skills, all of which are vital for South Africa's labour market, where youth unemployment surpasses 58.5% (Maluleke, 2025).

“The proverb I really enjoyed was the one with the boy watching that man – it taught me about observation and learning”.

(Learner 7, lines 2572–2573; 7:10/31).

5.3.3.1.2 Category 3.1.2: Applying proverbs to career concepts

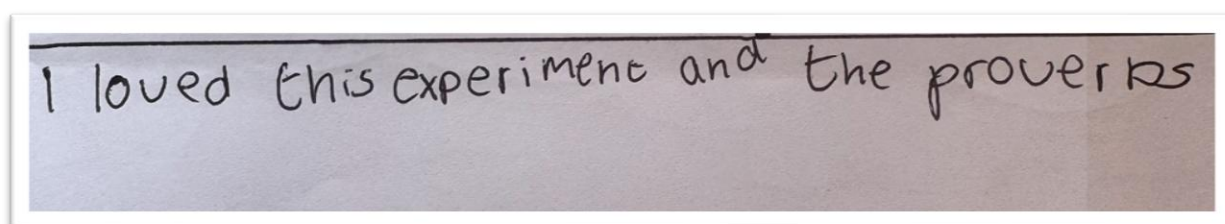
Learners used proverbs to unpack abstract career ideas:

“This whole concept of careers and the proverbs we’ve been discussing is, like, the steps we need to learn to take”.

(CC, line 1282–1283; 1:2/9).

“I feel like with the one with the chicken soup and the egg, that really helped, because it just, like, sometimes, like, when something decent or good happens, you just be like, okay, this is good, I’m just gonna settle for this, because I’m scared to take that extra step or that risk because what I just gained could, like, fall apart if I make one small mistake. So then I kind of feel like it just shows that settling isn’t really, like, the best thing because there will always be better”.

(Learner 6, line 2565–2570; 7:9/29).



(LeBron James, line 3299).

5.3.3.1.3 Category 3.1.3: Cultural connection

This connection to culture cultivated a sense of belonging and diminished the isolation often experienced by learners within a system that prioritises Western paradigms. In the South African context, where colonial legacies continue to shape educational practices, maintaining such cultural links is vital to sustaining the engagement of learners who might otherwise disengage (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Proverbs reinforced learners' bonds with their heritage:

“The proverbs gave a different perspective to how I looked at things in terms of my heritage”.

(Learner 12, line 2637; 7:4/15).

5.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Cultural relevance and identity formation

Nsamenang (2002) advocates a multidisciplinary, inclusive approach to support SSA learners in overcoming methodological challenges, such as the lack of indigenous literature and the necessity of incorporating adolescent perspectives.

The interplay of local and global influences shapes the multifaceted identities of African adolescents (Nsamenang, 2002). IAKS facilitated the development of identities that integrate cultural pride with career aspirations, reinforcing the study's recommendation to Africanise career education.

5.3.3.2.1 Category 3.2.1: Identity development

These insights correspond with Erikson's theory of identity development (1968), which posits that a robust sense of self is fundamental to personal growth and development. Among South African youth, whose identities are frequently marginalised within the educational system, such processes are essential for formulating career plans that genuinely reflect their lived experiences and values.

Learners reflected on how their cultural identities shaped their aspirations:

“It's giving me further understanding on self-love and the future and pride in my culture”.

(Learner 1, lines 2523–2524; 7:2/5).

“I think overall, all [the proverbs] of them just taught me that I need to start now with my habits, I need to change them now, I need to start learning now so I can be better in the future and so I can be successful in the future”.

(Learner 7, lines 2577–2579; 7:11/31).

5.3.3.2.2 Category 3.2.2: Cultural pride

African proverbs safeguard communal religious myths, preserve historical memory, strengthen identity, convey wisdom, and sustain the collective history and pride of the group. Pride fosters confidence, a vital asset in one’s career, and directly challenges the Eurocentric mindset that diminishes IK (Sefotho, 2021). In contexts where African culture is frequently marginalised, such affirmation may encourage learners to pursue their ambitions with greater self-assurance (Thakhathi & Netshitangani, 2020). The workshops cultivated a sense of pride in African heritage:

“It made me proud of my roots”.

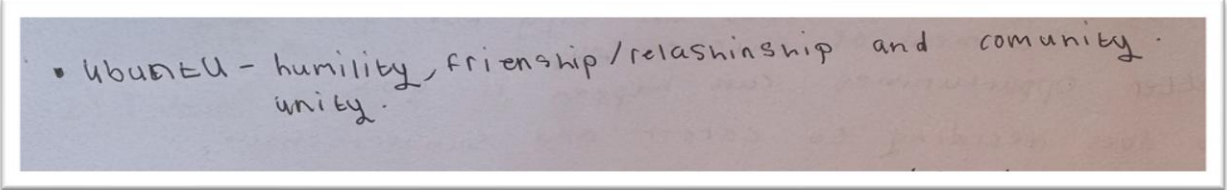
(Tumi, line 1302; 1:4/15).

5.3.3.2.3 Category 3.2.3: Community values

African proverbs and metaphors offer valuable contexts for research, enabling the utilisation of community values to inform interventions that address individual needs (Chilisa, 2020). The collective orientation inherent in Ubuntu inspires learners to view their career paths as interconnected with the broader social fabric (Shange, 2021). In a context characterised by pronounced inequities, such a perspective can foster more considered career choices, aligning educational pursuits with South Africa’s societal ideals. Ubuntu’s focus on community significantly influenced learners’ career perspectives.

“The proverbs gave a different perspective to how I looked at things in terms of my heritage”.

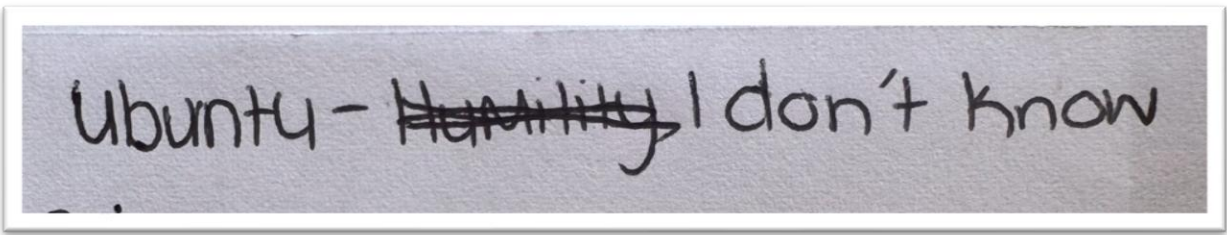
(Learner 12, line 2619; 7:4/15).



• Ubuntu - humility, friendship/relationship and community unity.

(Nomis, line 3301).

A few learners were unsure about the characteristics of Ubuntu:



Ubuntu - ~~Humility~~ I don't know

(Ola, line 3305).

5.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Self-directed learning and empowerment

SDL empowers South African learners to develop lifelong learning skills, promote independence, and achieve educational goals independently or in collaboration (Letseka et al., 2021). The workshop's integration of IAKS aligns with self-directed learning, empowering participants to address difficulties autonomously (Germeroth, 2024). IAKS enabled learners to assume command of their professional trajectories.

5.3.3.3.1 Category 3.3.1: Taking initiative

Self-directed learners manage their learning by setting objectives, organising resources, and fostering self-determination and initiative, which strengthens both self-directed and self-regulated learning (Karataş & Arpacı, 2021).

The workshops inspired learners to take initiative – a vital quality in an environment where restricted career guidance often results in many young people lacking direction (StatsSA, 2025).

"I think overall, all of them just taught me that I need to start now with my habits, I need to change them now, I need to start learning now so I can be better in the future and so I can be successful in the future".

(Learner 7, lines 2577–2579; 7:11/31).

5.3.3.3.2 Category 3.3.2: Problem-solving skills

Several learners recognised the capacity to address challenges. Problem-solving skills enhance career adaptability and prepare learners for a job market that is increasingly full of obstacles (Peila-Shuster et al., 2019).

“I’d say I’m a problem solver because most things that impact me negatively, I try to find solutions”.

(Jada, lines 1249–1250; 6:39/98).

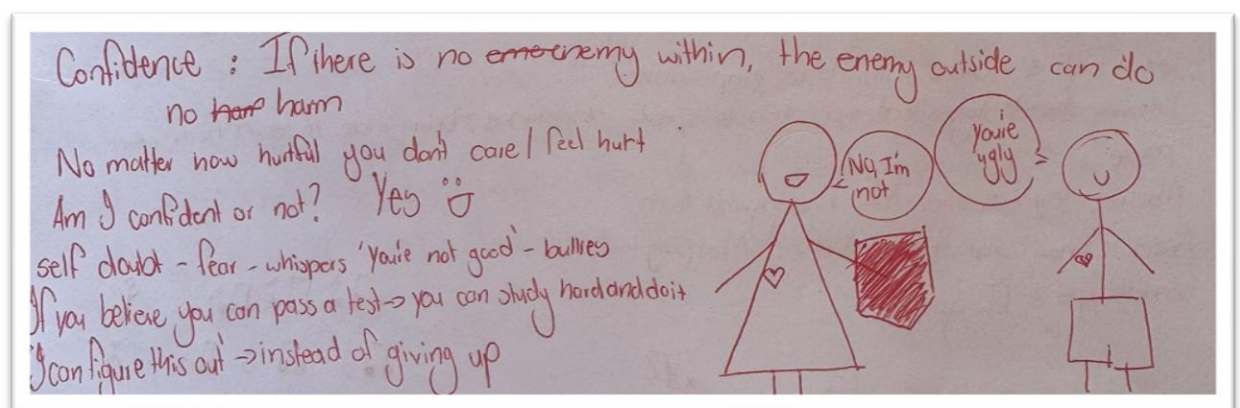
5.3.3.3.3 Category 3.3.3: Building confidence

Young Africans stand to gain greatly by adopting the principles of continuous self-development, resilience, and adaptability, which encourage growth, learning, and personal advancement. Achieving success calls for a shift in mindset and the cultivation of a culture that nurtures creativity, flexibility, and lifelong learning (Andati, 2025).

The workshop demonstrated healthy levels of self-confidence among certain learners.

“I think I’m confident because I know who I am, and I don’t think anyone can change my perspective of myself other than me ...”

(Imangi, lines 1230–1231; 6:35/90).

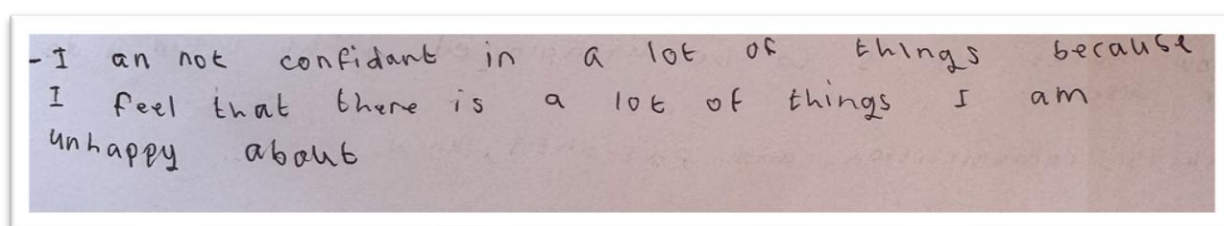


(Applesauce, line 3305).

The workshop revealed diminished and unhealthy levels of confidence among certain learners.

“I’m not confident. I might talk a lot or do everything, but certain things put me down. If someone says, “You don’t deserve this career,” I change my mind and think, “Let me just leave it.” I feel like I’m not worthy for certain things “.

(Tanduli, lines 1158–1159; 6:24/60).



(Shaun Coombs, line 3307).

5.3.4 Theme 4: Learners’ interaction and response to groupwork in the workshop sessions

This theme explores how learners interacted and responded to collaborative activities during the workshop session, emphasising key dynamics, emotional experiences, and suggestions for future implementation.

Table 34: Learners' reflections from workshop sessions

THEME 4: LEARNERS' INTERACTIONS AND RESPONSES TO GROUPWORK IN THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS	
Sub-theme	Categories
4.1 Group dynamics and peer learning	4.1.1 Collaboration 4.1.2 Peer support 4.1.3 Shared learning
4.2 Emotional responses and personal growth	4.2.1 Confidence vs insecurity 4.2.2 Fear vs empowerment 4.2.3 Reflection and insight
4.3 Suggestions for curriculum integration	4.3.1 Curriculum enhancement 4.3.2 Practical application 4.3.3 Teacher training

Table 34 and section 5.3.4 consider the five-week workshop as a dynamic demonstration of Ubuntu in practice. The concept of cooperation is understood via Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, although adapted to local contexts: peer support functions as emotional and spiritual support that fosters a sense of community (Main, 2021; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The graphic hierarchy demonstrates a distinct development from relational safety, via emotional fluctuations between confidence and insecurity, to specific curriculum requirements (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). Learners regularly emphasised the lack of this relational pedagogy in career education classes, emphasising an instructional inconsistency within the formal educational system (Maree, 2013).

The interpretive commentary emphasises that the workshop was effective precisely because it implemented the collaborative, relational and culturally responsive approaches that the official CAPS Life Orientation curriculum claims to promote. Figure 16's primary positioning of Theme 4 indicates that relationality serves as the pivotal point around which all other themes revolve, thereby implementing the

thesis's methodological dedication to talking circles as a form of decolonising education (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021).

The workshop sessions provided Grade 9 learners with an opportunity to engage with career education through group activities and personal reflection. This section examines their experiences and perspectives, considering how group interactions, emotional responses, and suggestions for curriculum improvement shaped their understanding of career learning. The theme is divided into three sub-themes: group dynamics and peer learning, emotional responses and personal growth, and suggestions for curriculum integration.

5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Group dynamics and peer learning

This sub-theme explores the ways in which learners worked collaboratively, provided mutual support, and engaged in collective learning within groups, thereby cultivating a sense of community in career education (Choane, 2025).

5.3.4.1.1 Category 4.1.1: Collaboration

Ubuntu promotes collaborative learning, in which individuals acquire knowledge through dialogue (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The Indigenous notion of connection was reflected in the workshop's use of talking circles, facilitating the exchange of diverse perspectives among learners (Held, 2019).

Learners valued the group work, noting that it deepened their understanding of career concepts.

"I think it was very helpful to do this in groups. It was very good to, you know, see other people's insights and hear their plans for the future and how far they're planning, like, I couldn't really imagine doing this thing, like, just me alone, like, it was really helpful doing it in groups".

(Learner 3, lines 2727–2730; 7:24/79).

5.3.4.1.2 Category 4.1.2: Peer support

Peer support creates a safe environment, reflecting Ubuntu's principles of compassion and unity (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The interpretivist approach, which values

individual emotions, is apparent in this case, as learners expressed gratitude for the group's emotional support (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Learners benefited from the group's mental and emotional encouragement.

“... and I think, especially being in groups with our peers, yeah, it was really helpful, and I felt more comfortable with them. We could ask each other questions, we could laugh about some things, and yeah, it was really nice”.

(Learner 14, lines 2722–2725; 7:27/85).

“I personally think this was also a nice experience. I think that I enjoyed the fact that we were learning with our peers, but also that you chose different people, not people like our friends, because generally, they have the same views, but you allowed us to be with different people, to be able to see and hear different views and opinions and things”.

(Learner 4, lines 2732–2735; 7:29/89).

Sometimes differences or misunderstandings in the groups blocked the embrace of Ubuntu:



(Skyler, line 3309: Addendum 11).

5.3.4.1.3 Category 4.1.3: Shared learning

Group interaction facilitates knowledge acquisition, aligning with Vygotsky's concept of learning through social engagement (Main, 2021). Learners expressed appreciation for the opportunity to draw upon one another's ideas, illustrating how a range of perspectives contributes to deeper understanding:

"I think that us doing this in groups was probably the best thing because it helped us to not only bond with the other people but to also help us with getting a new perspective of how things work in life, how we can change for the better, and how we can just adapt to situations where we need to change".

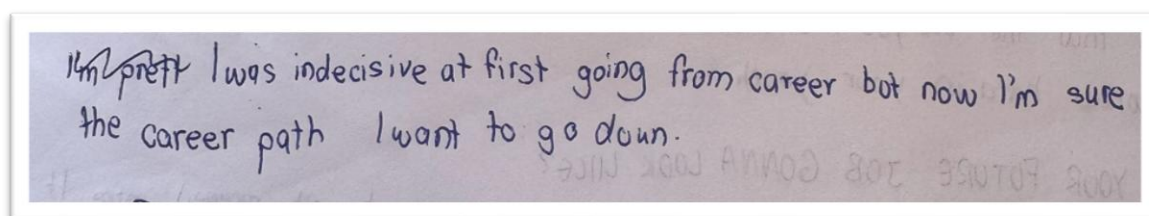
(Learner 13, lines 2714–1717; 7:26/83).

5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Emotional responses and personal growth

This sub-theme examines the emotions of learners during the workshop, with a particular focus on personal insights, anxiety, and confidence.

5.3.4.2.1 Category 4.2.1: Confidence vs insecurity

Peila-Shuster et al. (2021) stress the significance of confidence in career adaptability, noting its role in enabling learners to navigate challenges. Adolescent insecurity involves a lack of basic security and harmony across social, external, and communal domains, such as family, peer relationships, and broader global contexts (Kokkonen et al., 2023). Learners exhibited differing degrees of confidence, reflecting the influence of external circumstances and others' remarks on their self-esteem.

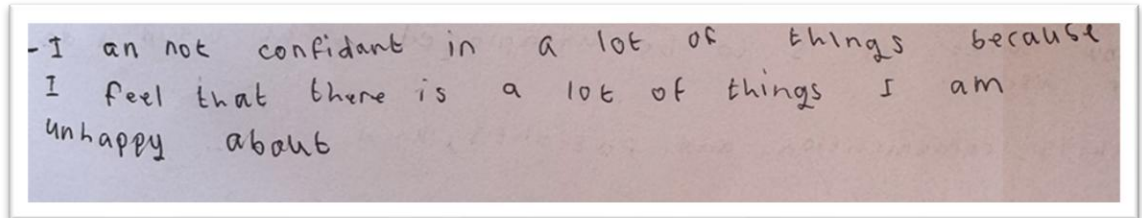


(Ms Bobson jr, line 3313).

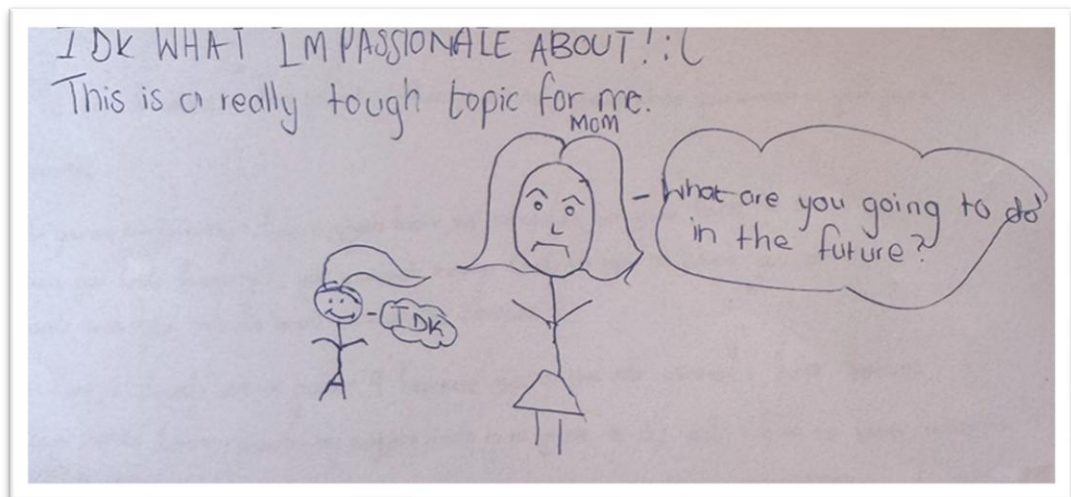
Some learners grappled with feelings of insecurity, influenced by outside factors.

