

**The elements of successful work placement processes: A case study of three
Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges**

by

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DHET	-	Department of Higher Education and Training
NSDS	-	National Skills Development Strategy
OECD	-	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PSET	-	Post School Education and Training
SETA	-	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WBE	-	Work Based Exposure
WIL	-	Work Integrated Learning
WPBL	-	Workplace Based Learning

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

There has been a shift in the economy of South Africa which has resulted in the growth of jobs at principally intermediate and high skills levels, with an increasing demand for technical and vocational skills. These technical and vocational skills are mainly supplied by the Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) Colleges and Universities of Technology (UoTs).

Recognising this, the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) identifies the strengthening and expansion of Technical and Vocation Training (TVET) colleges as its 'highest priority' and has located these institutions as central to the post-school education and training sector. TVET Colleges are also seen as important players in addressing the broader socio-economic issues of unemployment, income inequality and poverty; by creating opportunities especially for youth to further their education and consequently become employable (McGrath, 2004). However, even as the TVET Colleges receive the necessary support from national and provincial government, they continue to struggle to find relevance among employers and their graduates often struggle to find employment on completion of their studies.

Gewer (2010) points out that there is an important association between employment and workplace experience during studies. A tracking study found that only 25% of TVET graduates were in employment two years after completing their studies and only 50% of these were in jobs relevant to their qualification (Gewer, 2010). This could be attributed to various reasons, one of which is the lack of necessary social networks which are important for a young person without experience to access a first job.

However, workplace experience or work integrated learning (WIL) as it is currently being referred to, can serve as a proxy for the social network and for that reason should be an essential component of all TVET College offerings (ibid). It also provides learners with the necessary work exposure that equips them with employability skills, which increases their prospects of being employed in the long term. The students interviewed in the NSA tracking study (SSACI, JET and NBI, 2016) also rated their workplace experiences highly in assisting them with sourcing work.

Work integrated learning is important because the Colleges often find it difficult, mainly due to cost factors, to keep pace with workplace changes or to provide suitably equipped workshops or simulated experiences (Gamble, 2003). A college training experience without workplace exposure can only be effective if there is slow change in technology or the work processes within a particular sector, but there are few sectors where this is the case. The world of work is rapidly changing and to remain relevant, the graduates from universities and TVET Colleges have to be able to enter the work place with a certain degree of preparedness for the job that they will do (ibid).

1.2 Concept clarification

The terminology for work placement varies across the post-school sector. The Department of Higher Education and Training is in the process of developing a Policy Framework for Workplace Based Learning (WPBL). At a lecture in August 2015, Dr Van Staden from the Department of Higher Education and Training offered a tentative definition:

“Workplace-based learning is an educational approach through which a person internalises knowledge, gains insights and acquires skills and competencies through exposure to a workplace to achieve specific outcomes applicable to employment” (van Staden, 2015)

The National Business Initiative (NBI) report (2017) questions the value of this definition as it appears to be restricted to learners who are engaging in workplace learning towards obtaining a qualification. In keeping with international definitions, the NBI report (2017) suggests that the broader term of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) be used. This covers all work based learning programmes including graduates who require workplace experience or exposure regardless of the time period.

For the purposes of this study the broader definition of Work-Integrated Learning will therefore be used which includes; in-service workplace based exposure (WBE), graduate workplace experience and workplace based learning towards qualifications. The National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)) learners, who will be the focus of this study, only utilise WBE and graduate placement.

1.3 Research problem and method

Many studies indicate that learners’ ability to transition from studies to employment is closely linked to their work placement experience during their training and on exit from their respective qualifications. The intention of this study is to identify and analyse successful work placement practices through case-studies to develop an understanding of the various elements that contribute to TVET College learners successfully transitioning from TVET Colleges to workplaces.

Firstly, the research frame was informed through secondary research to gain insights from the literature sourced. The literature was analysed, exploring the elements that contribute to the successful transitioning of learners from educational institution to the workplace. This analysis also assisted with formulating key research questions in an attempt to understand and explain how individual TVET Colleges interpret their role in work placement, again utilising the elements identified as central to success. These research questions were then used to guide the interviews with the identified TVET Colleges.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section explores literature that speaks to the successful transition of learners from education to workplaces, with the view to gaining insight into possible variables for consideration in the research and to assist with formulation of the research questions.

Before considering what the literature identifies as important elements to successful work placement, it is necessary to have a brief look at the historical context as it relates to work placement. This is important for understanding the TVET College and its current context.