"I feel like I'm not a confident person because of what people say about me".

(Sibu, line 1166; 6:26/64).



(Nomis, line 3315).



(Jada, line 3317).5.3.4.2.2 Category 4.2.2: Fear vs empowerment

Erikson's theory suggests that adolescents often face identity struggles that can either bring fear or promote growth (Gross, 2020). The workshop sparked profound thinking, demonstrating that learners value reflection and acquiring fresh insights.

"This whole concept of careers and the proverbs we've been discussing is, like, they're the steps we need to learn to take. They show us how to prepare ourselves from going to high school and for further, um, onwards".

(CeCe, lines 1282–1285; 1:2/9).

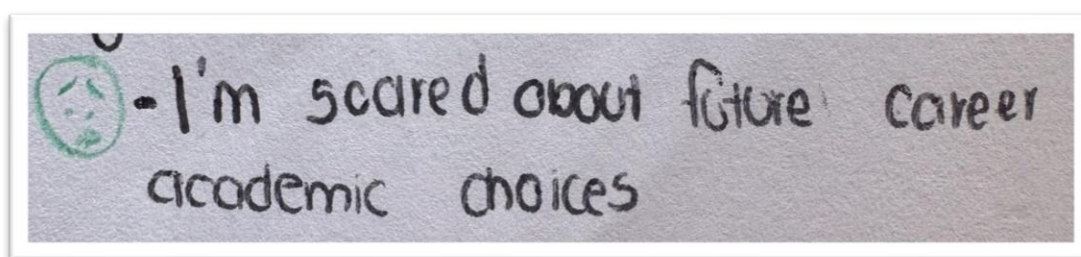
"I feel like all the proverbs we've gone through, all the times we've come here for our careers, have really shown us that, first of all, you mustn't fear what's coming".

(Fluffy, lines 1287–1288; 1:3/11).

Some learners, however, remained paralysed by fear.

"I'm a fearful person. When something happens, I freeze for two minutes before getting back to reality. I'm not a problem solver. I tend to overthink instead of acting".

(Sibu, lines 1190–1191; 6:29/76).



(Ms Lebo, line 3319).

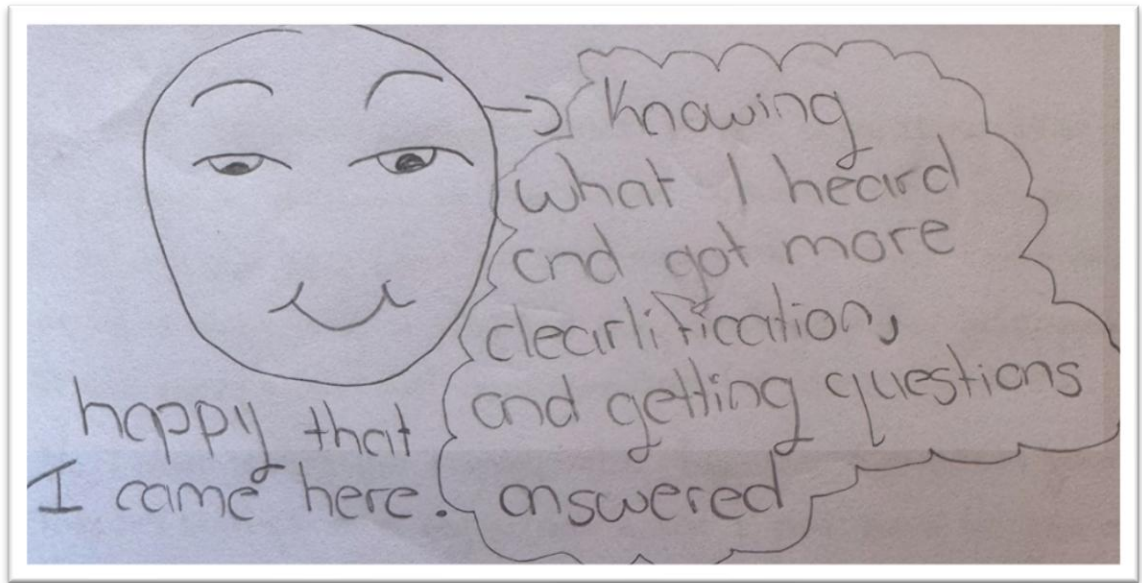
5.3.4.2.3 Category 4.2.3: Reflection and insight

The enduring wisdom encapsulated in African proverbs retains significance in the contemporary, fast-evolving world, offering learners crucial guidance for addressing present-day uncertainties and fostering progressive thinking, as noted by Asimeng-Boahene (2018).

"I really enjoyed, like, the proverbs that you gave us, ma'am. You know, it really told me about how to think about my career, my career chasing".

...

(Learner 5, lines 2555–2556; 7:7/23).



(Chantel, line 3321).

5.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Suggestions for curriculum integration

This sub-theme explored learners' suggestions for enhancing career education in schools, focusing on curriculum modifications, practical applications, and the roles of teachers.

5.3.4.3.1 Category 4.3.1: Curriculum enhancement

Letseka and Pitsoe (2018) argue that the Eurocentric system, which primarily focuses on European culture and history, frequently overlooks the cultural contributions of non-European societies. Learners expressed a desire to incorporate workshop lessons into their school curriculum.

"I feel like this should be added to our curriculum because, I mean, who knew that some jobs are being taken over by the Fifth Industrial Revolution? Not everyone knows that. And not everyone is educated about the fact that 8.8 million youths are unemployed. We didn't know that some careers have been taken over by robots. I feel we should be educated about this and learn that we need to start making businesses to create more job opportunities for others to reduce the unemployment rate".

(Fluffy, line 1326; 1:9/29).

“I would say it’s necessary, and I would like it to be in our curriculum because when we’re in school, we’re kind of protected from the real world by the school, ma’am. So, I think this type of workshop teaches us about the real world, how it’s not all sunshine and rainbows, and how life has its difficulties and how to take on life and jobs”.

(Learner 13, lines 2623–2626; 7:17/47).

5.3.4.3.2 Category 4.3.2: Practical application

SDL empowers learners to manage their learning journey by setting objectives, identifying resources, choosing suitable strategies to acquire new knowledge or skills, and evaluating the outcomes (Germeroth, 2024). The workshop participants emphasised the importance of practical skills over theory, highlighting the need for skills that are useful and relevant in real-life situations.

“I think it is very necessary because if this was in the curriculum, then it will lessen the chance of, like, anyone making, like, very, very big mistakes when it comes to, like, career choices or subject choices”.

(Learner 14, lines 2632–2634; 7:18/49).

“The workshops that we’re doing could help us and inform us on how to make the correct career choices ...”

(Learner 9, lines 2656–2657; 7:21/55).

5.3.4.3.3 Category 4.3.3: Teacher training

Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) advocate for an Ubuntu approach to education, where teachers cultivate a supportive and inclusive community rooted in African philosophy. Learners acknowledged the considerable impact that teachers exert on career education:

“We’re here because, in class, we’re not given that information. They’re not teaching us the way they should. That’s why we’re here—to get more information to build ourselves up”.

(Lethabo, lines 1323–1325; 1:8/27).

“These sessions have taught us about confidence. Do they teach confidence in class? No, they don’t. Do they teach about thinking ahead? They don’t. Do they teach about building yourself up? They don’t. They give you what they’re hired to give, without any feeling”.

(Cece, lines 1337–1340; 1:11/35).

5.3.5 Theme 5: Teachers’ perspectives on education

Table 35: Teachers’ perspectives on career education

THEME 5: TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER EDUCATION	
Sub-theme	Categories
5.1 Teachers’ readiness and professional development	5.1.1 Training and qualifications 5.1.2 Assignment to LO classes
5.2 Potential for Africanisation	5.2.1 Cultural familiarity with Ubuntu 5.2.2 Integration of IAKS into the career education curriculum
5.3 Current challenges in career education	5.3.1 Systemic barriers 5.3.2 Learner preparedness for the world of work

Table 35 and section 5.3.5 reveal the institutional preservation of coloniality previously documented in the literature review (chapter 2) and teacher interviews. Teachers indicated that their assignment to Life Orientation was due to available periods rather than specialised expertise, thereby contradicting the language of the Department of Basic Education policy (Francke, 2024). The visual disparity between training categories, certificates, and the potential for Africanisation indicates that Ubuntu is limited to isolated assessment tasks, lacking a significant link to career education content (Dama et al., 2020). This tendency represents pedagogical shortcomings.

The interpretive action perceives teachers' spoken dissatisfaction as an indication of the systemic challenges encountered by learners. Both groups are victims of a curriculum that has not seen authentic decolonisation, highlighting the limitations of the fundamental organising concept: IAKS cannot be supported by teachers who lack

the necessary expertise, time, or institutional legitimacy (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017).

This theme analyses the perspectives of LO teachers regarding career education in South African schools, based on interviews conducted for this study. The aim is to address the Eurocentric bias present in career education and to argue for a more Africanised approach. The findings are organised into three main areas: current challenges, the potential for Africanisation, and teacher readiness alongside professional development.

5.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Teacher readiness and professional development

This sub-theme explores the readiness of LO teachers to deliver career education, concentrating on their training and qualifications. The quotations reveal a notable deficiency in specialised LO training, as teachers are frequently assigned to LO classes to meet timetable requirements without the requisite skills for effective career education. LO teachers often lack the competencies needed to equip learners with relevant information, thereby limiting learners' capacity to select career paths aligned with their individual interests (Dama et al., 2020).

5.3.5.1.1 Category 5.1.1: Teacher training and qualifications

To ensure that learners in schools receive adequate psychosocial support, LO teachers must undergo further training both within their districts and during their university and FET college education (Mahwai & Ross, 2023).

Teachers interviewed indicated that a lack of LO-specific teaching experience has diminished their ability to deliver effective career education.

“They [teachers] are not trained for it [life orientation] “.

(Teacher A, line 2780; 14:2/1).

5.3.5.1.2 Category 5.1.2: Teacher assignment to LO classes

A reduction in teacher numbers resulting from budget cuts may significantly compromise the quality of education in the country (Francke, 2024). Teachers encounter considerable difficulties when required to teach unfamiliar subjects, as they

must not only acquire additional knowledge but also adapt their pedagogical approaches accordingly (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

The teachers' comments reinforce the perception of LO as a marginalised subject in the timetable, rather than a curricular priority. Such systemic concerns diminish its educational significance and reflect broader issues related to resource allocation and curriculum development.

"It's just the educators who attend, who had a bit of time in their timetable, where it's been fitted in, and they now have to teach it [life orientation]".

(Teacher A, lines 2848–2849; 14:22/61).

"My main subjects are, um, English and um, I am doing this um, life orientation because they are, periods open".

(Teacher B, lines 3332–3333; 15:1/3).

5.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: IAKS as potential for Africanisation

This sub-theme explores the potential to integrate IAKS, particularly Ubuntu, into the LO curriculum to enhance career education.

5.3.5.2.1 Category 5.2.1: Cultural familiarity with Ubuntu

The teacher interviews suggest that learners bring informal knowledge of Ubuntu to the career education classroom:

"Yes. But the Grade 12s know [about Ubuntu]. No, no, no, because they [learned it] beforehand, because their parents taught them".

(Teacher A, lines 2893–2894; 14:28/76).

5.3.5.2.2 Category 5.2.2: Integration of IAKS into the career education curriculum

Teacher comments indicate a disconnect as Ubuntu is confined in Grade 12 to an assessment task, but it is not linked to career education.

“And then we do the common assessment tasks with them ... this year it is Ubuntu”.

(Teacher A, lines 2876–2877; 27/74).

5.3.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Current challenges in career education

This sub-theme addresses the systemic and learner-related barriers to effective career education within LO, focusing on structural constraints and learner readiness.

5.3.5.3.1 Category 5.3.1: Systemic barriers

Van Der Westhuizen et al. (2017) assert that resource shortages substantially impede the provision of practical career guidance.

“[The system] makes it impossible for headmasters to simply appoint experienced [specialised] Life Orientation educators because there’s no budget”.

(Teacher A, lines 2766–2767; 14:5/4).

“The schools... they don't have money for, um, life orientation teachers. So it's usually the teachers that have open periods that are, uh, selected to give the subject”.

(Teacher B, line 3337; 15:2/7).

5.3.5.3.2 Category 5.3.2: Learner preparedness for the world of work

The Professional Provident Society's Student Confidence Index conducted in 2023-2024 reveals that merely 19% of learners consider themselves adequately prepared for the transition from high school to university, drawing attention to challenges related to finances, mental health, and insufficient career preparedness (Mashilo, 2025).

The teacher noted learners' emotional unreadiness, further exacerbated by limited self-awareness, which restricts effective career decision-making.

“Their path [or tendency], if they're bored, then they act out and go play”.

(Teacher A, line 2809; 14/32).

“They're [learners] so emotionally immature”.

(Teacher A, line 2820; 14:17/41).

“they are not serious about this Life orientation subject, and they play in the classroom and they do not concentrate”.

(Teacher B, lines 3343–3344; 15:4/7).

5.3.6 Theme 6: Exploring similarities and differences in learners' reflections between a public and a private school

The theme examines three sub-themes concerning career development in South Africa from indigenous perspectives. The first sub-theme, awareness of employment challenges, highlights the structural barriers faced by learners. The second sub-theme, engagement with IAKS, demonstrates the cultural significance and sense of pride inherent in these systems for career planning. The third sub-theme, self-efficacy and confidence in career planning, addresses issues of self-doubt and insecurity, revealing the psychological aspects of agency within uncertain job markets. Collectively, these sub-themes illustrate the dynamic relationship between individual aspirations, cultural heritage, and socio-economic conditions.

Table 36: Exploring similarities and differences in learners' reflections between a public and private school

THEME 6: EXPLORING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS ACROSS A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL	
6.1 Awareness of employment challenges	6.1.1 Fear of unemployment 6.1.2 Systemic gaps in career preparation 6.1.3 Optimism and adaptation
6.2 Engagement with IAKS	6.2.1 Cultural relevance and pride 6.2.2 Application to African proverbs 6.2.3 Community values via Ubuntu
6.3 Self-efficacy and confidence in career planning	6.3.1 Self-doubt and insecurity 6.3.2 Proactive initiative 6.3.3 Resilience against doubts

Tables 36–53 establish the logical basis of the thesis by applying Braun and Clarke's (2022) argument that themes must be contextually differentiated. Commonalities across school types, such as shared concern about Fifth Industrial Revolution disruptions, a collective desire for culturally relevant proverbs, and pervasive self-doubt, suggest that the core organising concept, the integration of Career Construction Theory (CCT) and Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS), transcends socio-economic divides (Savickas, 2020; Wills et al., 2025). Differences in intensity and

expression, for example, public-school learners articulating fear as an existential socio-economic threat while private-school learners view it as a strategic risk, together with varying levels of proactive initiative, indicate that material conditions significantly shape the capacity for career adaptability (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). These findings highlight that while IAKS (particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs) can scaffold adaptability across contexts, their effectiveness is mediated by socio-economic realities, thereby supporting the thesis's argument for stratified decolonisation in career education (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). The visual comparison tables serve as a comparative framework that guards against any idealised reading of IAKS as a universal solution (Cloete, 2015).

The theme examines three sub-themes concerning career development in South Africa from indigenous perspectives. The first sub-theme, awareness of employment challenges, draws attention to the structural barriers encountered by learners. The second sub-theme, engagement with IAKS, demonstrates the cultural significance and sense of pride inherent in these systems for career planning. The third sub-theme, self-efficacy and confidence in career planning, addresses issues of self-doubt and insecurity, revealing the psychological aspects of agency within uncertain job markets. Collectively, these sub-themes illustrate the dynamic relationship between individual aspirations, cultural heritage, and socio-economic conditions.

5.3.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Awareness of employment challenges

In South Africa, where youth unemployment rates remain exceptionally high, analysing employment challenges requires consideration of both psychological and systemic barriers confronting young people as they seek to enter the labour market (Wills et al., 2025). The sub-theme explores the interplay between the fear of unemployment, insufficient educational preparation, and the prospects for optimism fostered by adaptive responses to technological advancements.

5.3.6.1.1 Category 6.1.1: Fear of unemployment

The fear of unemployment among South African youth, particularly in response to technological advances such as the 5IR, constitutes a significant psychological burden that impedes effective career planning and amplifies anxiety. This apprehension

corresponds with theological perspectives on socio-economic challenges, which regard youth unemployment as a structural crisis (Cloete, 2015).

Similarities: Learners from both public and private schools expressed apprehension regarding technological disruption and the scarcity of employment opportunities, reflecting the generational anxiety induced by the 5IR and persistently high youth unemployment rates. They also noted the potential for AI to further aggravate employment challenges.

Table 37: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Fear of unemployment

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“As youth, we’re going to grow up with this Fifth Industrial Revolution, and it’s going to be even harder for us to get jobs... It makes me feel very doubtful about my future because now I’m thinking, ‘What’s going to happen to me in the future?’”</i> (Jada, lines 93 – 95; 2:33/37).	<i>“The Fifth Industrial Revolution makes me feel scared, fearful as well, because mainly robots will be taking our jobs, and careers will be very scarce, and the unemployment rate will get higher, obviously”.</i> (Lisa, lines 100 – 102; 2:34/39).

Differences: The fear experienced by public-school learners was pronounced and multifaceted, frequently associated with unemployment, crime, poverty, and societal collapse. These concerns reflect underlying socio-economic vulnerabilities characteristic of under-resourced settings. In comparison, private school learners reported fears that were fleeting and demonstrated greater adaptability.

Table 38: Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections: Fear of unemployment

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public	<i>“What I think about unemployment is that it’s a disadvantage for us as</i>	<i>“Like, I think having good grades, like not getting the minimum, like, let’s say your subject requires like</i>

and private school reflections	<i>people. A lot of people know a minimum 60%, and getting that unemployment leads to above that opens you to more theft, crime, rape, you know, options, more opportunities. And and people planning heists, yeah, I think you can really tell if selling cars, killing people, whatever you want to do is going to and all of that". (Lisa, lines 41 – 44; 2:20/19).</i>	<i>get replaced by AI". (Participant 6, lines 1452 – 1454; 8:25/21).</i>

5.3.6.1.2 Category 6.1.2: Systemic gaps in career preparation

Limited resources in South African public schools frequently lead to inadequate career preparation, resulting in a mismatch between learners' skills and labour market requirements (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024). Research advocates for more structured career counselling to enhance learners' employment readiness.

Similarities: Both groups criticised the curriculum for its lack of practical relevance, calling for the inclusion of elements such as workshops to address outdated content. Their perspectives reflect a shared demand across schools for a decolonised and adaptive education system.

Table 39: Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections: Systemic gaps in career preparation

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"I think the topics and all the proverbs we've learned about career adaptability... need to be added to our curriculum. We need this knowledge because some people don't even know about these things". (Tumi, lines 1301 – 1302; 1:4/15).</i>	<i>"This has to be something that's part of our curriculum because not only does it help us with subject choices, but it also helps us with general life skills". (Learner 6, lines 2649 – 2651; 7:20/53).</i>

Differences: Public school learners expressed greater frustration with outdated and superficial curriculum content, noting insufficient guidance from an early stage. In contrast, private school learners offered more restrained critiques, directing their concerns towards particular subjects rather than denouncing the system as a whole.

Table 40: Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections: Systemic gaps in career preparation

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“Do they teach confidence in class? No, they don’t. Do they teach about thinking ahead? They don’t. Do they teach about building yourself up? They don’t. They give you what they’re hired to give, without any feeling”.</i> (Cece, lines 1377 – 1388; 1:11/35).	<i>“We’re kind of protected from the real world by the school. So, I think this type of workshop teaches us about the real world, how it’s not all sunshine and rainbows, and how life has its difficulties and how to take on life and jobs”.</i> (Learner 13, lines 2624 – 2627; 7:17/47).

5.3.6.1.3 Category 6.1.3: Optimism and adaptation

South African youth exhibit optimism in their approach to automation, viewing it as a pathway to new opportunities, even as socio-economic factors shape their attitudes towards technological change. Public perceptions reflect both the potential benefits and inherent risks, drawing attention to the crucial role of education in cultivating resilience and encouraging proactive adaptation (Roberts et al., 2022).

Similarities: Both groups of school learners acknowledged the significance of critical thinking skills for navigating AI-driven changes, stressing the necessity of adaptation to secure future employability.

Table 41: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Optimism and adaptation

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"What I'm saying about that is that now machines are taking over, we as a youth now, we're supposed to think about things that machines in the future won't be able to do". (Fluffy, line 321 – 323; 2:51/125).</i>	<i>"... we could get ready for AI is ..., yes, that we can learn coding from a very young age and we could use it to help improve AI and there would be job offers that will still be there in the next 10 years". (Bruce Wayne, line 1561 – 156; 8:8/50).</i>

Differences: Public school learners exhibited cautious optimism, frequently linked to plan B strategies in response to limited resources. In contrast, private learners prioritised high-income skills and innovation, reflecting broader access to resources that facilitate proactive, forward-looking adaptation.

Table 42: Differences of public and private school learners' reflections: Optimism and adaptation

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"You should take physics, but maybe also take CAT or accounting because those are completely different fields, which means you'll have more opportunities". (Fluffy, line 538 – 539; 3:37/84).</i>	<i>"You have to develop those critical skills in order to maintain stability throughout the next 10 years. So maybe some things that you need to look out for, maybe including where you can train AI or this stuff, you got to be ready for the future". (Uncle Le Bron, line 1556 – 1558; 8:7/48).</i>

5.3.6.2 Sub-theme 6.2: Engagement with IAKS

This sub-theme examines the integration of IAKS within South African education, demonstrating how it enriches cultural identity and relevance. Such integration fosters career construction by utilising proverbs and the Ubuntu philosophy, and places collective well-being above individual aspirations (Ngubane & Makua, 2021).

5.3.6.2.1 Category 6.2.1: Cultural relevance and pride

IAKS in education foster pride and a strong sense of identity among learners, serving as a counterbalance to Eurocentric curricula. Such approaches increase the relevance of education, cultivating belonging and empowerment within diverse learning settings (Hadebe-Ndlovu, 2022).

Similarities: Learners from both public and private schools recognised the value of proverbs, noting their role in imparting innovative career knowledge and strengthening cultural ties, thereby nurturing a collective identity through IAKS.

Table 43: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Cultural relevance and pride

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“It made me proud of my roots”. (Tumi, line 1302; 1:4/15).</i>	<i>The proverbs gave a different perspective to how I looked at things in terms of my heritage (Learner 12, line 2619; 7:4/15).</i>

Differences: There were no significant differences found between the two groups.

5.3.6.2.2 Category 6.2.2: Application to African proverbs

African proverbs enhance concepts such as adaptability, decision-making, and ethical development in contemporary education by merging traditional wisdom with modern pedagogical approaches to achieve holistic learning outcomes (Kemi & Chijioke, 2021).

Similarities: Learners in both schools applied proverbs to concepts such as patience, adaptability, and confidence, utilising them as scaffolds for career reflection and illustrating the cross-contextual applicability of IAKS.

Table 44: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Application to African proverbs

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“This whole concept of careers and the proverbs we’ve been discussing is, like, they’re the steps we need to learn to take. They show us how to prepare ourselves from going to high school and for further, um,</i>	<i>“The proverb I really enjoyed was the one with the boy watching that man – it taught me about observation and learning. I think overall, all of them just taught me that I need to start now with my habits, I need to change them now, I need to start learning now</i>

<i>onwards</i> ". (CeCe, line 1282–128; 1:2/9).	<i>so I can be better in the future and so I can be successful in the future</i> ". (Learner 7, line 2572 – 2573; 7:10/31).

Differences: Public school applications focused on creating habits for survival, while private education prioritised creativity and long-term personal growth, supported by more stable circumstances.

Table 45: Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections: Application to African proverbs

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“The subjects you choose will determine your future, but not only subjects—other life decisions you make in high school have a chance to affect your future too”.</i> (Chantelle, line 486 – 488; 3:28/66).	<i>I think overall, all of them just taught me that I need to start now with my habits, I need to change them now, I need to start learning now so I can be better in the future and so I can be successful in the future</i> (Learner 7, line 2577 – 2579; 7:11/31).

5.3.6.2.3 Category 6.2.3: Community values via Ubuntu

Ubuntu’s community values in South Africa inform collective approaches to career planning, foregrounding interdependence and social harmony as essential for individual achievement. Academic research on Ubuntu within social work demonstrates its potential to enrich learning by prioritising interpersonal values and fostering communal support (Mugumbate et al., 2024).

Similarities: Learners from both schools appreciated Ubuntu for its emphasis on interconnection in professional decisions, prioritising collective well-being over individualism.

Table 46: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Community values via Ubuntu

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections	 (Skyler, line 3309).	<i>So, you know, as black people, you need to stand strong to be empowered ... Oh, yes, we need to stand together</i> (Participant 9, lines 1523 – 1523; 8:1/39).

Differences: Public learners emphasised family and community influences, while private learners appreciated Ubuntu for its emphasis on interconnection in career selections, prioritising collective well-being over individualism.

Table 47: Differences of public and private school reflections: Community values via Ubuntu

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“Our parents are right because they’re looking out for us, seeing what will take us to a brighter path”.</i> (CeCe, lines 905 – 90611; 5:14/25).	<i>“...it was a great experience because I feel like I got asked, like, questions and stuff like that, and it really did help. And I feel like it’s better to do it as a group because, like, you share your opinions, and they share theirs, and you can see whether or not you have the wrong idea or not. And it was also really good to just see how, like, others deal with how they’re picking their</i>

subjects". (Learner 11, lines 2708 – 2712; 7:25/81).

5.3.6.3 Sub-theme 6.3: Self-efficacy and confidence in career planning

This sub-theme examines the interplay between self-doubt, contextual challenges, proactive traits, and resilience strategies, drawing on community resources and socio-cognitive frameworks to advance youth development. Self-efficacy and confidence in career planning remain vital for empowering South African youth confronted with socio-economic obstacles, influencing their ability to make informed decisions and manage uncertainties (Algra, 2020).

5.3.6.3.1 Category 6.3.1: Self-doubt and insecurity

Self-doubt and insecurity in adolescent career planning are often amplified by disadvantaged contexts, where socio-cognitive factors like perceived barriers hinder decision-making (Albien & Naidoo, 2018).

Similarities: Learners from both schools described experiencing self-doubt, which was influenced by external opinions and struggles with identity during adolescence.

Table 48: Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections: Self-doubt and insecurity

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"I'm not confident. I might talk a lot or do everything, but certain things put me down. If someone says, "You don't deserve this career," I change my mind and think, "Let me just leave it." I feel like I'm not worthy for certain things". (Tanduli, lines 1158 – 1160; 6:24/60).</i>	<i>"I don't really find myself confident, not gonna lie. My view on confidence is someone who's all out there, no problem showing themselves. But me? I hate going outside, love staying in my room, and sometimes I don't even wanna talk to people". (Nomies, lines 2508 – 2509; 12:30/64).</i>

Differences: There were no significant differences in self-doubt and insecurity between the two schools; however, learners from the private school exhibited greater levels of confidence.

Table 49: Differences between public and private school learners’ reflections: Self-doubt and insecurity

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences between public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“I wonder, am I a confident person or not? I’m not sure if I’m confident. It depends on the situation. Especially with picking subjects—I’m not that confident”.</i> (Fluffy, lines 1064 – 1066; 6:2/17).	<i>“I think I’m a very confident person. How confidence helps with subject choices and job opportunities is this: With subject choices, if you’re confident in what you pick, you’re set for life. And for job opportunities, if you’re confident during interviews and discussions, your employer will see you’re serious about what you’re doing and why you want the job. So that’s why I think I’m confident and why confidence is a good thing to have”.</i> (Bruce Wayne, Lines 2454 – 2459; 20/44).

5.3.6.3.2 Category 6.3.2: Proactive initiative

Proactive initiative in career self-efficacy among South African youth is associated with specific personality traits and self-esteem, which facilitate more effective navigation of employment challenges. Studies indicate that a stronger proactive personality corresponds with heightened career decision-making efficacy, particularly within competitive labour contexts (Bokani & Leng, 2024).

Similarities: Both groups identified research and problem-solving as fundamental to initiative, with a shared focus on self-starting through early planning.

Table 50: Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections: Proactive initiative

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners’ reflections	<i>“I’d say I’m a problem solver because most things that impact me negatively, I usually find solutions for. I’m a person who loves finding solutions, so I’m a problem solver. I’m not really scared of encounters or challenges”. (Jada, lines 1249 – 1251; 6:39/98).</i>	<i>“I’m a confident person myself because I take the initiative to get things done”. (Uncle LeBron James, lines 2440 – 2441; 12:17/34).</i>

Differences: Public learners frequently experienced setbacks in taking initiative due to indecision and external constraints, resulting in predominantly reactive responses. In contrast, private learners exhibited greater autonomy and consistently engaged in actions shaped by established habits.

Table 51: Differences of public and private school learners' reflections: Proactive initiative

	Public high school	Private high school
Differences of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"I've been thinking about my future job, obviously, because the time to choose my subjects is near. I'm really indecisive about the careers I want to choose".</i> (Martha, lines 639 – 640; 3:53/124).	<i>I might be indecisive about a lot of things, but when it comes to my career choices, I'm very much a self-starter</i> (LeBron James, lines 2330 – 2331; 11:22/48).

5.3.6.3.3 Category 6.3.3: Resilience against doubts

Resilience in youth career development in South Africa originates from community and cultural resources, enabling adolescents to navigate socioeconomic challenges. Communal support contributes to the development of resilience and cultivates a positive sense of identity amid uncertainty (Shirima & Naudé, 2024).

Similarities: Learners from both schools identified self-love and mindset as crucial for sustaining perseverance, often countering external criticism by relying on their inner strength.

Table 52: Similarities of public and private school reflections: Resilience against doubts

	Public high school	Private high school
Similarities of public and private school learners' reflections	<i>"I know who I am, and I don't think anyone can change my perspective of myself other than me".</i> (Imangi, lines 1229 – 1231; 6:35/90).	<i>"But overall, I'd say yeah, I am [confident], 'cause I love myself to bits and pieces".</i> (Applesauce, line 2492: 12:26/56).

Differences: Learners from the private school displayed better coping strategies, inner resilience, and beliefs.

Table 53: Differences: Resilience against doubts

	Public high school	Private high school
No differences in learners' reflections	<i>"It makes me feel very doubtful about my future because now I'm thinking, "What's going to happen to me in the future? What career do I have to pick that's going to be beneficial for me?"</i> (Jada, lines 95 – 97; 2:1/37).	<i>"... once you stop self-doubting yourself, people doubting you won't harm you. Like, you'll realise that you're worth it, and it doesn't matter what other people think. So, once you're confident in yourself, then what other people say won't harm you"</i> (Annabeth, lines 2354 – 2355; 12:1/4).

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a thorough analysis of the data collected from Grade 9 learners and LO teachers in South African public and private high schools, using the career adaptability construct and IAKS as frameworks for understanding career education. The findings revealed that learners' career adaptability was influenced by their concerns about future employment challenges, their curiosity about career exploration, their sense of control over career choices, and their confidence in their abilities, as demonstrated through their reflections on African proverbs and the Ubuntu philosophy. These reflections highlighted the potential of IAKS to fill systemic gaps in South Africa's Eurocentric curriculum by promoting culturally relevant career education that supported identity development, community values, and self-directed learning. Teachers' perspectives emphasised the need for improved training and stronger integration of IAKS to overcome systemic barriers and more effectively prepare learners for a changing job market, particularly within the context of the 5IR. The comparison between learners in public and private schools revealed shared concerns about unemployment and curriculum shortcomings, alongside differences in

the intensity of these worries and in levels of proactive effort, reflecting broader socio-economic disparities.

Chapter 6 presents the study's findings on career education in South African schools, outlining limitations related to sample size and contextual specificity. Practical recommendations are proposed for the integration of IAKS within the LO curriculum, enhancement of teacher training, and the mitigation of systemic barriers. These measures aim to support learners in navigating career pathways amidst the evolving employment landscape.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The figure below outlines the structure of this chapter.

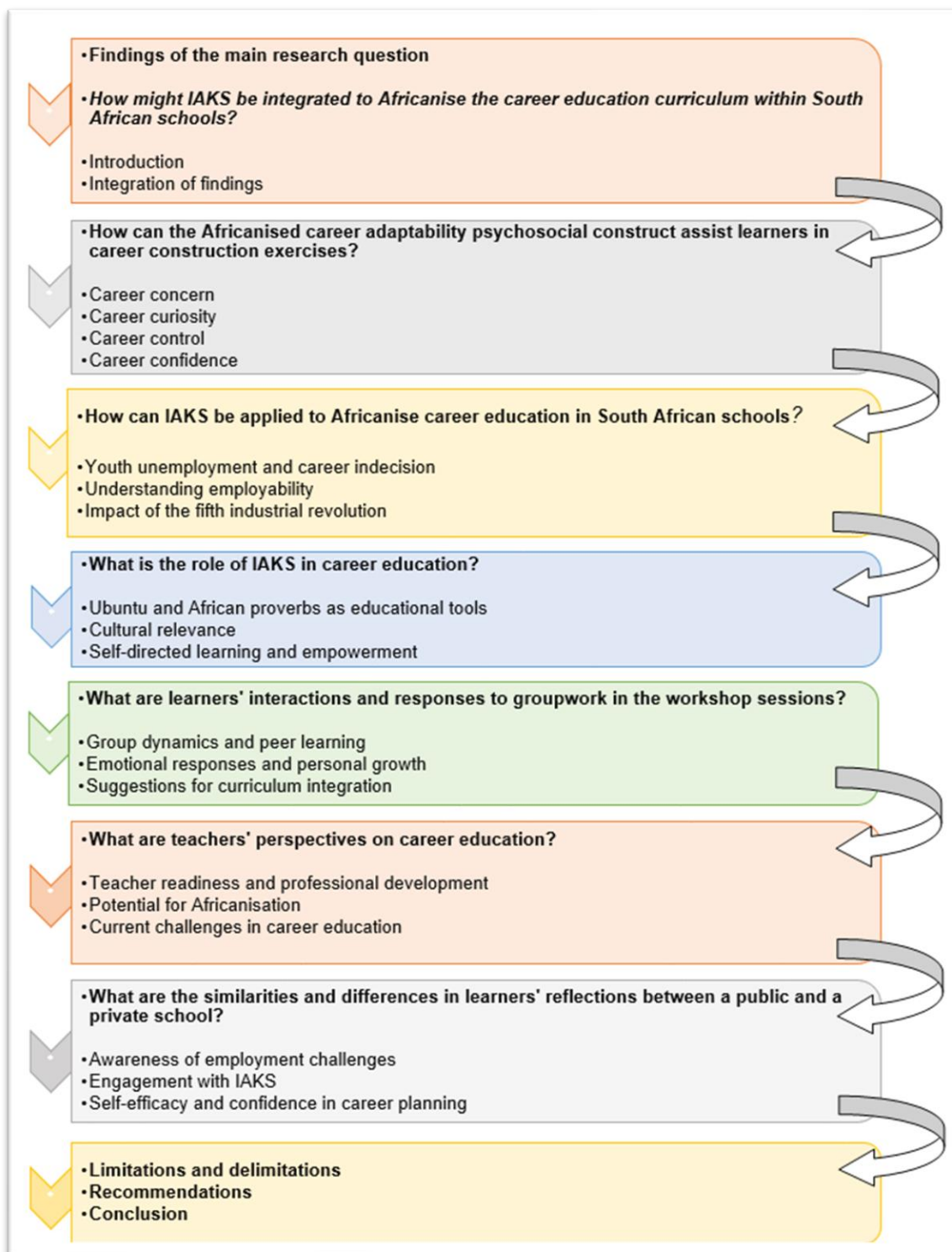


Figure 17: Overview of Chapter 6

6.2 INTRODUCTION

The persistent Eurocentric focus of South Africa's educational curriculum, particularly in career education within the LO subject, significantly hinders learners' preparation for the evolving employment landscape. This hindrance is evident in the increasingly high youth unemployment rates and a disconnect from IKS (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018; Ajayi et al., 2023).

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the study's findings, integrating data obtained from workshops with Grade 9 learners and interviews conducted with LO teachers. The analysis demonstrates how IAKS, particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs, can be utilised to Africanise career education and enhance learners' adaptability.

The discussion addresses the central research question concerning the integration of IAKS to Africanise the career education curriculum in South African schools. It further explores secondary questions related to learners' responses to Africanised career education tools such as the Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs, teachers' perceptions of career education, and inter-school differences in learner reflections. The chapter subsequently draws attention to the transformative potential of combining the career adaptability construct with IAKS. Such integration fosters self-directed, culturally relevant career development within the South African context, as illustrated in Chapter 3, Figure 7: Theoretical and conceptual framework (Savickas, 2020; Mthembu, 2021).

The chapter opens with a summary of the main findings from Themes 1 to 6, and then proceeds to a comprehensive assessment of these themes. The final section addresses limitations, offers recommendations, and provides concluding reflections intended to inform policy and practice aimed at aligning career education with South Africa's diverse realities.

6.2.1 Integration of findings

In addressing the principal research question, this integration of the findings provides an answer to how IAKS might be incorporated to Africanise the career education curriculum within South African schools. It draws on the findings from Themes 1 to 6,

derived from a qualitative embedded case study involving Grade 9 learners and LO teachers. The analysis shows that IAKS, which includes Ubuntu and African proverbs, may serve as a foundation for decolonising the predominantly Eurocentric National CAPS, particularly in career education, by embedding cultural relevance, encouraging self-directed learning, and nurturing communal resilience (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018; Mthembu, 2021). This integration is consistent with the interpretivist and indigenous paradigms underpinning the study, focusing on relational ontology and subjective experiences shaped by socio-historical contexts such as post-apartheid legacies and the 5IR (Held, 2019; Nsamenang, 2002). By incorporating learners' reflections on career adaptability (Chapter 5, Theme 1), employability challenges (Chapter 5, Theme 2), the educational role of IAKS (Chapter 5, Theme 3), workshop reflections (Theme 4), teachers' insights (Theme 5), and cross-school variations (Chapter 5, Theme 6), the findings call for a phased, multidisciplinary introduction of IAKS into career education to equip adolescents for navigating uncertainty, in line with Erikson's fifth developmental stage (Hamacheck, 1988; Güroğlu, 2020; Maree, 2021; Gross, 2020).