2.2 The historical context of TVET Colleges

The history of TVET Colleges has largely been shaped by the history of South Africa. Badroodien (McGrath, Badroodien, Kraak & Unwin, 2004), writes that vocational and industry training was initially provided for coloured men and immigrants in the early 1900's. If any vocational and technical education was offered to whites, it was seen as 'social rehabilitation' and was mainly offered to rural poor white children (McGrath, et al., 2004). Black South African's were only provided with training to encourage them to remain and subsist in the rural areas. Where black workers were permitted to enter the main economic activities it was often as cheap labour in the mines and as migrant workers. At the time, the technical colleges had relative autonomy and developed strong relationships with their local business and community leaders who were represented on their boards. The programme offerings were therefore influenced and shaped by employers, and learners were often contracted upfront by an employer. The learners also spent time between Colleges and the workplace, which resulted in transfer of knowledge between the workplace and educational institutions.

During their early history, the Colleges waxed and waned in importance as educational institutions, depending on the government in authority and their views on the importance of skills development. Eventually, in 1955, the colleges were brought under control of the central government which to a large extent limited the influence of local business and resulted in a stronger focus on educational outcomes (ibid). Under the apartheid dispensation separate colleges were also established and differently resourced depending on the race group they were intended to serve. Many of the historically black colleges were situated further from major industrial areas than their white counterparts which had an impact on the relationship they had with employers, and in turn on learners' opportunities for work placement (McGrath, 1998).

In 1994, with the introduction of a new era in South African history, skills development emerged as a key focus element for redressing historical social and economic inequalities. The historical privilege left a legacy, with certain colleges already better resourced than others, and therefore having an established foundation on which to build and expand (Fisher,

Jaff, Powell & Hall, 2003). Hence equality of offerings had to be addressed. The Colleges were then merged and this transitioning phase went on for a protracted period of time. This saw the Colleges struggle with transformational issues and compete for limited resources whilst dealing with a lack of central policy direction. The result was that many of them became inwardly focused for a while, with limited interaction with the local industry as was originally intended. They were also more directly under the mandate of education at both the national and provincial levels.

The new policy environment also established that the relationship with industry was largely to be led by the Sectoral Education and Training Organisations (SETOs) [which later became the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)], which were under the mandate of the Department of Labour. However, these had their own challenges with many employers not utilising their onerous system (McGrath, 1998).

Around 2006 the TVET Colleges introduced the National Certificate Vocation (NC(V)), that brought a shift to a more learner-centred rather than industry focused approach (Akoojee, 2010). It allowed for many learners in colleges to be private candidates who were not associated with industry, and this resulted in a greater struggle for learners to obtain access to work experience. McGrath (1998) also suggests that this impacted on a knowledge bias creeping into Colleges with a shift away from skills training.

In 2009 the Department of Higher Education and Training was established, bringing together the higher education component of the Department of Education and the training component of the Department of Labour. It also incorporated a number of institutions and policies, merging all post-school education and training institutions in one administrative space to ensure an integrated and responsive Post-School Education and Training system (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). The TVET Colleges that were previously under the joint administration of the provincial and national government's Department of Education were now a mandate of this newly established department. It was therefore expected that the SETAs, TVET Colleges and universities would play a more strategic role in their respective spaces to prepare learners for the workplace. This resulted in a stronger focus on the TVET Colleges and SETAs merging their efforts to ensure relevancy and responsiveness to industry. The intention was for SETA's to be the intermediary between TVET Colleges and their member companies (ibid).

The centralisation of the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector has brought significant benefits, but also resulted in challenges as a result of less discretion being vested in individual PSET institutions, especially TVET Colleges. Akoojee (2008) suggests that, in line with international practice, there should be less rather than more state intervention in skills development delivery. He argues for the decentralisation of TVET governance, as the outcome of many functions remaining centralized manifests in low flexibility in offerings, and therefore Colleges remain non-responsive to their local industries. Akoojee (2008) suggests that a new discourse of partnerships, linkages with industry and local stakeholders is needed. He also

observes that in 2001, when the technical colleges were declared FET colleges, the human resource capacity and networks that were critical to its success had largely exited the system, and there is a need to build this capacity again.

The TVET Colleges have been through a long and difficult journey with many changes enforced on them, and still more challenges to overcome.

2.3 The institutional context

The legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks, which impact on the governance and management of TVET Colleges in South Africa, have changed quite extensively since 1994. This was considered necessary so as to address the systemised inequalities in institutional offerings and performance entrenched by the apartheid system (McGrath, 1998). It was also necessary to close the skills gap that hindered the delivery of the government's vision and plans to reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment.