Theme 1 foregrounded the career adaptability framework, encompassing career concern, career curiosity, career control, and career confidence, which function as an instructional scaffold. In parallel, African proverbs promoted critical reflection on career construction and individual decision-making. Learners' interpretation of these proverbs connected adolescent career preparation to lifelong outcomes, drawing attention to anxieties regarding technological change and unemployment, while also fostering proactive career planning and drawing attention to deficiencies in school-based career education (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.1, categories 1.1.1–1.1.4). Integrating this theme with Themes 3 and 6 advocates for the inclusion of African proverbs in CAPS from Grade 9, supporting proactive career planning and autonomy, and challenging Eurocentric theoretical assumptions by leveraging Ubuntu's notion of interdependence for collaborative career exploration. For example, survival-oriented strategies among public school learners contrast with the creativity prevalent in private schools, indicating that IAKS could facilitate more equitable access to career education by embedding family and community values into decision-making processes. In doing so, the approach Africanises independent thought while maintaining respect for interpersonal relationships (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.3, categories 1.3.1–1.3.3).

In addition to the points above, Theme 2's perceptions of employability – marked by concerns about uncertainty and shifts in the world of work – intersected with Theme 5's teacher-identified systemic challenges, such as the assignment of unqualified teachers and learner immaturity. This convergence exposes the career education curriculum's shortcomings in fostering career adaptability (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, categories 2.1.1 to 2.1.3; sub-theme 5.1, categories 5.1.1 to 5.1.2). Learners' calls for practical knowledge and psychological readiness (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, categories 2.2.1 to 2.2.3) are in line with the workshop suggestions in Theme 4 for curriculum enhancement, where group dynamics provided peer-supported confidence (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, categories 4.1.1 to 4.1.3; sub-theme 4.3, categories 4.3.1 to 4.3.3).

Bringing this together with Theme 3, the integration of IAKS through African proverbs for critical thinking and Ubuntu for empowerment could localise the career education curriculum by transforming abstract, Eurocentric content into relational, self-directed modules that address unreadiness and nurture initiative. Cross-school differences in Theme 6 show that the cautious optimism of public school learners calls for a stronger focus on communal values within IAKS to improve outcomes in the face of uncertainty. This approach connects private school innovation with public school resilience strategies (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, categories 6.1.1 to 6.1.3; sub-theme 6.3, categories 6.3.1 to 6.3.3).

The role of IAKS in resources, identity, and empowerment within Theme 3 is closely linked to Theme 4's focus on emotional development, where issues of confidence and insecurity demonstrate the workshops' ability to decolonise career education through the inclusivity of Ubuntu, thus addressing the isolation often found in Eurocentric approaches (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, categories 3.2.1 to 3.2.3; sub-theme 4.2, categories 4.2.1 to 4.2.3).

Teacher perspectives in Theme 5 advanced Africanisation through the informal application of Ubuntu, while also recognising deficiencies in its integration. They proposed the incremental incorporation of IAKS into LO's career education to address challenges such as budget constraints and developmental limitations (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.2, categories 5.2.1 to 5.2.2; sub-theme 5.3, categories 5.3.1 to 5.3.2).

Theme 6 synthesised interaction with IAKS, revealing that public high school learners prioritised relationships, whereas private high school learners placed greater value on pride. The latter supported curriculum enhancement through the inclusion of African proverbs to encourage ethical development and Ubuntu, which cultivates harmony. Although self-efficacy was evident across different school types, public school learners demonstrated increased self-doubt linked to socio-economic challenges, illustrating the importance of IAKS in nurturing resilience (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, categories 6.2.1–6.2.3; sub-theme 6.3, categories 6.3.1–6.3.3).

In sum, the integration of IAKS to Africanise curricula entails embedding Ubuntu's relational philosophy and the insights of African proverbs within CAPS from Grade 9 onwards. This approach reconfigures career education in LO as a self-directed, communal framework that addresses Eurocentric limitations and cultivates resilient pathways (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Savickas, 2020).

6.3 HOW CAN THE AFRICANISED CAREER ADAPTABILITY PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSTRUCT ASSIST LEARNERS IN THEIR CAREER CONSTRUCTION EXERCISES?

This section addresses the research sub-question (Chapter 1.8): *“How can the career adaptability psychosocial construct be Africanised to assist learners in their career-building exercises?”* Accordingly, Objective 1, which sought to explore the Africanisation of the career adaptability construct, has been met.

The career adaptability construct, comprising concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021), offers a comprehensive psychosocial framework for adapting the South African school curriculum, particularly in career education, such as the subject LO. Although traditionally grounded in the Eurocentric CCT (Savickas, 2020), the construct can be indigenised through the integration of IAKS, directly addressing the persistent Western bias that marginalises African epistemologies. This thesis advances IAKS integration as a strategy to facilitate culturally relevant career preparation, equipping adolescents to navigate career construction and identity formation amidst significant youth unemployment and technological shifts linked to the 5IR. By combining career adaptability with IAKS, the curriculum evolves from a decontextualised Eurocentric approach to a hybrid

Afrocentric-Eurocentric model, nurturing self-directed learning and resilience within a changing employment landscape.

Africanisation progresses through the intentional application of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold (Algra, 2020), incorporating the Ubuntu philosophy and African proverbs as cultural touchstones to reinterpret the four dimensions of career adaptability and encourage reflective engagement.

6.3.1 Career concern

Learners were encouraged to independently analyse the proverb “*where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth*” when planning a career, applying critical thinking abilities within the CCT, strengthened by IAKS (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.1, category 1.1.1). The session generated a range of perspectives, as learners linked youthful initiatives to future outcomes.

Participants frequently associated career choices with socio-economic and cultural factors (Savickas, 2020). Many stressed the significance of preparation in overcoming challenges, while others expanded the discussion to encompass careful planning and anticipatory thinking, noting that educational commitment during adolescence contributes to later success. These findings centre on the relationship between career concern and identity formation during Erikson's fifth stage (Gross, 2020), reflecting learners' anxiety about present decisions that may result in future instability. The results suggest a need for culturally relevant guidance that fosters proactive engagement.

Concerns regarding future employment environments dominated learners' discussions, intensified by the automation threats associated with the 5IR and South Africa's persistent youth unemployment (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.1, category 1.1.2). Learners expressed considerable apprehension about digitisation displacing traditional roles, aligning with Zahidi's (2025) predictions of redundancy in administrative sectors, a challenge compounded by the local unemployment rate of 58.5% among those aged 15-24 (Maluleke, 2025). Alongside widespread uncertainty, there were pronounced worries about the extent of unemployment. Nevertheless, a sense of resilient optimism emerged, as learners proposed adaptive strategies and innovations. The findings indicate the necessity for career education to cultivate

resilience, addressing both psychological and structural challenges, through IAKS-integrated interventions (Stead & Subich, 2024).

The motivation for early career preparation was particularly evident at the Grade 9 level, where subject choices shape future pathways (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.1, category 1.1.3). Such motivation corresponds with Erikson's identity vs role confusion stage, during which career identity emerges amid constrained opportunities (Gross, 2020). Learners acknowledged the significance of proactive insight, directly linking subject selection to long-term outcomes. The findings reveal an inclination towards strategic responses to uncertainty; however, a minority conveyed confusion or indecision. The reflections point to the necessity of structured guidance to mitigate uncertainty, incorporating IAKS to foster self-directed learning and ensure cultural relevance during initial planning (Mthembu, 2021).

Criticism of the educational framework's shortcomings in preparing learners for workplace realities was apparent, drawing attention to discrepancies between curricular content and actual demands (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.1, category 1.1.4). Learners condemned the curriculum's inadequacies, likening it to "*rice*" without "*spice*" (1:11/35), and called for the integration of IAKS-informed career adaptability, stating that "*the topics and all the proverbs... need to be added to our curriculum*" (1:4/15). These findings correspond with Letseka and Pitsoe's (2018) critique of Eurocentric biases, indicating the need for reform to address unemployment. Learners regarded the workshops as instrumental in cultivating a realistic understanding of careers, illuminating current challenges in the South African labour market and informing subject selection. While some preferred independent research over prescribed curriculum changes, the overall findings support the systemic adoption of culturally relevant approaches to rectify existing disparities, consistent with Mthembu's (2021) call for Afrocentric enhancements in career education.

6.3.2 Career curiosity

Learners actively explored the African proverb "*he who asks questions never loses his way*" in relation to career curiosity, demonstrating a fundamental link between inquisitiveness and purposeful direction in career choices (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.2, category 1.2.1). Reflections indicate that curiosity enables deeper understanding, extending beyond basic awareness to guide well-informed career paths. Learners

noted that continuous enquiry offers meaningful guidance. This process of meaning-making accords with Cadaret and Hartung's (2021) assertion that curiosity cultivates resilience when encountering diverse perspectives, as learners noted the broadening of knowledge through ongoing enquiry. These findings illustrate the role of curiosity in reducing career uncertainty, showing its significance as a basis for self-directed career development in resource-limited environments.

The exploration of career options emerged as a purposeful pursuit among learners, who balanced enthusiasm with pragmatic considerations amid limited opportunities (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.2, category 1.2.2). Many learners reported engaging in active searches for viable professions, recognising the significance of aligning their choices with market demands. These findings correspond with Maree's (2020a) assertion regarding the necessity of informed decision-making to reduce indecisiveness. Some learners, however, admitted to minimal engagement, indicating a need for greater initiative and revealing obstacles to independent enquiry. The results indicate that while certain learners exhibit initiative in exploring career options, systemic deficiencies necessitate enhanced curricular support to cultivate consistent research behaviours.

Exposure to African proverbs encouraged learners to adopt new perspectives, expanded their career outlooks, and promoted innovative problem-solving (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.2, category 1.2.3). Learners reflected on how these cultural resources influenced their viewpoints. These findings are consistent with Asimeng-Boahene's (2018) view that proverbs nurture critical thinking, which is essential for adaptability in evolving employment contexts. Learners also acknowledged the value of curiosity, illustrating a readiness to integrate diverse perspectives into comprehensive career planning. The findings point to a more inclusive and adaptable framework for career education.

Learners identified curiosity as a key agent in career construction success, acknowledging its role in generating job possibilities and inspiring entrepreneurial pursuits (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.2, category 1.2.4). Findings highlighted that inquisitiveness promotes depth rather than superficiality, which aligns with Bal and Arikan's (2020) framework, proposing that curiosity strengthens self-awareness and contextual coherence. Learners additionally linked curiosity with practical outcomes,

asserting that "*posing questions yields answers, and answers can lead to success. That success can open businesses and doors*" (4:2/6), demonstrating its significance for fostering perspective. In the South African context, where societal barriers are prevalent, these findings highlight the transformative power of curiosity to foster proactive engagement and mitigate unemployment risks through ongoing exploration.

6.3.3 Career control

Learners discussed the proverb "*he who eats an egg foregoes a meal of chicken soup*", interpreting it as a metaphor for the consequences of making short-sighted choices compared to ongoing career exploration. These reflections align with the CCT's emphasis on planning, as described by Savickas (2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.3, category 1.3.1). Learners identified the egg as a symbol of unrealised potential, proposing that limited early career exploration may reduce future opportunities. Others extended this idea to practical applications, advocating for diverse topic selections to broaden prospects, while also stressing the value of patience. These insights reveal a connection between career control and qualities such as foresight and resilience, especially in contexts where socio-economic challenges require proactive development of potential through culturally relevant tools, such as African proverbs.

The tension between parental and societal expectations and individual autonomy was apparent, reflecting the transitional nature of African adolescence as described by Nsamenang (2002), where learners balance independence with communal values (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.3, category 1.3.2). Several learners appreciated parental guidance as support for their inexperience and encouraged the inclusion of multiple viewpoints. Conversely, some expressed frustration with excessive control, criticising financially motivated pressures and requesting greater parental empathy for their career-related struggles. One learner took a more extreme stance, advocating complete submission to parental decisions. These observations signal the need for balanced career guidance models that honour Ubuntu's collective principles while nurturing learner independence in career exploration.

Learners increasingly recognised their vital role in shaping their career paths, in line with Knowles' principles of self-directed learning, which state that ownership is essential for flexibility (Letseka & Seeletso, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.3, category 1.3.3). Participants stressed the significance of personal responsibility, noting the

need for informed decision-making to avoid errors, and supported self-sufficiency in exploring career options. Others demonstrated initiative and asserted their independence. These findings show the connection between career control and self-efficacy, suggesting that nurturing this responsibility through IAKS could reduce external vulnerabilities and enable learners to take an active role in shaping their futures within South Africa's challenging socio-economic environment.

6.3.4 Career confidence

Learners actively interpreted the proverb as a depiction of internal self-confidence that offers protection against external challenges, illustrating how career confidence fosters autonomy in decision-making (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.4, category 1.4.1). Learners described the inner mindset as a safeguard, aligning with the proverb's focus on overcoming self-doubt. Others discussed the protective benefits of self-acceptance. These findings indicate that confidence acts as a motivating factor, reducing reliance on external validation in uncertain career environments and reflecting Ubuntu's communal support for individual determination (Savickas, 2021).

Expressions of self-efficacy in career pursuits were apparent, supporting Bandura's (1977) association between perceived competence and performance engagement, which forms the basis of career adaptability (Savickas, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.4, category 1.4.2). Some learners displayed confidence and early determination in real-life situations, as demonstrated by their reflections. Assertions of indifference to criticism revealed further resilience. Conversely, some challenges emerged, such as expressions of pessimism and anxiety concerning unemployment. These findings demonstrate the significance of career education that strengthens self-efficacy, encouraging purposeful engagement with career guidance.

Learners regarded specific skills as essential for career success in evolving circumstances, as suggested by Maree (2020a) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.4, category 1.4.3). Confidence and initiative were evident, with particular praise given to problem-solving abilities. These findings illustrate how confidence supports navigation of South Africa's challenging employment market, blending personal agency with adaptability to address employment barriers.

Resilience, developed through reflective and collaborative strategies integral to life design for professional development (Savickas, 2020a), was vital for sustaining ambitions despite external doubt (Chapter 5, sub-theme 1.4, category 1.4.4). Learners displayed resilience through internal reinforcement and persistent effort. Creative thinking further strengthened this resilience. Supported by Ubuntu's communal framework (Sefotho, 2021), these findings show that resilience stems from inherent strength, allowing learners to counter negativity and sustain their career aspirations in difficult circumstances.

6.3.5 Theme 1: reflective synthesis

The Africanised career adaptability construct, scaffolded by Ubuntu principles and African proverbs, emerges as a powerful psychosocial tool for assisting Grade 9 learners in their career construction exercises. By reinterpreting concern, control, curiosity, and confidence through culturally embedded African proverbs, learners demonstrated enhanced meaning-making, shifting from passive recipients of Eurocentric career education to active agents in their identity formation. This integration not only extends Savickas' Career Construction Theory by infusing it with relational, communal ontologies central to IAKS but also addresses Erikson's identity versus role confusion stage within South Africa's hybrid cultural landscape. Reflexively, as a researcher, witnessing learners connect proverbs such as *"If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt"* to personal futures evoked a profound sense of decolonial praxis, validating the study's aim to bridge coloniser-colonised knowledge divides. These findings affirm that IAKS fosters resilience and SDL, equipping learners for 5IR disruptions and high unemployment realities. Ultimately, this Africanised framework advocates for a synergistic curriculum that honours indigenous wisdom, promoting equitable career trajectories across diverse socio-economic contexts.

6.4 LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

Learners' reflections reveal a widespread sense of apprehension linked to South Africa's high youth unemployment rate, which stands at 58.5%. This climate of

uncertainty contributes to indecision and obstructs effective career planning (Maluleke, 2025). This sub-theme is consistent with the study's interpretivist paradigm, which recognises that subjective experiences are shaped by socio-historical contexts, such as the legacies of post-apartheid South Africa and the 5IR's focus on personalisation and artificial intelligence (Zahidi, 2025). Participants' concerns resonate with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where adolescents face identity formation challenges amid external pressures, often resulting in confusion rather than resilience (Hamacheck, 1988b; Güroğlu, 2020). The integration of IAKS, such as Ubuntu, may help address these challenges by fostering communal support and self-directed learning, thereby countering the Eurocentric bias that marginalises African perspectives in education (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018a). Findings show that without structured systemic interventions in the career education curriculum, learners remain at risk of becoming NEET, with youth unemployment rates at 58.5%, pointing to the urgent need for culturally relevant strategies to strengthen career adaptability (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1).

6.4.1 Youth unemployment and career indecision

Learners conveyed a profound fear of unemployment, perceiving it as an unavoidable crisis that threatens future aspirations, a sentiment that aligns with statistics indicating that 58.5% of 15-24-year-olds remain unemployed within the post-COVID structural norm (Maluleke, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.1). This anxiety is further intensified by the automation associated with the 5IR, which risks making administrative roles obsolete and worsening job scarcity (Savickas, 2020b). Such psychological distress corresponds with Erikson's identity confusion stage, characterised by unstable self-esteem and heightened vulnerability to external influences (Hamacheck, 1990). In indigenous contexts, these fears disrupt social cohesion, as adolescence in Africa is shaped by the convergence of local, Arab-Islamic, and Western influences, which tend to prioritise communal resilience over individualism (Nsamenang, 2002). The findings point to the significance of Ubuntu in fostering interdependence, mitigating isolation by embedding career education within community values to encourage hope and effective planning (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.1).

The lack of career guidance emerged as a key contributor to indecision, with learners feeling unguided and uncertain, reflecting systemic gaps in public schools where counsellors are scarce (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.2). This lack of guidance aligns with the study's qualitative approach, where interpretivism prioritises participants' internal thoughts on phenomena such as career uncertainty (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). In an African context, this shortage fails to consider hybrid identities shaped by indigenous influences, leading to inadequate preparation for adult social roles (Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's emphasis on relational ties and community could transform guidance into a collective process, promoting self-construction and narrative-based planning in line with Guichard's self-construction theory (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.2).

Subject choice dilemmas amplify anxiety, as learners grapple with Grade 10 decisions without adequate awareness of available options, frequently resulting in frustration and misaligned aspirations (sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.3). Such dilemmas reflect pressures intensified by insufficient guidance, aligning with calls for more practical counselling services (Maree, 2013). These challenges are consistent with Erikson's notion of social reorientation during adolescence, where the pursuit of independence from caregivers is central, yet often constrained by Eurocentric curricula that overlook cross-cultural diversity (Güroğlu, 2014; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). Adopting an indigenous perspective that incorporates African proverbs for critical reflection could promote adaptability and more informed decision-making, thereby supporting Savickas' career construction theory by enabling learners to shape their trajectories during transitional periods (Savickas, 2005) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1, category 2.1.3).

Overall, sub-theme 2.1 illustrates the complex interaction of fear, inadequate guidance, and decision-making dilemmas in sustaining indecision, highlighting the necessity of integrating IAKS to align education with South Africa's realities and to facilitate equitable transitions (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.1).

6.4.2 Understanding employability

Learners' reflections indicate a growing awareness of employability as a combination of competencies and readiness, shaped by the demands of a rapidly evolving job

market influenced by the 5IR's focus on personalisation and artificial intelligence (Regenesys Business School, n.d.). This sub-theme is consistent with the study's interpretivist paradigm, which values subjective interpretations of work readiness within socio-historical contexts, such as post-apartheid educational biases (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). Participants' perspectives are consistent with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where adolescents navigate identity through self-exploration, often constrained by limited practical experience (Hamacheck, 1990; Güroğlu, 2014). The inclusion of IAKS, such as Ubuntu, may deepen this understanding by fostering interdependence and holistic development, in contrast to the Eurocentric focus that disregards African communal values (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021). Findings indicate that, in the absence of targeted interventions, learners remain unprepared for transitions, perpetuating high NEET rates and reinforcing the importance of career adaptability in supporting entrepreneurship and organisational performance (Succi & Canovi, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2).

Learners identified skills and knowledge as fundamental to employability, acknowledging the necessity of education and open-mindedness for effective career navigation, in accordance with frameworks that prioritise competencies for adaptation and role development (Succi & Canovi, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.1). Such perspectives reveal deficiencies in current curricula, where an emphasis on theoretical content often overshadows practical application, supporting the argument for integrating indigenous and Western approaches to curriculum transformation (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Within the African context, skills development facilitates self-directed learning, empowering learners to utilise lived experiences in contributing to society (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). The study's indigenous paradigm demonstrates Ubuntu's significance in fostering these qualities through community-based learning, thereby advancing career construction in accordance with Savickas' theory (Savickas, 2005) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.1).

Personal attributes, such as confidence and mental preparedness, were regarded as essential for employability, reflecting the significance of adaptability and the ability to maintain stability during change (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.2). These qualities correspond with literature that advocates for psychosocial resources – including concern, control, curiosity, and confidence – to navigate career transitions (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). Adolescents' focus on these traits aligns with Erikson's

identity development, in which resilience mitigates confusion (Hamacheck, 1990). Ubuntu's moral framework, rooted in interconnection and reconciliation, may further strengthen these attributes by nurturing relational ties and a sense of community, thereby supporting self-construction in diverse contexts (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.2).

Workplace requirements presented considerable challenges, with learners acknowledging a lack of readiness due to inadequate skills and limited exposure. This reflects ongoing criticism of South African education's insufficient connection to practical work environments (Maree, 2013) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.3). Such views point to deeper systemic issues, as Eurocentric models restrict cross-cultural relevance and marginalise indigenous approaches (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). Automation within the 5IR further compounds these difficulties, making it increasingly important to implement adaptation strategies grounded in IAKS to achieve career satisfaction (Mishra, 2020). CCT supports integrating such requirements through narrative and action-oriented counselling (Savickas, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.2, category 2.2.3).

6.4.3 Impact of the 5IR

Learners' reflections reveal apprehension regarding the 5IR's reshaping of career landscapes through personalisation and artificial intelligence, influencing perceptions of employability in a context of high youth unemployment (Mishra, 2020). This sub-theme aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm, emphasising subjective interpretations amid socio-historical factors such as post-apartheid legacies and global digitisation (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Participants' views echo Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where adolescents confront identity amid uncertainties, often experiencing confusion without adaptive tools (Hamacheck, 1990; Güroğlu, 2014). Incorporating IAKS, such as Ubuntu, could address these challenges by emphasising interdependence and resilience, challenging Eurocentric models that marginalise African epistemologies (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). The findings reveal that unaddressed impacts continue to perpetuate the vulnerability of the status of NEETs, affecting 58.5% of individuals aged 15-24 and signalling the need for culturally responsive education to promote career satisfaction (Nsamenang, 2002; Maluleke, 2025) (sub-theme 2.3).

Learners viewed technological changes as disruptive, expressing concerns that automation would eliminate roles and result in job redundancy, a perspective consistent with projected workplace shifts towards cognitive computing (Regenesys Business School, n.d.) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.1). Such reflections correspond with the literature on the 4IR and 5IR, which detail the digitisation of work, the narrowing of human-machine divides, and the gradual reduction of managerial positions (Sarfraz et al., 2021). Among African adolescents, these developments intersect with hybrid identities that merge indigenous and Western influences, thereby complicating social integration (Nsamenang, 2002). The indigenous paradigm draws attention to Ubuntu's spiritual and relational dimensions, which support adaptation and address fear through communal wisdom (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.1).

Job market concerns featured prominently, with learners expressing apprehension about diminished opportunities and increased competition, especially against the backdrop of South Africa's 58.5% youth unemployment rate (Maleluka, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.2). Such perceptions correspond with a 9% decline in employment among 18–34-year-olds over the past decade, a trend further intensified by post-COVID-19 realities (StatsSA, 2025). Erikson's framework demonstrates how these anxieties can intensify identity confusion, particularly in dynamic environments marked by fragile self-esteem (Hamacheck, 1990). The communal orientation of Ubuntu offers the potential to reduce isolation by fostering collective approaches for fair access (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.2).

Adaptation strategies emerged as proactive responses, focusing on essential skills and environmental adjustments to promote stability and satisfaction across diverse occupations (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.3). This finding is consistent with CCT, which encourages the use of psychosocial resources, such as concern and confidence, during transitions (Savickas, 2005). In SSA contexts, multidisciplinary approaches that incorporate indigenous resilience help to address methodological gaps (Nsamenang, 2002). SDL, grounded in Ubuntu, supports the development of initiative and resourcefulness, preparing individuals for lifelong adaptability (Germeroth, 2024) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 2.3, category 2.3.3).

6.4.4 Theme 2: reflective analysis

Learners' perceptions of career education and employability reveal deep-seated anxieties rooted in systemic failures, youth unemployment (58.5%), and 5IR uncertainties, yet also highlight pockets of optimism and adaptive awareness. Synthesising these insights through an interpretivist lens underscores how subjective experiences of indecision, skill gaps, and technological disruption are shaped by post-apartheid inequities and inadequate LO provision. The integration of IAKS offers a pathway to reframe these perceptions by embedding Ubuntu's interdependence, transforming individual fears into communal strategies for employability. As the researcher, the emotional weight of learners' narratives, particularly public-school participants' socio-economic concerns, reinforced my commitment to Africanising education as an act of social justice. These reflections extend literature on career indecision by demonstrating IAKS's role in fostering cultural relevance and self-efficacy. Moving forward, such perceptions necessitate curriculum reforms that prioritise practical, contextually grounded preparation, ensuring learners are not only employable but empowered to navigate and shape their futures meaningfully.

6.5 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF IAKS IN CAREER EDUCATION?

This chapter brings together the main findings from the data analysis in relation to the research questions, with particular attention to the role of IAKS in career education as discussed in Chapter 5, Theme 3. The theme connects these findings with existing literature to offer a coherent interpretation, drawing out implications for South African secondary education. The discussion explores the relationship between Ubuntu and African proverbs as educational tools, their cultural significance, and potential to empower learners, informed by indigenous and interpretivist perspectives.

6.5.1 Ubuntu and African proverbs as educational tools

Reflections suggest that Ubuntu and African proverbs function as effective instruments for reflection and learning, enabling learners to connect cultural wisdom with career aspirations in ways that challenge the abstract character of Eurocentric education in South African schools (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). This sub-theme is consistent with the study's indigenous paradigm, which prioritises relational ontology and cultural

inclusion to interpret realities through culturally relevant perspectives (Held, 2019). Such practices facilitate Erikson's fifth developmental stage by supporting identity formation through communal and reflective engagement, particularly in hybrid African contexts where indigenous and Western influences intersect (Hamacheck, 1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Integrating IAKS advances decolonisation by utilising local resources and language to foster meaningful learning, which is vital in a job market marked by high youth unemployment (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). The findings indicate that these approaches help mitigate feelings of isolation by cultivating a sense of belonging, an important consideration in contexts where colonial legacies continue to marginalise African epistemologies (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; sub-theme 3.1).

African proverbs foster critical thinking, determination, and keen perception, all of which are essential for navigating South Africa's employment challenges amid technological disruptions (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.1). This finding is consistent with indigenous development approaches that use proverbs to inspire constructive learning and promote decolonisation, thus complementing Western epistemologies for holistic growth (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). In adolescent contexts, these skills support self-directed learning and resilience, addressing methodological gaps in SSA education through multidisciplinary inclusivity (Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's moral philosophy reinforces this by embedding critical reflection in community values, strengthening career adaptability as outlined in Savickas' construction theory (Savickas, 2005) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.1).

Learners applied African proverbs to abstract career concepts, illustrating how these expressions can clarify complex ideas within familiar cultural contexts (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.2). This approach supports Vygotsky's ZPD, where scaffolds such as proverbs provide tailored guidance, gradually fostering independence (Main, 2021). In South African settings, this challenges Eurocentric rigidity by integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary requirements, encouraging creativity and new perspectives (Asimeng-Boahene, 2018).

African proverbs strengthened cultural ties, nurturing a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of alienation within systems that prioritise Western norms – an important factor for engagement in the context of colonial legacies (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.3). These connections promote pride

and help preserve identity, consistent with the role of African proverbs in imparting wisdom and maintaining collective history (Babalola & Alu, 2019). Ubuntu's focus on interconnectedness further supports this, encouraging relational learning in talking circles that model situated relatedness and attentive listening (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). Such relationships align with Erikson's social reorientation, equipping young people for adult responsibilities through cultural affirmation (Güroğlu, 2014).

6.5.2 Cultural relevance

Reflections suggest that IAKS foster the development of hybrid identities among African adolescents, who navigate both local and global influences to make career education more relevant and supportive of personal growth (Nsamenang, 2002). This Chapter 5, sub-theme (3.2) is consistent with the study's indigenous paradigm, which recognises relativist ontology and cultural perspectives in interpreting realities (Held, 2019). Such integration reinforces Erikson's fifth developmental stage by encouraging stable self-esteem and resilience through cultural affirmation, especially in contexts that combine indigenous, Arab-Islamic, and Western influences (Hamacheck, 1990; Güroğlu, 2014). Promoting multidisciplinary inclusivity, IAKS addresses gaps in local literature and gives greater voice to adolescent perspectives, which is crucial for decolonising education in post-colonial settings (Nsamenang, 2002). The findings indicate that these systems enable learners to align their career aspirations with their heritage, thereby reducing disengagement within Eurocentric frameworks (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2).

IAKS strengthens identity development by deepening self-awareness and personal growth, which is vital for South African youth who are often marginalised in education, allowing for career planning grounded in individual realities (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.1). This process is in line with Erikson's theory, where a strong self-concept supports progress and helps prevent confusion (Hamacheck, 1990). In African contexts, it encourages social adaptation to adult roles and promotes independence through cultural synthesis (Güroğlu, 2014; Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's relational approach further enriches this by affirming interdependence in child-rearing and the pursuit of a meaningful life through relationships with others (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.1).

Cultural pride is cultivated through IAKS, preserving historical memory and wisdom to boost confidence in careers, challenging Eurocentric devaluation of IK (Babalola & Alu, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.2). This validation motivates the pursuit of goals in societies that overlook African heritage, aligning with decolonisation efforts that promote mutual respect across cultures (Mthembu, 2021). The role of proverbs in imparting moral standards and shaping conduct reinforces pride, ensuring living practices for generational transmission (Babalola & Alu, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.2).

Community values, shaped by Ubuntu and proverbs, inform interventions by drawing on collective principles and framing career trajectories as intrinsically linked to broader social structures (Chilisa, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.3). In an unequal South African context, such an approach aligns decision-making with societal ideals, advancing both community cohesion and reconciliation (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). These perspectives strengthen identity within hybrid environments and foster resilience through collective support (Nsamenang, 2002) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.2, category 3.2.3).

6.5.3 *SDL and empowerment*

Reflections indicate that integrating IAKS enables learners to manage their career trajectories independently, building lifelong skills and autonomy in both collaborative and solitary contexts (Germeroth, 2024). This sub-theme aligns with the study's indigenous paradigm, foregrounding relational accountability and reciprocity to interpret empowerment through cultural lenses (Held, 2019). The findings are consistent with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, nurturing resilience and self-regulation amid uncertainty, particularly among individuals with African hybrid identities (Hamacheck, 1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Promoting shifts in mindset towards creativity and adaptability, IAKS addresses unemployment vulnerabilities by encouraging continuous self-improvement (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). The findings suggest that these shifts effectively tackle problems stemming from inadequate career guidance, enabling users to participate more actively in a labour market burdened by significant barriers (StatsSA, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3).

Learners displayed motivation to act by regulating their activities through goal-setting and organising resources, which strengthened self-determination in career planning

(Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.1). This finding is consistent with definitions of SDL, where individuals assess their needs and apply strategies to reach desired outcomes (Germeroth, 2024). In South African contexts, it addresses directionlessness and supports Ubuntu's principle of community-driven initiative (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Career adaptability theory supports these results, as taking initiative fosters concern and control during transitions (Savickas, 2005) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.1).

Problem-solving was identified as a key capacity, supporting adaptability and preparation for market challenges through effective solution-finding (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.2). This skill is essential for self-regulated learning, enabling learners to locate and assess resources independently (Germeroth, 2024). Within indigenous frameworks, it draws on Ubuntu's relational ties to address difficulties collectively, strengthening resilience in South African contexts (Nsamenang, 2002) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.2).

Building confidence involves mindset shifts that foster resilience and a focus on self-improvement, enabling learners to pursue continuous development and adapt within their cultural context (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.3). This finding is consistent with Erikson's view that stable self-esteem supports growth and counters confusion in hybrid contexts (Hamacheck, 1990). The interconnectedness promoted by Ubuntu further contributes to self-construction and purposeful living (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 3.3, category 3.3.3).

6.5.4 Theme 3: reflective synthesis

The role of IAKS in career education, as illuminated through Ubuntu and African proverbs, transcends mere cultural inclusion to become a transformative educational tool for identity, critical thinking, and empowerment. Learners' engagement evidenced how proverbs scaffolded abstract career concepts, nurturing SDL and communal values in ways that Eurocentric approaches often fail to achieve. This aligns with decolonisation imperatives (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018) and the indigenous paradigm's emphasis on relational epistemologies. Reflexively, facilitating the workshops affirmed the power of talking circles in creating safe, participatory spaces that mirrored Ubuntu in action, challenging my own positionality as a

researcher bridging personal and academic worlds. The findings synthesise to advocate IAKS not as an add-on but as foundational to Africanised pedagogies, fostering cultural pride and resilience amid identity formation challenges. This has profound implications for LO syllabus redesign, teacher training, and broader efforts to decolonise South African education for sustainable youth empowerment.

6.6 WHAT ARE LEARNERS' INTERACTIONS AND RESPONSES TO GROUPWORK IN THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS?

Reflections reveal how group work fostered a sense of community in career education, facilitating collaboration, support, and the sharing of insights among learners (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). This sub-theme aligns with the study's indigenous paradigm, which values relational ontology through talking circles that encourage mutual learning and respect (Held, 2019). These dynamics contribute to Erikson's fifth developmental stage by supporting social reorientation and identity formation through peer interactions (Hamacheck, 1990; Güroğlu, 2014). Ubuntu's collaborative ethos, grounded in dialogue and compassion, challenges Eurocentric individualism and creates space for diverse perspectives (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The findings show that these processes help reduce isolation in contexts with limited guidance, increasing engagement in the face of unemployment challenges (Maluleke, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1).

6.6.1 Group dynamics and peer learning

Group work enhanced understanding of career concepts by integrating diverse perspectives, resonating with Ubuntu's focus on knowledge acquisition through communal dialogue (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.1). Such findings reflect the indigenous notion of connectedness present in talking circles, where exchanging viewpoints facilitates deeper comprehension (Held, 2019). Within an interpretivist framework, subjective experiences are foregrounded in collaborative contexts (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Vygotsky's social learning theory further aligns with these observations, suggesting that interactions within ZPDs provide scaffolding for development (Main, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.1).

Peer interactions offered emotional support, fostering secure spaces that reflect Ubuntu's principles of unity and compassion (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.2). This support is consistent with interpretivism's attention to personal experiences within group contexts (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). For African adolescents, it assists in navigating hybrid identities and building resilience through communal connections (Nsamenang, 2002). These dynamics challenge Eurocentric notions of isolation, cultivating inclusive environments for career exploration (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.2).

Diverse perspectives within groups broadened understanding, reflecting Vygotsky's view of social interaction as central to knowledge construction (Main, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.3). This outcome encourages self-directed learning and the sharing of ideas, aligning with Ubuntu's relational approach to community (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). In SSA contexts, it addresses methodological limitations by giving greater prominence to multidisciplinary inclusivity (Nsamenang, 2002). Talking circles exemplify this process, strengthening relationships and supporting flexible viewpoints (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.3).

6.6.2 Emotional responses and personal growth

Reflections reveal a range of emotions during workshops, highlighting personal insights, anxieties, and confidence in career contexts (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). This sub-theme aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm, prioritising subjective experiences amid socio-historical factors, such as post-apartheid biases (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Such responses resonate with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where adolescents confront struggles yielding either confusion or advancement (Hamacheck, 1990; Gross, 2020). Ubuntu's relational framework may alleviate adverse effects by nurturing community bonds and promoting reconciliation, thus contributing to self-construction (Guichard, 2009). Evidence suggests that unaddressed emotions sustain vulnerabilities in environments with limited guidance, necessitating culturally grounded support to foster resilience (Nsamenang, 2002; sub-theme 4.2).

Confidence variations demonstrate its role in adaptability, supporting the navigation of challenges, while insecurity indicates a lack of social harmony at various levels (Peila-

Shuster et al., 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.1). This finding is consistent with Erikson's identity theory, which suggests that external influences affect self-esteem in hybrid African contexts (Hamacheck, 1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Interpretivism draws attention to personal impacts, as worldviews shape self-esteem (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Ubuntu addresses insecurity through interdependence, fostering stable identities for career readiness (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.1).

Fear dynamics contrast with empowerment, as identity struggles may induce apprehension or foster development in uncertain environments (Gross, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.2). This finding is consistent with Erikson's framework, where adolescents experience reorientation amid various pressures (Güroğlu, 2014). In SSA contexts, multidisciplinary approaches foster resilience against challenges such as technological disruptions (Nsamenang, 2002). The workshops' reflective approach resonates with indigenous paradigms, facilitating the transformation of fear into personal growth through communal support (Held, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.2).

Reflection yields insights, with proverbs offering timeless guidance for navigating uncertainties and forward thinking (Asimeng-Boahene, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.3). This finding supports SDL, where evaluation drives personal advancement (Germeroth, 2024). In African contexts, it enhances hybrid identities through cultural wisdom, addressing literature gaps (Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's reconciliation promotes profound awareness, aligning with career construction for purposeful trajectories (Savickas, 2005) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.2, category 4.2.3).

6.6.3 Suggestions for curriculum integration

Reflections point to desires for curriculum changes, practical orientations, and evolving teacher roles to advance career education, focusing on adaptation, application, and training (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). This sub-theme is consistent with the study's indigenous paradigm, which values relational accountability in interpreting improvements through cultural perspectives (Held, 2019). Such recommendations contribute to Erikson's fifth developmental stage by supporting identity development within nurturing environments, particularly in hybrid African contexts (Hamacheck,

1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's inclusive community ethos addresses Eurocentric neglect of non-European contributions, fostering harmony and responsiveness (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). Findings show that fragmented proposals sustain gaps in guidance, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive reforms to facilitate informed choices (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3).