The important aspect addressed by the various frameworks is the improved relationship between post-school education and training institutions and employers. A key focus of this relationship building is to facilitate the successful placement of learners. There are many elements that have been identified as important to the successful work placement of learners and the following key elements were identified for further exploration:

- Institutional responsiveness of the entire organisation to a changing work environment
- The role of the Work Integrated Learning unit in transitioning learners
- Curriculum relevance to industry requirements
- The nature of Industry partnerships
- Work readiness of learners

These elements are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

2.3.1 Institutional responsiveness

Responsiveness is a concept that features prominently in many national and international reports and policy documents that address the transition from education to work. Wedekind (2012) defines responsiveness as the extent to which an educational institution interacts and responds to external influences and stakeholders in shaping its programme offerings. Often this will influence the way the institution structures itself.

The initial mandate of the TVET Colleges was to support the government's agenda of addressing inequality and poverty through educating marginalised communities. The shift identified in the White Paper (2013) for Colleges to be more responsive to industry, although linked to their former objective, would require a shift in the organisational strategy and processes.

Employers are challenged to respond to technology changes and to innovate so that they can remain productive, relevant and competitive. The TVET Colleges have to consider how they respond to a work environment that is changing at a rapid rate largely due to globalisation and constantly evolving technology. They need to understand how to prepare their learners for this changing technological environment and the concomitant competency requirements of employers (Kruss, Petersen, McGrath & Gastrow, 2014).

For any changes to be effected in an organisation it requires the commitment of the structures and officials in the organisation. It also requires 'innovative leadership and teamwork', as Kruss & Petersen (2016b, p.3) identify these as essential elements in an interactive and responsive organisation. Wedekind (2012) however reminds that the internal structures of TVET Colleges are largely hierarchical with a strong education focus which lends to it being inflexible to changes as required by a rapidly evolving economy. The officials in many instances have come from an educational background and therefore pursue educational excellence. Work placement will only be a focus if it is built into the qualification.

Kruss, et al.(2014, p.4) speak about the importance of what they refer to as 'network alignment'. This is an alignment in the goals of the educational institutions and employers. Kruss, et al. (2014, p.2) also refer to the need for what they term as 'interactive capabilities' which requires the various stakeholders in the skills development arena to form effective linkages and learn through this interaction. One of the ways for colleges to improve their understanding of their local economic dynamics and stakeholders is to participate in networks at different levels.

The purpose is for the TVET College to not only develop the capacity to meet routine employer needs, but for a college, through its networking, to sense changes in the local environment. The detection of these changes could present opportunities and could assist with the planning for future skills needs required by employers for competitiveness and inclusion (Kruss, et al., 2014). It would require the TVET Colleges to respond by adapting its offerings or may necessitate the acquisition of new knowledge and capabilities that allows the college to remain relevant. Kruss, et al (2014) suggests that this 'interactive capability' is necessary at all levels within the organisation including individual lecturers, academics and the leadership.

However, the question is how quickly and often colleges can respond to shifts in the economy in order to offer an appropriate qualification. Besides the fact that the curriculum is managed centrally, there is also the challenge of acquiring relevant equipment to keep up to date with shifts in industry (Gamble, 2003). Equipment and tools are expensive and this cost would need to be passed on to learners, which might exclude the very learners which the TVET Colleges are meant to attract.

2.3.2 Work Integrated Learning (WIL) units

The White Paper (2013) speaks to TVET Colleges forging stronger relationships with employers but it is not explicit on how this can and should be achieved. Many of these institutions do not have the mechanisms, expertise and structures that support external linkages with companies and industry associations.

As a result, many TVET Colleges established a structure or unit that supports and facilitates interactions between the college and workplaces (Badroodien & Kraak, 2006). These units were originally established as the Linkages and Partnership Unit (LPUs) and over time have taken on many different names but are generally referred to as the WIL (Work Integrated Learning) unit. They usually offer a support service to potential employers, students and lecturers across all programmes.

The role of the WIL component is to identify work opportunities with employers and to link students and graduates, and sometimes also lecturers, for appointment in such opportunities. These opportunities may vary from temporary vocational workplace experience to practical internships, to permanent employment for graduates.

Many of the Colleges have at least one WIL officer at each campus but they still felt that this unit was poorly resourced with often only one person managing across the operations (National Business Initiative, 2017). It has also been found that it is usually funded at too low a level to attract people with suitable skills, so these individuals often do not hold any sway with the employers or in their own organisation.