Calls to incorporate workshop elements respond to Eurocentric tendencies that disregard non-European histories, suggesting additions to enhance cultural recognition and relevance (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.1). This outcome is consistent with decolonisation efforts that integrate indigenous and Western approaches for meaningful transformation (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). In South African contexts, it addresses disconnection, supporting multidisciplinary inclusion to elevate diverse perspectives (Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's relational principles further this aim, cultivating environments conducive to holistic guidance (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.1).

A focus on practical skills over theory signals the need for real-world applicability, equipping individuals to manage their development through clear objectives and assessment (Germeroth, 2024) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.2). This supports the idea of self-directed learning, where effective approaches lead to positive outcomes in demanding markets (Germeroth, 2024). For adolescents, it guides reorientation, reducing missteps by ensuring relevance (Güroğlu, 2014). Indigenous methods, including proverbs, encourage critical thinking for effective navigation (Asimeng-Boahene, 2018) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.2).

The influence of teachers highlights the need for training in supportive communities grounded in African philosophy, creating safe spaces for questions (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.3). This finding aligns with calls for responsiveness to unguided learners, countering the use of rote delivery without depth (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025). In interpretivist terms, it prioritises emotions in educational roles (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Ubuntu's community promotes inclusivity, enhancing construction for purposeful paths (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 4.3, category 4.3.3).

6.6.4 Theme 4: reflective synthesis

Learners' interactions and responses to Ubuntu-informed groupwork in the workshop sessions highlighted the efficacy of talking circles and peer collaboration in promoting emotional growth, shared learning, and curriculum insights. These dynamics embodied Ubuntu's principles of interconnectedness and mutual support, countering individualistic Western models and addressing adolescents' social reorientation needs (Güroğlu, 2020; Nsamenang, 2002). From an interpretivist perspective, the rich qualitative data captured nuanced shifts from insecurity to empowerment, validating indigenous methodologies in educational research. As a researcher-participant observer, I was struck by the authentic vulnerability and collective wisdom emerging in these spaces, which deepened my understanding of IAKS as lived practice rather than abstract theory. This synthesis underscores the potential of such group processes for enhancing peer learning and self-efficacy in career development. Recommendations for integration into routine LO practice could significantly enrich learner engagement, particularly in resource-constrained public schools, advancing the study's objective of culturally responsive career education.

6.7 WHAT ARE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER EDUCATION?

Interviews reveal that LO teachers' preparedness for career education is adversely affected by insufficient specialised training and opportunistic assignments, reflecting wider difficulties in delivering psychosocial support (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025). The sub-theme aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm, which foregrounds teachers' subjective experiences within the context of resource limitations and Eurocentric biases (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). These challenges intersect with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where adolescents, in the absence of skilled guidance, experience identity confusion (Hamacheck, 1990). Ubuntu's relational approach offers a means to address these concerns by fostering community-based training and challenging colonial legacies that marginalise African epistemologies (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). The findings indicate that unaddressed gaps impede learners' ability to align their educational pathways with their interests, thereby necessitating interventions at district and tertiary levels to strengthen counselling provision (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025; sub-theme 5.1).

6.7.1 Teacher readiness and professional development

LO-specific experience shortages impede effective delivery, as teachers often lack content familiarity with university syllabi, thereby compromising their ability to provide relevant career path guidance (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.1, category 5.1.1). Such findings indicate the necessity for supplementary district and tertiary training to facilitate psychosocial support (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025). Within African contexts, this overlooks the complexity of hybrid identities, underscoring the importance of multidisciplinary inclusivity to foster resilience (Nsamenang, 2002). Indigenous paradigms, such as Ubuntu, foster relational development and contribute to self-construction, ultimately facilitating purposeful life trajectories (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.1, category 5.1.1).

Assignments to LO as timetable fillers reinforce its marginal status, a consequence of budget constraints that inhibit specialised appointments and require teachers to take on unfamiliar subjects (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.1, category 5.1.2). Such findings correspond with evidence that financial cutbacks compromise quality, compelling educators to adopt unfamiliar pedagogies under significant pressure (Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2017). Systemic challenges compromise resource distribution, perpetuating Eurocentric rigidity and marginalising diversity (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). Ubuntu's communal ethos offers an alternative, advocating for the prioritisation of LO through inclusive planning and the cultivation of responsive educational environments (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.1, category 5.1.2).

6.7.2 Potential for Africanisation

Interviews indicate opportunities to integrate IAKS, particularly Ubuntu, into LO curricula to enrich career education by fostering cultural grounding and formal incorporation (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). This sub-theme coheres with the study's indigenous paradigm, reflecting a relativist ontology in which realities arise from relationships and cultural perspectives (Held, 2019). Such possibilities contribute to Erikson's fifth developmental stage by supporting identity formation through communal wisdom, especially within hybrid African settings (Hamacheck, 1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's moral framework, which conveys humanness through connection with others, challenges Eurocentric dominance and advances principles of interdependence and reconciliation (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo &

Gaotlhobogwe, 2021). Findings indicate untapped integration could transform disconnected assessments into holistic guidance, aligning with decolonisation for mutual cultural respect (Mthembu, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.2).

Learners' informal familiarity with Ubuntu, imparted by families, provides a foundation for classroom enhancement, as teachers note that prior exposure facilitates deeper engagement (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.2, category 5.2.1). This finding aligns with IK, which serves as pre-existing philosophical wisdom guiding perceptions and living (Nkosinkulu, 2021).

Ubuntu's restriction to Grade 12 assessments, without connections to career pathways, reveals significant integration gaps and constrains its effectiveness in learner preparation, despite its potential for narrative transformation (Guichard, 2009) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.2, category 5.2.2). Such findings demonstrate the necessity of incorporating IAKS into career education curricula to develop holistic pathways that complement Western epistemologies (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019).

6.7.3 Current challenges in career education

Interviews reveal structural and readiness barriers within LO, focusing on constraints and immaturity that hinder effective delivery amid Eurocentric biases (Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2017). This sub-theme aligns with the study's interpretivist paradigm, emphasising teachers' experiences in resource-scarce contexts (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). Such concerns intersect with Erikson's fifth developmental stage, where unresolved immaturity intensifies confusion in the absence of effective facilitation (Hamacheck, 1990). Ubuntu's relational framework offers potential to foster community-based resilience and address the marginalisation of African epistemologies resulting from colonial legacies (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2018). The findings reveal that persistent challenges contribute to inadequate transition preparedness, with only 19% of learners feeling ready to move from high school to university, thereby calling for integrated interventions that address both financial and mental health needs (Professional Provident Society, 2025) (sub-theme 5.3).

Resource shortages hinder effective practical guidance, as budget constraints prevent the appointment of specialists and diminish quality across institutions (Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2017) (sub-theme 5.3, category 5.3.1). Such findings are consistent

with systemic barriers faced by school principals, who are often compelled to employ unqualified teachers, thereby diminishing the perceived value of LO (Van Der Westhuizen et al., 2017). In African contexts, these shortages disrupt multidisciplinary inclusivity and necessitate locally driven strategies to address deficiencies by fostering resilience (Nsamenang, 2002). Indigenous paradigms, such as Ubuntu, facilitate communal resource sharing and promote equitable access (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.3, category 5.3.1).

Learners' emotional unreadiness, stemming from deficiencies in self-awareness, hinders effective decision-making and is further aggravated by distractions such as technology, which diminish opportunities for reflection (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.3, category 5.3.2). This finding accords with Erikson's framework, which demonstrates clear links to identity confusion and the persistence of immaturity (Hamacheck, 1990). Within SSA contexts, the study draws attention to the importance of self-knowledge and the cultivation of resilience through cultural synthesis (Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's principle of interdependence offers a counterbalance by encouraging maturity through relational connections (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.3, category 5.3.2).

6.7.4 Theme 5: reflective synthesis

Teachers' perspectives on career education expose critical gaps in professional development, curriculum relevance, and systemic support, while simultaneously revealing openness to IAKS integration as a means of Africanisation. Their accounts, analysed interpretively, illuminate the tensions between CAPS mandates and classroom realities, particularly LO teachers' out-of-field assignments and limited training. This resonates with literature on educational inequities (Maree & Mahlalela, 2025; Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017) and reinforces the need for Ubuntu-grounded pedagogies. Reflexively, engaging with teachers' narratives highlighted shared frustrations and hopes, mirroring the learners' voices and strengthening the embedded case study design. The synthesis points to IAKS as a catalyst for teacher empowerment and curricular transformation, bridging theory and practice. Addressing these perspectives through targeted PD and policy changes is essential for realising the study's aims of inclusive, decolonised career education that prepares all learners equitably.

6.8 WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS BETWEEN A PUBLIC AND A PRIVATE SCHOOL?

In South Africa, where youth unemployment rates exceed 58.5% among individuals aged 15–24, addressing employment challenges requires recognition of both psychological and systemic obstacles that impede young people's access to the job market (Maluleke, 2025). This sub-theme examines the interplay between fear of unemployment, insufficient career preparation, and the emergence of optimism fostered by adaptive responses to technological developments associated with the 5IR. The findings indicate both shared concerns and distinct contextual variations in learners' perceptions of these issues, influenced by socio-economic disparities between public and private school environments (Pillay, 2021). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1).

6.8.1 Awareness of employment challenges

Similarities across the schools point to a generational anxiety rooted in perceptions of technological disruption, as learners express concerns about AI's effect on diminishing career opportunities and rising unemployment (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.1).

Differences are evident in the depth and scope of these concerns: Public school learners raised more nuanced and broader worries about societal issues, including crime, poverty, and systemic inequalities, drawing attention to the limitations of underfunded schools. In contrast, private school learners reported less complex anxieties, focusing on adaptive strategies and reflecting access to more resources (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.1). The fear of unemployment among South African youth, exacerbated by technological progress such as the 5IR, creates significant psychological pressure, impeding effective career planning and increasing anxiety (Sarfraz et al., 2021). This observation aligns with extensive socio-economic analyses that identify youth unemployment as a structural issue, intensified by automation and job scarcity (Cloete, 2015). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.1).

Similarities among the schools draw attention to widespread dissatisfaction with the curriculum's lack of real-world applicability, prompting calls for the inclusion of practical components, such as the workshop content, to update outdated material and meet the demand for decolonised and flexible educational approaches (Algra, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.2). Differences in frustration levels are apparent: public school learners voiced stronger dissatisfaction with the superficial and obsolete aspects of the curriculum, and noted inadequate support from early schooling. Conversely, private school learners offered milder criticisms, generally targeting specific subjects rather than the system as a whole (Theme 6, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.2). The findings indicate that limited resources in South African public schools often lead to poor career preparation, resulting in a mismatch between learners' skills and labour market needs (Farao & Du Plessis, 2024). These insights further support the need for structured career education to enhance career readiness (Algra, 2020; Maree & Mahlalela, 2025). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.2).

Similarities across the schools indicate an acknowledgement of the necessity for critical thinking in navigating AI-induced changes, demonstrating the importance of adaptability to secure future employability (Algra, 2020). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.3). Divergent attitudes towards optimism emerge: public school learners displayed cautious positivity, often shaped by contingency planning amid limited resources, whereas private school learners focused on cultivating high-income skills and innovative approaches, reflecting greater access to opportunities for future-oriented planning (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.3). This finding is consistent with literature showing that socio-economic factors significantly shape perceptions of technological change, with South African youth expressing optimism about harnessing automation for new possibilities while managing related risks. Notably, education functions as a critical mechanism for building resilience and encouraging adaptive behaviours (Roberts et al., 2022). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.1, category 6.1.3). The findings substantiate the thesis's argument that integrating IAKS can reduce inequities, advancing culturally relevant career education that enhances adaptive capacity across diverse educational contexts.

6.8.2 Engagement with IAKS

Learner reflections from various schools demonstrate that IAKS enhances educational relevance and identity, facilitating career construction through African proverbs and Ubuntu by prioritising collective rather than individual achievement in challenging markets (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019a). The sub-theme corresponds with the study's indigenous paradigm, drawing on a relational ontology where knowledge informs belonging and empowerment (Held, 2019b). Such engagement nurtures Erikson's fifth developmental stage by enabling learners to navigate cultural wisdom, especially within hybrid African identities shaped by both local and global influences (Hamacheck, 1990; Nsamenang, 2002). Ubuntu's values inform planning rooted in interdependence and harmony, challenging Eurocentric curricula that often exclude pride and communal support (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019). The findings reveal that emphasis varies according to socio-economic context, indicating the need for IAKS to achieve holistic outcomes across diverse settings (Banda & Banda, 2017) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2).

Commonalities reveal that learners from both public and private schools valued proverbs for providing novel perspectives on career knowledge and establishing cultural connections, thus cultivating a shared identity through IAKS (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.1). Public school learners referred to these connections with a measured sense of pride, which suggests a more reserved approach to identity formation. Conversely, private school learners assigned greater significance to heritage, pride, and community interdependence (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.1). The findings confirm that learner reflections serve as evidence of IAKS strengthening cultural identity and empowerment, contesting the marginalisation of indigenous perspectives within formal education and advancing inclusivity (Hadebe-Ndlovu, 2022). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.1). These findings suggest that the process actively addresses historical exclusion by integrating indigenous knowledge into career education.

Both public and private school learners exhibited comparable approaches in employing African proverbs to interrogate concepts such as patience, adaptability, and confidence, utilising these proverbs as frameworks for career reflection and illustrating

the continued relevance of IAKS across varied contexts (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.2).

Distinct patterns emerged, with public school learners concentrating on habit formation as a means of survival, whereas private school learners placed greater value on innovation and sustained personal development, mirroring their more secure socio-economic environments (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.2). The findings suggest that learners' engagement with African proverbs affirms their effectiveness in bridging traditional wisdom and contemporary career concepts, thereby promoting broader educational outcomes through ethical and adaptive learning (Kemi & Chijioke, 2021) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.2). Furthermore, the results indicate that this interplay contributes to decolonial instructional transformation.

Learners from both schools valued Ubuntu for its focus on interconnectedness in career choices, with a preference for social welfare over individualism (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.3). Public school learners referenced the role of family and community, while private school learners appreciated Ubuntu's relevance in collaborative career decision-making, prioritising collective well-being above personal goals (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.3). Ubuntu's communal principles in South Africa shape collective approaches to career planning, positioning interdependence and social harmony as essential to personal achievement. Social work research demonstrates its importance in cultivating interpersonal values and group support (Mugumbate et al., 2024). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.3). The findings indicate that Ubuntu's community-oriented ideals influence career planning in ways that promote social cohesion, a perspective further reinforced by social work research highlighting its contribution to nurturing supportive learning environments (Mugumbate et al., 2024). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.3).

6.8.3 Self-efficacy and confidence in career planning

This sub-theme is congruent with the study's interpretivist paradigm, foregrounding the significance of subjective agency shaped by socio-cognitive factors (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020a). The analysis considers the dynamic relationship between learners' self-perceptions and their confidence in navigating career trajectories, referencing socio-cognitive frameworks that demonstrate the centrality of self-efficacy in decision-making processes (Bandura, 2009). Within the South African context,

where socio-economic disparities frequently intensify psychological barriers, self-efficacy proves to be a pivotal factor in career adaptability, shaping adolescents' responses to labour market uncertainties (Maree, 2017). Learners' reflections across various schools revealed that self-doubt is often intensified by contextual factors, yet counterbalanced by initiative and perseverance in accessing developmental resources, with efficacy facilitating more empowered decision-making amid adversity (Peila-Shuster et al., 2019). The findings reveal complex patterns among learners from both public and private schools, identifying shared vulnerabilities as well as distinctive coping mechanisms (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3).

Learners in both private and public educational settings reported comparable experiences of self-doubt, frequently prompted by external influences such as peer criticism and identity conflicts characteristic of adolescence, in line with Erikson's conceptualisation of identity confusion as a significant developmental challenge (Maree, 2021). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.1). Such collective insecurity points to deeper structural issues within South African schooling, where insufficient career guidance perpetuates feelings of inadequacy, particularly against the backdrop of pronounced youth unemployment (Maluleke, 2025). Despite the absence of notable differences in the prevalence of self-doubt, learners at private schools exhibited marginally greater baseline confidence, which may be attributed to better access to supportive resources, including extracurricular activities that foster self-esteem (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). These findings indicate the necessity for targeted interventions to strengthen self-efficacy, as diminished confidence can impede proactive career development and reinforce socio-economic vulnerabilities (Gross, 2020) (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.1).

Both school types showed similarities in learners' recognition of research and problem-solving as essential for taking initiative, reinforcing the value of early planning as a self-motivated behaviour (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.2). This finding is consistent with research on proactive personality traits, which are positively associated with effective career decision-making (Tanau & Salim, 2020). However, differences appeared in how these initiatives were carried out: public school learners' efforts tended to be more reactive and were often limited by indecision and fewer opportunities, reflecting socio-cognitive challenges in under-resourced settings (Albien & Naidoo, 2018). In contrast, private school learners exhibited greater

independence and consistent self-directed behaviours, supported by stable circumstances that foster autonomous learning (Germeroth, 2024). These disparities draw attention to the influence of contextual resources on self-efficacy, suggesting that integrating indigenous frameworks, such as Ubuntu-inspired collaborative planning, could strengthen initiative in public schools (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.2).

Shared doubt, shaped by opinions and identity issues, persists across schools, especially in disadvantaged settings where barriers impede progress (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.1). These findings are consistent with socio-cognitive links to traits and esteem, which sustain insecurity in the absence of interventions (Peila-Shuster et al., 2021). The findings demonstrate nuanced patterns among public and private school learners, revealing both common vulnerabilities and differing coping mechanisms. In sub-Saharan contexts, this doubt disrupts integration, necessitating multidisciplinary inclusivity to build resilience (Nsamenang, 2002). Indigenous paradigms, such as Ubuntu, address this challenge by encouraging interdependence, which supports the development of stable self-concepts (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, as cited in Gumbo & Gaotlhobogwe, 2021). (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.1).

No significant differences were identified between public and private school learners regarding their resilience strategies. Both groups relied on internal processes such as self-affirmation, cognitive rethinking, and disregarding criticism from others to maintain perseverance (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.3). This outcome is consistent with communal resilience frameworks in African contexts, where cultural resources – including familial and community support – help mitigate uncertainties and maintain a stable sense of identity (Nsamenang, 2002). The results draw on extensive research into youth development, indicating that resilience improves with positive self-perceptions, which in turn reduce socio-economic pressures and are linked to career adaptability (Savickas, 2021). From an Indigenous perspective, these adaptive behaviours may be further reinforced in response to identity-related uncertainties, especially in diverse South African settings shaped by hybrid cultural influences (Nsamenang, 2002). The findings demonstrate the potential of culturally relevant education to build enduring confidence, supporting fair access to job opportunities (Chapter 5, sub-theme 6.3, category 6.3.3).

Overall, sub-theme 6.3 reveals differences in efficacy and confidence, calling for the integration of IAKS to promote resilience across varied school environments (sub-theme 6.3).

6.8.4 Theme 6: reflective synthesis

The similarities and differences in learners' reflections between public and private schools illuminate persistent socio-economic disparities while affirming the universal appeal of IAKS across contexts. Common fears of unemployment, systemic gaps, and cultural resonance with proverbs/Ubuntu underscore shared adolescent struggles, whereas nuanced differences in resource access, optimism, and initiative reflect structural inequalities. Through the indigenous and interpretivist paradigms, these patterns reveal how hybrid identities and contextual factors shape career perceptions. As a researcher, comparing the two settings deepened my appreciation for context-sensitive approaches to equity in education. This synthesis advances the study's objective of promoting fair career education by demonstrating IAKS's potential to mitigate disparities, fostering resilience and pride irrespective of school type. It calls for scaled implementation and further research to ensure culturally relevant interventions benefit all South African youth, contributing to national goals of social cohesion and economic participation.