The location of the unit within the organisation is also critical as often the staff in the unit only have any contact with the learner at the end of the education process. In organisations where the WIL units have been found to be an integral structure involved in strategic discussions of the organisation, it has resulted in successful partnerships with industry and improved work placement programmes (ibid).

In many Colleges these WIL units play a key role through hosting events and working with the marketing units to encourage employer involvement and interaction. These WIL offices have the potential to play a really important role in the work placement process, but it is also important that they are not the only role-players to interact with employers. Kruss, et al (2014) suggests that the 'interactive capacity' has to be developed across the organisation and include lecturers, administrative staff and academics to ensure that the learnings obtained from the interaction is spread across the organisation and that it encourages the appropriate responsiveness.

2.3.3 Curriculum relevance

Curriculum refers to the entire scope of learning and teaching a learner experiences throughout the programme. It would therefore include the theory and practical components (Kruss & Petersen, 2016 (b)). Curriculum is often regarded as central to the responsiveness and employability discussion (Wedekind, 2012). It is through the adaptation of the curriculum

that the TVET College is able to be most responsive to labour market changes. Fisher, Jaff, Powell & Hall (2003) emphasise the relevance of curricula and range of provision in line with industry requirements for the success of a TVET College.

However, many employers do not trust the curriculum offerings of TVET Colleges. It could be that historically their role in the vocational education environment has been minimal and therefore the curriculum does not reflect their needs or interests. Furthermore, many employers have over the years established their own academies and colleges at considerable cost and may thus have a vested interest in maintaining the image of TVET Colleges as incompetent and irrelevant. However, it does not help that the curriculum offering at TVET colleges is often dated and has not kept pace with shifts in the work environment, thereby giving credence to employers' concerns.

There have also been significant shifts in the labour market with new technologies being introduced and global changes in the processes of work (Kraak, 2008). This requires a new type of worker, one who is able to respond to rapid changes and also has the skills to work in different work processes. With the rapid shifts in technology and the costs associated with purchasing this technology, Colleges have not kept pace with industry work processes and equipment.

Programmes and qualifications at TVET Colleges have developed over many years and resulted in numerous qualifications being offered. There have not been any recent audits to assess the relevance of these offerings and there are also questions and concerns regarding the quality assurance of these programmes. The intention of the White Paper (2013) was to review and rationalise the programmes to improve the offering and ensure its relevance.

In a study conducted by the then Further Education Training Institute (FETi), now renamed the Institute for Post School Studies (IPSS), employers in Engineering, Tourism-Hospitality and Wholesale and Retail were interviewed to gain an understanding of their views on the employability of graduates (Further Education and Training Institute, 2014). The respondents reported experiencing challenges with students' ability to communicate (including electronically) and what they termed attitudinal skills. Companies also expressed concerns that the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) did not offer sufficient practical skills to students.

Wedekind (2012) however cautions against Colleges responding too narrowly to the very immediate and short-term needs of industry, as it could distort the educational mission of the institution. A curriculum that is too narrowly linked to one employer or industry could also restrict the value for a learner and reduce the mobility of their qualification. He also raised a broader issue than the curriculum: whose demand the college should be responding to – learners, society, employers? Managing these different stakeholder demands puts pressure on the College as finding the space where all stakeholders' needs are met is difficult. Colleges

also have a responsibility to ensure that they remain true to the spirit of being educational institutions (Wedekind, 2012).

A current challenge is that colleges are restricted in terms of developing programmes as these are centrally developed and assessed. The colleges have limited scope to develop local courses as this would not be funded (Wedekind & Mutereko, 2016). Although the curriculum is centrally determined, TVET Colleges can respond to industry demands through customising the curriculum offerings, by building on existing content. Many colleges have been innovative within this nationally defined curriculum and it has often been based on their interaction with industry (Wedekind, 2012).

2.3.4 Partnerships

Salamon (2002) states that the problems of our society are too complex for a single institution or government to address, and any successful resolution would require multiple stakeholders to work collaboratively. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009) defines partnership as an agreement between two or more parties to work together so as to add benefit to all the stakeholders involved. This also has the added benefit of reducing duplication of efforts through a more efficient use of resources.

Singizi (2011, p.7) defines the different types of partnerships available to TVET Colleges:

- “A private- public sector partnership is where parties undertake a joint business project, of mutual benefit, constructed around a business plan with various partners contracting to provide services.
- A social partnership is structured around a social agenda with defined benefits and risks and an agreement to work together in a cross-sector manner, to constructively and synergistically solve a problem or provide a service. Such partnerships will have a business dimension in their management and evaluation.
- An education partnership is a partnership developed between an education organisation and a prospective business employer for the purposes of two-way learning about the practical and theoretical dimensions of school and the world of work in order to complement classroom based learning with the intention of learners being better equipped to enter the world of work.
- A learning partnership is where the parties within a partnership commit to a learning agenda within the partnership for their own professional development, for furthering understanding about the focus of the project, and deeper understanding of the practice of partnerships.”

Various documents (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) (Department of Education, 2008) (National Treasury, 2011) identify the need for stronger relationships between industry and TVET Colleges as it is expected that this will result in an improved transition of learners from college to work. The White Paper (2013) communicates the importance of these industry partnerships to assist with workplace experience in vocational

and occupational competence, so that a learner can complement the theory with practical skills.

However, the partnerships pursued by TVET Colleges should comprise all the elements identified by Singizi (2011). Collaboration between employers and Colleges is also important to ensure that major changes in work practice and processes are shared with TVET Colleges. Employers, as the people who are demanding these skills, are well-placed to identify global and sectoral shifts that are changing rapidly due to technology improvements and a globally competitive environment (McGrath, 2002). In the FETi study (2014), companies made a request to be included earlier in the development of a project and also engage earlier with the learner to influence their learning and prepare them for the workplace.

Another important aspect to pursue is the maintenance of a lecturer's vocational, technical skills and knowledge, and allowing them to keep up to date with practice in their particular field (DHET & SSACI, 2016). Employer partnerships are therefore important to facilitate the placement of lecturers in a work environment, so that they remain abreast of changes in the workplace. Employer partnerships also have an additional value for under-resourced TVET Colleges as they can contribute funding or provide their workplaces with modern equipment for learners to practice their skills.

Historically, the relationship between TVET Colleges and employers has always been fraught with challenges. The changes to the system in 2000, with the phasing out of apprenticeships and the introduction of full-time programmes, have contributed to a widening gap between TVET Colleges and the labour market (Gewe, 2010). Individual learners could register for a programme without being attached to an employer, and this resulted in a tenuous relationship between college and employer and ultimately, between learner and workplace.

Early in the post-democracy history of the TVET Colleges, a Linkages and Programme Unit was established that was intended to work with industry to ensure the necessary exchanges for an improved experience for learners (Badroodien & Kraak, 2006). The initial research into their effectiveness found that they were responsive but more so towards driving and implementing government policies. In instances where they responded to employer demands, it resulted in a shift away from more formal qualifications towards a short-term focus that translated into a myriad of short courses. This shifted back again to the formal qualifications with the introduction of the NC(V) (Wedekind, 2012).

An audit conducted in 2003 shows TVET Colleges reporting on 1 852 partnership projects (Rasool, 2014). The question remains whether or not the number of partnerships that have been established had an impact on the effectiveness of the TVET Colleges, or if they have been merely relationship-driven, short-term projects with no long-term benefits to the college or its students. The increase in partnerships may also be attributed to the increasing role by SETAs in promoting TVET Colleges. However, it is important to not only consider the

number of partnership agreements signed, but also the nature and strength of these partnerships and whether the partnerships have resulted in sustainable benefits (ibid).

Employers can play an important role in shaping the curriculum, but a true partnership is one where both parties benefit from the interaction (Singizi cc, 2011). Wedekind (2016) highlights that research has shown that education providers and employers need to be equal partners as this is more likely to lead to the employability of the graduate. The relationship cannot be one-sided and public TVET Colleges should be active partners, bringing their own knowledge and expertise and growing their expertise. Public sector officials bring a longer term perspective than that of industry that has short-term needs to be met. Kruss, et al. (2014, p.20) identify the need for an 'innovative systems approach' to skills planning and development which emphasises the value of interaction and learning among the stakeholders in the system, which results in a trust relationship.

Building the capacity of TVET College staff to have the necessary knowledge or expertise to engage on an equal footing with industry is necessary to enable mutually beneficial agreements to be negotiated. However, Kruss, Petersen, McGrath, & Gastrow (2014) remind that it cannot be assumed that companies always have the commitment or the capability to engage with education and training organisations. Their skills needs are often reactive and short-term in nature and not linked to their longer term strategies.

There are many examples of successful industry partnerships. In the example of the Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) TVET College, this historically black technical college was established in 1968 and was required to rebuild as an agricultural college in 1996. Through partnerships with industry it developed a Centre of Excellence for Sugar, and this resulted in programmes that were responsive to the local context and industry. Kruss & Petersen (2016(a)) emphasise the importance of innovative leadership and team work in the success of this partnership.