6.9 LIMITATIONS & DELIMITATIONS

This section elucidates both dimensions within the context of this qualitative embedded case study, which examines the integration of IAKS – specifically Ubuntu and African proverbs – into career education in South African schools. The discussion is anchored in the study's methodological design, participant selection, and socio-historical context, alongside ethical and paradigmatic considerations informed by Interpretivist and Indigenous research frameworks.

6.9.1 Limitations

This section acknowledges the limitations of the study. First, this qualitative case study examined Grade 9 learners and LO teachers in both public and private schools located in Gauteng. A key limitation was the study's restricted geographical and demographic scope. Participants were drawn exclusively from two urban educational institutions –

a public high school and a private school in Pretoria – which constrains the applicability of the findings to other contexts, such as rural areas or different provinces. In these alternative settings, variations in socio-economic status, access to resources, and cultural dynamics may produce markedly different responses to IAKS and the concept of career adaptability (Nsamenang, 2002).

Second, the scheduling of workshops was constrained by institutional timetables and the DBE's regulations, which specify that research may only take place after school and during certain academic terms. Learners were required to leave at set times to secure transport, and these time limitations affected the depth of their reflections. In some sessions, data collection had to be accelerated due to interruptions from extracurricular activities and disciplinary detentions, potentially limiting a thorough exploration of key themes (sub-themes 1.2 and 1.3). These constraints reflect broader methodological challenges commonly encountered in South African educational research, where limited resources often restrict sustained engagement (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017).

Third, ethical considerations also imposed limitations, particularly in ensuring voluntary participation and accurately representing learner voices within the complex power dynamics among researchers, teachers, and learners. The use of purposive and convenience sampling, while suitable for an exploratory study, may have introduced selection bias, as participants were drawn from those available and able to attend after-school sessions. This approach may have excluded learners most affected by anxieties related to unemployment (Chilisa & Phatshwane, 2022). Although the interpretivist and indigenous paradigms enhanced the study's cultural relevance by incorporating Ubuntu and African proverbs, they required careful attention to avoid researcher assumptions. Reflective practices were used to address this issue, though only to a limited extent.

Fourth, teacher interviews (Theme 5), while informative, revealed constrained perspectives regarding the feasibility of Africanisation within the curriculum. The availability of both participants was negatively influenced by their substantial teaching workloads. In addition, teachers may have been hesitant to openly criticise the national curriculum or school policies, which limited the depth of critical commentary on systemic barriers.

Collectively, these limitations highlight the need for more extensive, longitudinal research to substantiate the efficacy of the Africanised adaptability construct across diverse South African educational contexts.

6.9.2 Delimitations

Delimitations represent the self-imposed parameters delineating the boundaries of the study, allowing for a concentrated investigation of the phenomenon in question. These parameters were informed by the researcher's background as a former teacher and recruitment consultant, the exploratory nature of the inquiry, and the practicalities of conducting research within South African educational contexts.

Firstly, the study was geographically restricted to urban high schools in Gauteng Province, specifically one public and one private institution in Pretoria. This focus enabled an in-depth examination of career education amid heightened youth unemployment and the enduring legacies of apartheid within the education system, while intentionally excluding rural schools or other provinces where cultural factors, resource disparities, and socioeconomic variation could yield alternative perspectives on IAKS integration.

Secondly, the participant sample comprised 30 Grade 9 learners (15 from each school) and their LO teachers. Concentrating on adolescents within Erikson's fifth developmental stage drew attention to identity formation and career development, while other grade levels, non-LO teachers, parents, and additional stakeholders were not included. Purposive and convenience sampling prioritised accessible participants for workshop-based data collection, though it did not encompass a broader demographic, such as learners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds outside the selected schools.

Lastly, the research design utilised semi-structured interviews with LO teachers to explore career education within the CAPS curriculum. This approach situated the study within interpretivist and indigenous paradigms, prioritising subjective reflections and a relational ontology, while intentionally omitting quantitative methods, longitudinal tracking, and comparative analyses with non-African knowledge systems. The theoretical lens was limited to the CCT, focusing on career adaptability through

Ubuntu and African proverbs, without incorporating additional Indigenous elements or advocating for comprehensive curriculum reform.

These carefully selected delimitations were intended to maintain cultural relevance and feasibility, making a substantial contribution to the decolonisation of career education in South Africa and indicating areas for future research.

6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.10.1 Recommendation for Education Policy

South Africa's education policy framework, including the National CAPS, could be developed further to position IAKS as a central aspect of career education, thereby promoting a balanced Afrocentric-Eurocentric perspective that prepares learners for an evolving labour market. Policymakers could revise CAPS to require the integration of IAKS within the LO curriculum, particularly in the 'World of Work' section for Grades 7–9. Such revisions might involve embedding Ubuntu principles and African proverbs as analytical tools to facilitate understanding of the career adaptability construct (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). In doing so, the gap between Eurocentric frameworks and local contexts would be addressed. These reforms would foster multiculturalism and inclusion, as set out in the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy (Department of Science and Technology, 2004), which advocates for the research and preservation of indigenous epistemologies. Khoza (2025) contends that the school syllabus in South Africa should move beyond functioning as a mere checklist; it needs to serve as a beacon of direction. It must be:

- Contextual, rooted in African realities, and globally relevant.
- Transformative, aiming to foster critical thinking and civic participation.
- Comprehensive, encompassing a range of perspectives, narratives, and possibilities.

Secondly, the DBE could continue to develop targeted guidelines for teacher professional development, incorporating mandatory training in Africanised pedagogies. Such guidelines seek to address the documented issues of insufficient teacher preparedness and the allocation of untrained teachers, thereby ensuring that educators are suitably equipped to deliver culturally relevant career education.

Policies may draw upon the Indigenous Knowledge Act of South Africa (South Africa, 2019), which safeguards and advances IKS, by supporting workshops that merge traditional knowledge with contemporary career concepts.

Thirdly, to tackle youth unemployment, policies could strengthen connections between education and employment through IAKS-integrated programmes. In alignment with the National Development Plan 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012), which aspires to achieve equitable education by 2030, the DBE could promote career education initiatives that incorporate communal values from Ubuntu and African proverbs, thereby reducing NEET rates through community-oriented strategies.

These policy proposals have the potential to decolonise the career education curriculum while also advancing the achievement of sustainable development goals. Such measures would help ensure that education is responsive to South Africa's socio-historical context and contemporary economic realities.

6.10.2 Recommendations for practice

In educational practice, the integration of IAKS provides pragmatic strategies for LO teachers and school administrators to enhance the relevance and efficacy of career education. Firstly, teachers could use talking circles as a regular pedagogical tool in LO career education classrooms, encouraging reflective discussions on career adaptability supported by African proverbs. This approach, as demonstrated in the study's workshops, nurtures group dynamics, peer learning, and emotional support, aligning with Ubuntu's focus on interconnection and community to address challenges in self-directed learning.

Secondly, schools could introduce structured workshops that build career construction using IAKS, such as pairing proverbs with the four elements of adaptability to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving. These workshops would address learners' understanding of career construction by incorporating practical, real-world applications, particularly in under-resourced public schools where systemic barriers contribute to identity uncertainty. Teachers could work with community elders to co-design these sessions, ensuring cultural authenticity and strengthening self-efficacy in the face of technological change.

Thirdly, to support adolescents, teachers and/or career development practitioners could prioritise holistic career guidance that connects career education to broader life skills, including digital literacy and entrepreneurship. In both private and public schools, this might involve partnerships with private sector initiatives, integrating IAKS to address unemployment risks through culturally relevant upskilling methods. Such practices would empower young people by building resilience and fostering communal values in their career planning.

These practical recommendations support inclusive, decolonised teaching that utilises IAKS to prepare learners for meaningful participation in the workforce.

6.10.3 Recommendations for stakeholders

Based on the findings, the following practice-focused recommendations are proposed:

- For Life orientation teachers: Incorporate at least one African proverb per career lesson and facilitate weekly talking-circle discussions.
- For adolescents: Develop personal “career proverb journals” to reflect on how cultural wisdom applies to their future aspirations.
- For career practitioners: Adopt a “communal life-design” approach that integrates family and community narratives into individual career counselling.
- For parents and communities: Establish community career mentorship circles involving elders and successful local professionals.
- South Africa lacks a cohesive national policy that integrates the departments of Basic Education, Higher Education and Training, Employment and Labour, and Social Development.
- To better align academic standards with global best practices, South Africa ought to establish a comprehensive intergovernmental national career advice policy.
- Quality assurance procedures, encompassing practitioner standards and systematic monitoring, require significant enhancement.

6.10.4 Suggestions for further research

While this study provides foundational insights into Africanising career education, several gaps warrant further investigation to broaden its impact. Firstly, longitudinal

research is recommended to track the long-term effects of IAKS integration on learners' career development and employment outcomes. Moving beyond short-term workshops, such studies could adopt mixed methods approaches to evaluate sustained improvements in adaptability and identity formation, particularly in the context of rising youth unemployment.

Secondly, expanding the geographical and demographic scope is crucial. Future research should include rural schools and various provinces to examine how socio-economic and cultural differences affect the effectiveness of IAKS, thereby addressing the urban focus of this study. Comparative studies between public, private, and township institutions could also reveal disparities in resource availability and teacher preparedness.

Thirdly, multidisciplinary approaches that combine IKS with emerging technologies, such as AI in the 5IR, deserve investigation. Research could assess how digital platforms support the delivery of IAKS in career education, in alignment with policies for inclusive skills development. Furthermore, examining the perspectives of stakeholders, including parents, employers, and policymakers, would deepen understanding of systemic challenges to curriculum decolonisation.

Fourthly, future research could usefully extend the present study by examining several interconnected yet under-explored dimensions of curriculum transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. A particularly timely and revealing line of inquiry would be the persistent prevalence of Western-centric curricula and pedagogical frameworks more than three decades after the advent of democracy in 1994.

These proposals seek to advance equitable educational practices, contributing to South Africa's goals for sustainable youth empowerment.

6.11 FINAL CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of integrating IAKS, particularly Ubuntu and African proverbs, into South Africa's career education framework to address the limitations of a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum. Conducted in Gauteng with Grade 9 learners from both public and private high schools, the research demonstrates that IAKS fosters culturally relevant career adaptability, thereby enhancing learners' preparedness for a dynamic job market

characterised by high youth unemployment and global changes such as the 5IR. This qualitative embedded case study, utilising talking circles and teacher interviews, draws attention to a significant disconnect within the current National CAPS, which fails to account for cross-cultural diversity and local realities, thereby perpetuating post-apartheid educational biases.

Key findings indicate that IAKS effectively bridges gaps in career preparation by fostering self-directed learning and supporting adolescent identity formation, consistent with Erikson's fifth stage of development. Learners from both school types valued Ubuntu's focus on interdependence as well as the use of African proverbs to cultivate critical thinking. Nevertheless, public school learners articulated more pronounced socio-economic concerns, reflecting disparities in resources. Teacher perspectives pointed to insufficient training and systemic obstacles, demonstrating the need for ongoing professional development in Africanised pedagogies. Collectively, these insights advocate a balanced Afrocentric-Eurocentric approach, enabling learners facing unemployment to navigate employment challenges with greater efficacy.

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”

Woodrow Wilson

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM 1: ETHICS APPROVAL



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/10/11

Ref: **2023/10/11/59371064/14/AM**

Name: Mrs M Algra

Student No.:59371064

Dear Mrs M Algra

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2023/10/11 to 2028/10/11

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs M Algra
E-mail address: 59371064@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0825785304

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr. H. Olivier
E-mail address: olivih@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 4296753

Title of research:

**Integrating indigenous African knowledge systems to Africanise career education
in South African schools**

Qualification: PhD Psychology of Education

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 2023/10/11 to 2028/10/11.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/10/11 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2028/10/11**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2023/10/11/59371064/14/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

ADDENDUM 2: GDE APPROVAL



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	26 January 2024
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2024– 30 September 2024 2024/551
Name of Researcher:	Algra M
Address of Researcher:	7 Took's Corner Pierre van Ryneveld/ Centurion
Telephone Number:	082 578 5304
Email address:	59371064@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Research Topic:	Integrating indigenous African knowledge systems to Africanise career education in South African schools
Name of University:	UNISA
Type of qualification	PhD
Number and type of schools:	1 Secondary schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Shane 26/01/24

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

ADDENDUM 3: LETTERS OF CONSENT/ASSENT: LEARNERS, TEACHERS

APPENDIX I – INFORMATION LETTER AND ASSENT – LEARNER



EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION LETTER AND ASSENT – LEARNER PARTICIPANT FOR WORKSHOP AND FOCUS GROUP

Integrating indigenous African knowledge systems to Africanise career education in South African schools

Dear _____

Date _____

I am doing research on africanising career education in South African schools as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal have given me permission to do this study at your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this research so that I can find possible ways that your teachers can use to teach you to prepare for jobs after school. This could help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to get your assent (approval) and explain what I would like you to do. You may not always know all of the words in this letter. Another adult or I can explain any of these words you do not understand or if you are confused. You are welcome to take this letter home to read and talk about it with your parents before you decide if you want to join the study.

I would like to invite you to a 5-session/class course that will take place after school (one per week). There will be a light lunch provided. All of these classes will last for 40 minutes. The course will include conversations in groups on African proverbs and how to use them to get ready for jobs after Grade 12. After that, I will ask you to participate in one focus group after school (like a little meeting where we talk about the course). The focus group discussion won't take more than 40 minutes.

I will write a report on the study, but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Taking part is a choice, and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop anytime. You may tell me if you do not want to answer my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I finish my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my research. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.



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The benefits of this study might be for you to find out where to begin to build a career path.

There are no risks involved in the study.

You will not be paid or receive any gifts for your sharing in the study.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or have your parent or another adult call me at 0825785304. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact dr. Hermien Olivier at 0827275622 or olivih@unisa.ac.za.

Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

MARLENE ALGRA

WRITTEN ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORKSHOP AND FOCUS GROUP.

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about the study, and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

I grant assent that Marlene Algra may use the information I share during the focus group for research purposes. I undertake not to reveal any information shared in the group discussions to any person outside the group to maintain confidentiality.

Learner's name (print): Learner's signature: Date:

Witness's name (print) Witness's signature Date:

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

Researcher's name (print) Researcher's signature: Date:



**APPENDIX J – INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT -
TEACHER**



Date

The Life Orientation Teacher

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Marlene Algra and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr Hermien Olivier, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: **Integrating indigenous African knowledge systems to Africanise career education in South African schools.**

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that can be applied to Africanise career education using indigenous African knowledge systems in South African schools.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because of your knowledge and involvement in the career education curriculum for Grade 9 learners.

I obtained your contact details from the School Principal. (The Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013, necessitates the disclosure of how access was gained to the personal information of prospective participants). I have invited a second Life Orientation teacher from your school to participate in separate individual interviews regarding career education in South African schools. Further, 20 learners from your school will be invited to participate in a workshop related to career preparation. Two Life Orientation teachers from a second school will also be invited to an interview with the same format.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves semi-structured interviews. The questions might for example include:

- What is your view of the career education syllabus?
- Have learners discussed or offered opinions regarding the current career education syllabus?
- What content would you like to see in a future career education syllabus?
- What are your thoughts on the Africanisation of the syllabus, i.e., integrating AIKS into the syllabus?

The interview will be for approximately 40 minutes and could either take place after school in your classroom, or an online Microsoft Teams (for which you will be reimbursed for data, computer and electricity usage) meeting could be arranged after hours, whichever will be the most convenient.



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CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, but you will not be able to withdraw from the research project after the interview has been conducted. Your information will remain confidential at all times.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Your contribution to the study could potentially lead to the Africanisation of the career education curriculum and potentially assist learners in making better career choices.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There is no foreseen potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to yourself.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research (this measure refers to confidentiality) OR Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give (this measure refers to anonymity). Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (this measure refers to confidentiality).

Records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at the researchers' house (7 Tooks Corner, Pierre van Ryneveld, Centurion) for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the computer's hard drive through the use of a relevant software program).

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No payment or reward will be offered, financial or otherwise. Any costs incurred by the participant should be explained and justified in adherence to the principle of fair procedures (justice).



HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Marlene Algra on 0825785304 or email marlene.algra@gmail.com. Hard copies (interview notes) will be stored safely in a file in a locked office at the researcher's private residence for the prescribed minimum period of 5 years for possible future research or for academic purposes. Thereafter, it will be shredded. All information is treated as extremely confidential.

All electronic information is stored securely on a password-protected computer in a lock-up office at the researcher's private home for the prescribed number of years, after which it will be deleted.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Marlene Algra on the contact details above.

Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, you may contact dr Hermien Olivier, at olivih@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.



Marlene Algra



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information letter.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) _____

Researcher's signature

Date



ADDENDUM 4: PERMISSION – SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

APPENDIX F: PERMISSION SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



EXAMPLE OF LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Request for permission to conduct research at Voortrekkerhoogte High School/Pierre van Ryneveld Private School

Integrating indigenous African knowledge systems to Africanise career education in South African schools

April 2024

I, Marlene Algra am doing research under the supervision of Dr Hermien Oliver, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology of Education towards a PhD at the University of South Africa. We want to invite learners at your school to participate in a study entitled: Integrating Indigenous African Knowledge Systems to Africanise career education in South Africa.

The aim of the study is an attempt to africanise career education in South African schools and for learners to increase their employability and empower/inspire them to investigate future career paths.

Your school has been selected because it is representative of an urban high school/private school in South Africa.

The study will entail five workshop sessions (40 minutes each) and one focus group session (40 minutes) after completing the five sessions.

The workshop will take the form of reflection, group discussions, writing, drawing and art forms of their choice for them to be able to express their views and opinions on the following concepts with regard to their career path construction. The content will be transformed into African proverbs to serve as an instructional scaffold to understand the principles of career adaptability.:

CONTENT	ADDRESSING SHORTAGES IN THE FOLLOWING FIELDS. WHAT CAN I DO TO EMPOWER MYSELF?
Career adaptability	
Career concern	Negative and apathetic towards the future
Career control	Indecision Uncertainty about future Hesitancy
Career curiosity	Limited exploration Unrealistic aspirations and expectations about the future.
Career confidence	Feelings about the future: Self-consciousness Timidity Inhibition

In the focus group taking place after the five sessions, the learners will reflect on the following questions:

What are your feelings about the content of the workshop?

How did you experience the influence of African proverbs to explain the meaning of career adaptability?



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www.unisa.ac.za

Are you concerned about your future career path? What are you concerned about? Is there anything you can do about it?

Are you currently looking at different options for work after school – how do you do it?

How confident are you that you will get a job after school/studies?

Do you feel that you have control over your future work situation? Why/why not? What does the phrase “to be employable” mean to you?”

Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share about ideas you became aware of in the workshop?

The session will take place after school comes out in the afternoon. A light lunch will be provided.

The benefits of this study are potentially that learners in your school will be aware that their employability skills after school are of utmost importance and the knowledge gained will stimulate learners to prepare themselves better for the world of work.

There is no anticipated potential risk involved in the study, but should there be a need, learners will be referred to Dr Hermien Olivier, an Education Psychologist who will assist with debriefing.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

After completing the study, the feedback procedure will entail a short session with learners at the school. A teacher feedback session at the school will also be arranged after the study has concluded.