There are cases where employer organisations such as the NBI have 'adopted' a TVET College and transformed the offerings to be relevant to its member companies (National Business Initiative, 2017). Other ways in which colleges have encouraged industry interaction is through the board or other advisory bodies on which employers and other key role players can serve to influence offerings. Wedekind & Mutereko (2016) also highlight how the partnership built on trust in the sugar sector resulted in two qualifications that were not accredited but which became highly valued by employers.

There are also roles for intermediaries, such as SETAs and industry associations, that can serve as a bridge and clarify industry needs for scarce and critical skills to TVET Colleges. Intermediaries are defined as organisations who serve as brokers between the skills demand-side and supply-side (Kraak, 2015). They may have an additional function to bridge the unemployed or first-time entrants to the labour market. Additionally, these intermediaries have a potentially important role to unblock bottlenecks, address gaps and facilitate interaction to improve alignment and linkages.

Driving partnerships require staff members with additional skills and knowledge. These public agents need to promote the importance of key sectoral and regional dynamics in skills planning and support how Colleges respond to this (Kruss & Petersen, 2016 (a)).

2.3.5 Work Readiness preparation of learners

An often cited reason for the failure of TVET learners to access the labour market is the lack of work readiness skills or “employability skills” (Wedekind, 2016).

Wedekind (2012) concludes that there is no agreement on a single definition for employability, but a general accepted understanding is that it encompasses all the knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes that make an individual employable. Recent reports tend to refer to employable skills as the soft skills, as opposed to the more technical skills, that result in the individual being more valued in the working environment (Wedekind, 2012). These are generally those skills that assist learners to adapt more easily to the work environment and may include skills such as problem-solving, decision-making and team-work skills. Other aspects often identified by employers as critical are work ethic issues such as communication, time-keeping and general presentation of self (ibid).

Interestingly, more recently the research is also focusing on the networking skills and their importance to accessing employment (Wedekind, 2012). A NBI tracking study also emphasises the importance of social capital, however the TVET Colleges were found to not assist learners to access work or teach the necessary networking skills (Gewer, 2010). This was also cited by hotels in the study conducted by FETi (2014) who felt that students lacked job-seeking skills and this showed up in their CVs and interview skills, which is a critical first introduction to the learner.

Wedekind & Mutereko (2016) cautions though about the expectation of public TVET Colleges to train for employability. They are of the opinion that it is impractical for TVET Colleges to prepare students for all possible workplace expectations or workplace specific equipment. Work readiness is defined by Wedekind & Mutereko (2016) as a societal problem rather than simply an educational one. The workplace is changing and the current work culture values different employability skills when compared to the traditional one. Also the issue of assessing these skills is challenging as they are often interpersonal in nature and difficult to measure. (Wedekind, 2012).

There are also varying opinions on what constitutes a successful employability skills course: what is the ideal length, should it be a standalone training programme, or one that is embedded in the curriculum and classroom? Opinions differ on the ideal work readiness programme and even when it should be offered - upfront or just before the learner exits the college. A study commissioned by the DG Murray Trust revealed that even if work readiness is integrated into the course, a refresher is necessary as close as possible to placement (Further Education and Training Institute, 2014).

Wedekind (2016) suggests that structuring workshops and classrooms on a typical company set-up, applying expectations of workplace behaviour, and assessing in ways similar to workplace realities are approaches that do not require too much curriculum adaptation. He is also of the view that separate modules for employability or life skills tend to become disconnected from a workplace context and appears to have limited impact on students.

Kruss, et al. (2014) also challenges the concept that employability will lead to increased employment. They are of the opinion that it is difficult for colleges and companies to always produce the exact number and kind of qualifications and skills that are required in key sectors in order to meet employers' current and future skills needs. The key role of the Post School Education and Training institutions are only to prepare learners for participation in the workplace and economy, but it also requires other partners such as companies and intermediary organisations to take responsibility for work readiness as they also benefit from a skilled employee. Kruss, et al. (2014) argue that producing an employable learner is a collective responsibility and many companies have strong training, induction and mentoring programmes that could add value to learners' employability.

2.4 Summary

In summary, the core mandate of the TVET College as an educational institution is to provide the learner with relevant skills and ultimately a qualification. This is their primary focus, though the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) has also identified the employability of learners as central to the TVET Colleges' goals and objectives.

Currently, the Colleges have delegated the responsibility for work placement to the Work Integrated Learning unit. These units are often under-resourced and under-capacitated. There is also the view that responsiveness is the responsibility of the entire College organisation, and this would have to be championed especially by the organisation's leadership. It would also need to be integrated into the policies and processes within the organisation such as its performance management process, to ensure the successful implementation.

But work placement is dependent on the College for a number of key elements. One key element impacting responsiveness relates to the curriculum offerings. The challenge is that the Colleges work to a nationally established curriculum which is regarded as outdated, having not kept pace with rapid changes in technology and work processes. There is not much flexibility built into the system that allows for Colleges to change or adapt the curriculum to meet the local demands of industry. However, there are also voices of concern that warn against Colleges being too responsive to a particular sector or employer's needs as it would limit the mobility of a learner's qualification across employers and industry.

Another key element that the responsiveness discussions have highlighted are partnerships. The White Paper (2013) has also placed considerable emphasis on partnerships between TVET

Colleges and the industries/employers in their surrounding localities. These partnerships, although considerable in number, have not shown sustainability and not translated into significant impact in terms of learners' ability to source work placement.

Perhaps this is related to a further key element, which is employers' concerns regarding the work readiness of learners. Their regular refrain is to bemoan the attitude of learners and their lack of 'soft' skills such as communication, decision making and problem solving skills, which are required in the workplace. There is dispute though about what constitutes a good quality work readiness programme and where to fit it into the curriculum. There is also dispute regarding whose responsibility it is to get the learners' work ready. Many educational institutions feel that their main focus should be on getting the learners technically skilled and the soft skills should be learnt in the workplace.

The key issue that the literature review highlights is the importance of the TVET College being responsive to and interactive within its local context as this often correlates to the successful placement of learners on exit of their programmes. The study explores the extent to which the three Colleges have been responsive in terms of their structures and within the limitations of a structured curriculum. The extent to which Colleges have been innovative in relation to the constraints of the curriculum and how they have also addressed the concerns of employers about the work readiness of learners, is explored. The study further considers the nature and quality of partnerships that these Colleges have pursued and how this has impacted on their success.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

3.1 Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study is derived directly from the research statement and questions presented in the preceding section. In considering the best research methodology to address the research question, it was decided to use the comparative case study methodology. According to Aaltio & Heilmann (2012), the case study methodology applies well to the study of organisational behaviour and companies as unique entities. They also identify cases as a valuable means of education, as a descriptive case can provide valuable insights and academic explanation of good practice that can add to learning. With this in mind, it was thought that it would provide the best methodology to learn from the practice of individual TVET Colleges and how they address the issue of work placement of their learners.

The comparative case study methodology in turn assists to determine the connecting, divergent or similar elements across the cases, all of which can provide key learning points. Mixed methods of research were also used to add to the richness of the analysis of the case studies. Evers & van Staa (2012, p.3) are of the opinion that when studying 'complex social phenomena', the utilisation of 'multiple strategies combined may address unique angles or contribute different viewpoints'.

The case studies were undertaken initially by means of qualitative interviews with the sampled institutions. The interviews were then analysed to understand the context of the identified elements within each of the TVET Colleges. Campbell (2012, p.2) indicates that comparative case studies should tend towards an 'iterative analysis' of individual cases, highlighting the convergent rather than the unusual. This approach was employed to provide a final account of the developing themes and explanations.

The research method also comprised a quantitative analysis as the statistics of the work placement efforts of the three Colleges were also obtained. These quantitative statistics supplemented and added a richness to the analysis, thereby improving the contextual understanding of the Colleges.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

There were no ethical issues that impacted on the study. The necessary permissions were obtained from the regional office of the Department of Higher Education and Training. After this, permission was requested from the individual principals. Two Colleges requested an application process, which was duly completed and permission obtained. The Principals' offices also advised on the best people to be interviewed for this study.

There may be concerns regarding the sharing of data and information as this is the Colleges' competitive edge, but the nature of the study is to determine key success determinants that can only benefit all. However, it was decided to anonymise the data and interviews to allow respondents to be as honest in their responses without concerns of reprisals.

3.3 Sample of TVET Colleges

In research studies it is generally expected that the sample is randomly selected so as to minimise bias. In the comparative case study methodology the sample is selected logically to ensure that the subjects of analysis are relatively similar to one another, to allow for comparison (Campbell, 2012). That is, the sampling is purposive. It was therefore decided to select the three metro colleges on the basis of their physical location, which renders considerable similarity in their feeder communities. Beyond this, however, it is important to acknowledge that each College has a distinct history which impacted the shape and nature of their organisational structures and practices.

College of Cape Town - The College of Cape Town is the oldest and largest TVET College in the Western Cape with more than 15 000 students enrolling per annum. The College emerged in February 2002 from the merger of four former technical colleges: Athlone College, Cape College, Sivuyile College and Western Province Technical College. The college has eight campuses located in Athlone, the City, Crawford, Gardens, Guguletu, Pinelands, Thornton and Wynberg. The College has an impressive list of relationships and partnerships. It has not only forged close partnerships with industry, it has also pursued relationships with international partners and this has resulted in student and lecturer exchanges. The NC(V) Hospitality is offered at its City Campus. (College of Cape Town, 2017)

False Bay College - False Bay College is also a well-established institution that spans a vast location with campuses in Fish Hoek, Khayelitsha, Muizenberg, Westlake and Mitchells Plain (False Bay College, n.d.). It is one of the Colleges with robust industry partnerships that have resulted in strong industry academies being established. Their partnerships with key industry players have resulted in the Boat Building Academy being established in 2006, and through extensive consultation with the industry they now offer the National Certificate: Yacht and Boat Building at NQF levels 2-3. The NC(V) Hospitality programme is offered at its Muizenberg Campus (False Bay College, 2017)

Northlink College - Northlink College was established in 2002, following the merger of four colleges in the northern suburbs of Cape Town Metropole, namely Wingfield Technical College (three campuses: Wingfield, Goodwood and Table Bay), Tygerberg College (Tygerberg and Parow) and Bellville Technical College. In 2005 Northlink bought Belhar College, a private institution. The College prides itself on an extensive list of partnerships with industry, both large and small businesses. In addition, they have pursued partnerships with higher education institutions, SETAs and international institutions. The NC(V) Hospitality Programme is offered at the Bellville Campus. (Northlink College, 2017)

3.4 Programme Offerings at TVET Colleges

Generally the following programmes are offered at all TVET Colleges (Department of Higher Education, 2017):

- **National Certificate Vocational NC(V)** was introduced in 2007. It is delivered under the auspices of the Department of Higher Education and Training and quality assured by Umalusi. Umalusi is the regulatory body that develops and monitors the standards for general and further education and training in South Africa (Umalusi, 2015). The NC(V) offers learners a vocational alternative to an academic Grade 10-12 by offering specialised training on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2-4. The programme is intended to integrate theory and practice and provide learners with knowledge and practical skills within specific industry fields.
- **National Technical Education Diploma (NATED) or Report 191 programmes** are also delivered under the auspices of the Department of Higher Education and Training and quality assured by Umalusi. The programmes consist of 18 months of theoretical studies at colleges and 18 months of relevant practical application in work places. Engineering studies range from N1 – N6 while Business and Utility Studies range from N4 – N6
- **National Higher Certificates** are Higher Education programmes, usually at NQF5 level, offered at certain colleges in partnership with Higher Education Institutions.
- **Learnership Programmes** offers a route to a NQF registered qualification that includes on-the-job learning (70%) with off-the-job learning (30%). It is usually offered under the auspices of SETAs and quality assured by SETA Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs).
- **Skills Programmes** are also offered under the auspices of SETAs and quality assured by SETA ETQAs. They are presented as discrete NQF registered unit standards and can build up to a full qualification.

The two main educational offerings are the NATED and the NCV, which are also funded by the DHET. TVET Colleges have started introducing National Higher Certificates in key studies, but this is not available broadly.

The introduction of the NC(V) resulted in numerous challenges as it was originally developed to replace the NATED courses. However, industry rejected the course, regarding it as too theoretical which resulted in the NC(V) and NATED both being funded by the TVET Colleges (SSACI, JET and NBI, 2016).

3.5 National Certificate (Vocational) NC(V) Hospitality

In considering the successful placement of learners, it was necessary to be mindful that the accomplishment of learner placement could be attributed to many factors, including the course offering and its relevance or irrelevance in the economy at the time. To control as many of these variables, the research focused only on one qualification that is offered by all three Colleges. The qualification is the NC(V) Hospitality. This qualification was considered because tourism has been identified as an important economic sector in the Western Cape so there is always a demand for skilled employees; thus, it provides a sound case for consideration.

This qualification was designed for learners to further their studies, become self-employed or find employment in the hospitality industry. The learner can pursue an occupation in Food preparation such as assistant chef, waitron or kitchen hand. (College of Cape Town, 2017) (False Bay College, 2017) (Northlink College, 2017)

The National Certificate (Vocational) Hospitality is a three-year qualification at NQF Levels 2, 3 and 4, with the