If you have questions about this study, please ask me or my study supervisor, dr H Olivier, Department of Psychology of Education, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0825785304, and my e-mail is marlene.algra@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely

MARLENE ALGRA

Consent to conduct the study granted.

_____ (signature)



ADDENDUM 5: WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Workshop Schedule

The researcher uses African proverbs for each topic to clarify meaning of topics.

Session 1

Topic: Career adaptability	MEANING

If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt.

Researcher create an atmosphere of trust and power sharing. Explain the reason for the workshops to learners.

The researcher explains the term "career adaptability" and the four principles.

Learners discuss and reflect on "career adaptability" by referring to the meaning of the African proverb as a learning aid.

The researcher facilitates the discussion by asking questions preceded by "I wonder ...":

... what your plans are for employment after you complete Grade 12?

.... if you have long-term career plan?

... where you see yourself in 5 years?

... what you will do if your plans do not work out?

... how you currently prepare for the world of work?

... what your understanding is of the term "to be employable?"

Reflect on your own/write/doode

Are you concerned about your future career path? What are you concerned about?

Learner are randomly divided into small groups for further reflection. Learners reflect by way of creative writing or drawing in journal.

Researcher: participant as observer – immerses herself to gain insider perspective.

Session 2

Topic: Career Concern	INSTILL HABIT OF LIFELONG CONCERN

where you will sit when you are old, shows where your stood in your youth

Class and small group discussion on the meaning of the proverb to emphasise the need for concern about personal career path.

... how is the world going to look in 20 years from now with regards to jobs?

... what I should NOW to make sure I will be ok with my career?

Learner are randomly divided into small groups for further reflection. Learners reflect by way of creative writing or drawing in journal.

Researcher: participant as observer – immerses herself to gain insider perspective.

Session 3:

Topic: Career curiosity	ESTABLISH A HABIT OF LIFELONG CURIOSITY

A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long

Class and small group discussion on the meaning of the proverb to emphasise the need to anticipate and investigate future career path changes.

Researcher facilitates the discussion by asking questions preceded by "I wonder ...":

... if you become a teacher or an engineer now, what will you also be able to do with your qualification in the future?

... if certain jobs are still going to be available in the future, for example, will there still be packers in a factory one day or will a robot do all the work?

... what one can do to make sure that you will still have a job in the future?

Learner are randomly divided into small groups for further reflection. Learners reflect by way of creative writing or drawing in journal.

Researcher: participant as observer – immerses herself to gain insider perspective.

Session 4

Topic: Career control	THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFELONG SELF MANAGEMENT

He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup

Discussion on proverb meaning relating to future careers.

Learners reflect with researcher on ways they will be able to control their own actions and enforce resilience.

Researcher facilitates the discussion by asking questions preceded by "I wonder ...":

... what I could do to ensure that I always have a job?

... if finding a job is more important than planning a long-term career?

... if it is worth starting at a lower pay and working myself up or trying to start high and fail?

... what it entails to start your own business?

Learner are randomly divided into small groups for further reflection.
Learners reflect by way of creative writing or drawing in journal.

Researcher: participant as observer – immerses herself to gain insider perspective.

Session 5

Topic: Career confidence	UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE

if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.

Class discussion of proverb meaning relating to career confidence.

Researcher facilitates the discussion by asking questions preceded by "I wonder ...":

... what does confidence look like?

... how can one build self-confidence?

... why people with a lot of confidence always get the job?

... why is it important to seem confident to a possible employer?

Learner are randomly divided into small groups for further reflection.
Learners reflect by way of creative writing or drawing in journal.

Researcher: participant as observer – immerses herself to gain insider perspective.

ADDENDUM 6: LEARNER WORKSHEETS – SESSION 1

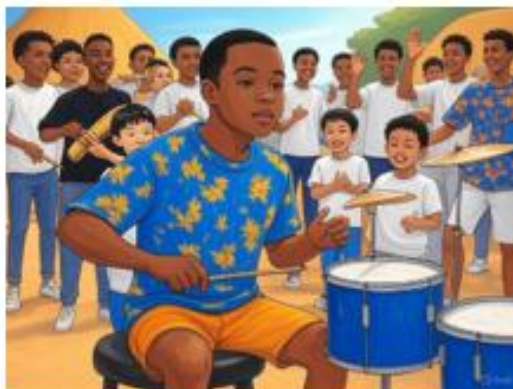
Session 1

Special name:

Topic: Career adaptability

MEANING OF ADAPTABILITY

"If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt".



Group discussion – **RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER UBUNTU!**

1. I wonder ... if you knew about the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa. Will this influence me personally?
2. I wonder ... if you knew what it meant to be employable? What can I do to empower myself?
3. I wonder ... if you knew about the 5th Industrial Revolution? How can I prepare myself?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

Hey there! So, reflection is like taking a moment to think about something more deeply. Imagine you're looking into a mirror—that's kind of what reflection does, but for your thoughts or experiences. It's when you pause and ask yourself : "**HOW DID THE PROVERB HELP ME UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY?**"

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ADDENDUM 7: LEARNER WORKSHEETS – SESSION 2

Copyright: Marlene Algra (0825785304)

Session two

Special name:

Topic: Career concern

HABITS OF LIFELONG CONCERN FOR CAREER

"where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth"



Group discussion – RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER UBUNTU!

1. Look at the proverb and picture. What does the proverb mean?
2. I wonder ... have you been thinking about your future job already? Why should you care in Grade 9?
3. I wonder ... are you positive about planning a career, or are you negative? Say why?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

WHAT DID I LEARN TODAY? TURN THE PAGE AROUND AND WRITE DOWN OR DRAW YOUR REFLECTION ...

ADDENDUM 8: LEARNER WORKSHEETS – SESSION 3

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Session three

Special name:

Topic: Career curiosity

Establish a habit of lifelong curiosity

"he who asks questions never loses his way"



Group discussion – RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER **UBUNTU!**

1. Look at the proverb and picture. What does the proverb mean?
2. I wonder ... have you been researching different jobs already? Why not?
3. I wonder ... what subjects do you need for what you want to become after school?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

WHAT DID I LEARN TODAY?TURN THE PAGE AROUND AND WRITE DOWN OR DRAW YOUR REFLECTION ...

ADDENDUM 9: LEARNER WORKSHEETS – SESSION 4

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Session 4

Special name:

Topic: Career control

The importance of lifelong self management

"he who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup"



Group discussion – **RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER UBUNTU!**

- 1. Look at the proverb and picture. What does the proverb mean?**
- 2. I wonder ... who decides what job I must do or what I must study?**
I wonder ...are you a self-starter, or are you indecisive about a future job?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

WHAT DID I LEARN TODAY?TURN THE PAGE AROUND AND WRITE DOWN OR DRAW YOUR REFLECTION ...

ADDENDUM 10: LEARNER WORKSHEETS – SESSION 5

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Session 5

Special name:

Topic: Career confidence

Understanding the importance of confidence

"if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm"



Group discussion – **RULES: YOU MAY ONLY SPEAK IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING OBJECT IN HAND. YOU MAY DIFFER IN OPINION AND ARGUE A POINT, BUT ALWAYS BE KIND – REMEMBER UBUNTU!**

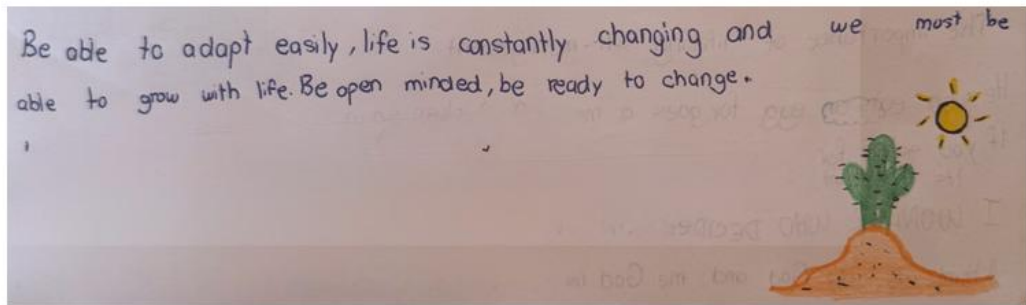
1. *Look at the proverb and picture. What does the proverb mean?*
2. *I wonder ... am I a confident person or not? Why do you say that?*
3. *I wonder ... do you find yourself to be a problem-solver or are you fearful?*

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY HERE WHILE YOU LISTEN TO YOUR GROUP:

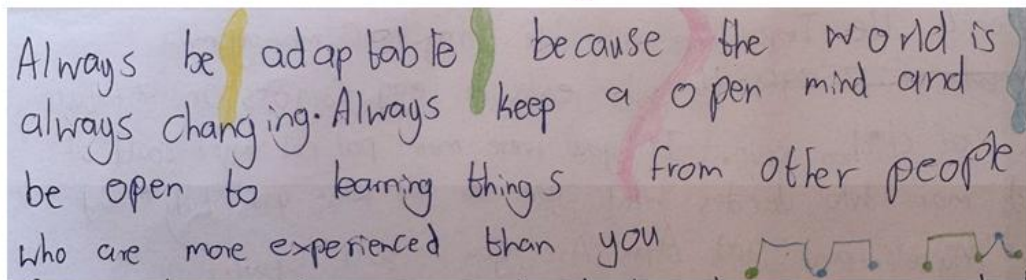
WHAT DID I LEARN TODAY?TURN THE PAGE AROUND AND WRITE DOWN OR DRAW YOUR REFLECTION ...

ADDENDUM 11: TRANSCRIPT DATA – SNIPPET

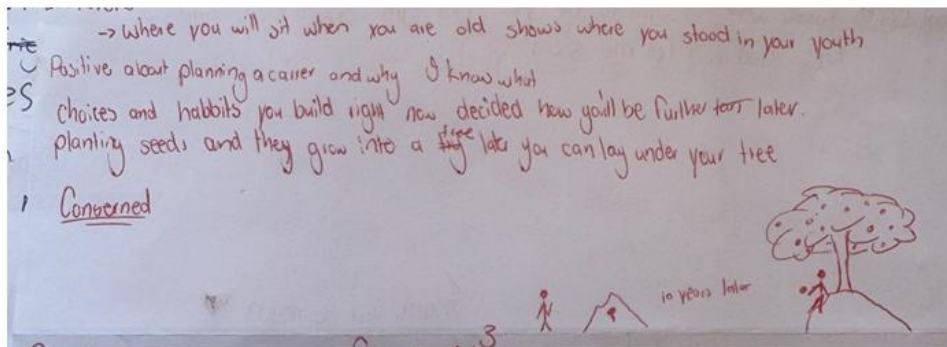
3237 offers the learners purpose and makes them excited about choosing subjects one
3238 learner at the private school came to me and said to me ma'am I wasn't sure about
3239 the subject choices and but now I feel like I'm excited to try and figure out which
3240 subject I must go and try because I know what I have in mind, but I didn't know which
3241 subjects I needed. And that is a very positive aspect of this workshop to getting
3242 learners activated



3243
3244 Doodle: Private school session 1: Ms Bobson jr. line 3243



3245
3246 Doodle: Private school session 1: Salah, line 3245



3247
3248 Doodle: Private school session 2: Applesauce, line 3247

Public school:

PUBLIC SESSION 1

1.1. GROUP 1

Facilitator: Alright, let's stop. You can't discuss while it's going on. Please, let's focus. Mr, is this about the youth unemployment crisis?

Jada: I like that. Okay, I'm gonna start. What do you think about youth unemployment in South Africa?

Facilitator: Speak to each other. This is your team. Who wants to start?

Jada: So, we've already started recording. Let's quickly read the first topic. I wonder if you knew about the youth unemployment in South Africa. Why do you think about it? Now you say what you want to say, and then you pause or pass the talking stick so that others can share their thoughts. While you do it, you can write or something in the open spaces.

Jada: About the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa, it's something that's very well known among the youth, I guess. I think we all know that it's very scarce for us to get jobs after matric. Some people don't even know what they're going to do after matric. And yeah, it's just been very tough. I don't think it's going to get better in the future, especially with the Fifth Industrial Revolution happening. It's probably going to get worse, which is why we have to find viable careers that go with the times, I'd like to think. What do you think?

Martha: I mean, I did know about it. My thoughts about places in South Africa, I don't think it's something that can get better in the future because the job opportunities are few. People are not putting in the effort towards what you have to do to get a better job. And these job chances... I don't know. A lot of people put in the effort, you know, like studying and all that, and still don't get jobs. That's what stops you from actually getting the job.

Banman: I just wanted to add on to what Martha said. She's speaking about how people do actually put in effort and still don't get a job. I think this thing of having to put in effort and get a job, sometimes when you think, "Oh, I have to get a job that will work for me in the future," you are leaving what you are actually passionate about. That makes it harder for you to choose what you're going to do. That's why some people now find themselves not liking the jobs they have because they chose a job they don't even like, but only because it's going to work for them in the future.

Georgia: What I think about the unemployment crisis is that it's been an ongoing crisis in South Africa. How this happens is that people go to job interviews, and at some point, they are not suitable. Their characteristics and skills don't match the job they're applying for. That's why most people—less people get employed because they have the skills, but the majority of the youth do not have the right skills because we are not guided from a young age. That's what I think about the unemployment principles in South Africa.

Lisa: What I think about unemployment is that it's a disadvantage for us as people. A lot of people know that unemployment leads to theft, crime, rape, you know, and people planning heists, selling cars, killing people, and all of that. A lot of young girls in South Africa are getting pregnant, especially teenagers. I think the reason why people start stealing or going for crimes and things like that is because of anger and frustration. They think, "Guys, I can't get a job."

Facilitator: Lisa, I think the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa can be fixed because a lot of people come to school, put effort into education, and really want to get employed. They're looking for a job. Interviews are happening, people are sending their CVs around, and they don't receive any jobs, even though they try hard. People wake up every morning, make long queues outside companies looking for jobs, and they don't get any responses.

Banman: I also think that unemployment, because of a lack of job opportunities and also because there's not enough jobs left for people, leads to crime.

Jada: Before we move on to the next topic, I just wanted to say that I really like the point that Georgia brought out because people don't realise that the youth unemployment crisis now also affects crime in South Africa, and it's become bad. It's only going to get worse from here, especially when the whole revolution is going to happen. But yeah, I think we should move on to the next topic, which is, I wonder if you knew what it meant to be employable. Do you think you are at the moment? Who wants to start? By the way, this is Jada speaking.

Jada: Okay, I'll start. Before I actually learned about what being employable meant, I thought that being employable meant you had to have great qualifications or a very good degree to get a job. Now I learned that, actually, being employable has to do with your qualities and your skills as a person, including your communication skills.

Do I think I am employable at the moment? No, because I think there are still some things I need to work on and develop, like communication skills, teamwork skills, all of that. Okay, I'm done. This was Jada.

Lisa: About being employable, I don't think I'm employable at the moment because I only know so much. Being great, I don't think I really have the knowledge to be employable or anything.

Georgia: I don't think I am employable since I'm still in school and I don't have a matric certificate or even the age to be employable. To be employable is to be welleducated, skilled, and able to be open-minded and speak to people, and just being creative. At the moment, I don't think I am employable because I haven't yet reached my goals. I don't yet have a matric certificate, but I believe that I will be one day.

ADDENDUM 12: SELECTED IN VIVO QUOTES EXTRACTED FROM ATLAS.TI

Project: Marlene PhD

Report created by Marlene algra on 2025/06/25

Quotation Report – Grouped by: Code Groups

All (359) quotations

Groupless

1 Quotations:

2:36 ¶ 43 in Public Session 1 all groups

2 Codes:

○ **Fifth industrial revolution: but I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth u**

2 Quotations:

2:36 ¶ 43, but I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth u... in Public Session 1 all groups / 2:41 ¶ 75, I even don't know where to start or where to end with my career or whi... in Public Session 1 all groups

○ **Youth unemployment: but I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth u (4)**

1 Quotations:

2:36 ¶ 43, but I'm really getting scared because what if I fall under the youth u... in Public Session 1 all groups

In vivo codes

358 Quotations:

1:1 ¶ 7 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

○ **I think the proverb on adaptability showed us we should be determined**

1 Quotations:

1:1 ¶ 7, I think the proverb on adaptability showed us we should be determined... in
Public school - learner feedback

1:2 ¶ 9 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

○ **this whole concept of careers and the proverbs we've been discussing i**

1 Quotations:

1:2 ¶ 9, this whole concept of careers and the proverbs we've been discussing i... in
Public school - learner feedback

1:3 ¶ 11 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

○ **I feel like all the proverbs we've gone through, all the times we've c**

1 Quotations:

1:3 ¶ 11, I feel like all the proverbs we've gone through, all the times we've c... in
Public school - learner feedback

1:4 ¶ 15 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

○ **I think the topics and all the proverbs we've learned about career ada**

1 Quotations:

1:4 ¶ 15, I think the topics and all the proverbs we've learned about career ada... in
Public school - learner feedback

1:5 ¶ 17 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

○ **I feel like the proverbs and all these career things we've been discus**

1 Quotations:

1:5 ¶ 17, I feel like the proverbs and all these career things we've been discus... in
Public school - learner feedback

1:6 ¶ 19 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

- I feel like it doesn't have a purpose being added because you can teach

1 Quotations:

1:6 ¶ 19, I feel like it doesn't have a purpose being added because you can teach... in Public school - learner feedback

1:7 ¶ 23 – 25 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

- What if it's too overwhelming for some children? Some kids aren't even

1 Quotations:

1:7 ¶ 23 – 25, What if it's too overwhelming for some children? Some kids aren't even... in Public school - learner feedback

1:8 ¶ 27 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

- Why are you here? We're here because, in class, we're not given that i

1 Quotations:

1:8 ¶ 27, Why are you here? We're here because, in class, we're not given that i... in Public school - learner feedback

1:9 ¶ 29 in Public school - learner feedback

1 Codes:

- I feel like this should be added to our curriculum because, I mean, wh

1 Quotations:

1:9 ¶ 29, I feel like this should be added to our curriculum because, I mean, wh... in Public school - learner feedback

1:10 ¶ 31 in Public school - learner feedback

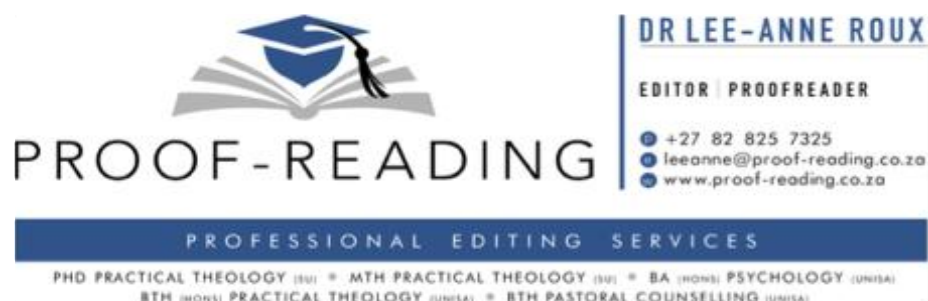
1 Codes:

- **If some people don't understand these concepts, they can come to event**

1 Quotations:

1:10 ¶ 31, If some people don't understand these concepts, they can come to event...
in Public school - learner feedback

ADDENDUM 13: EDITOR'S LETTER



29 January 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**Integrating Indigenous African Knowledge Systems (IAKS) to Africanise
career education in South African schools
by
MARLENE ALGRA**

[This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process].

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux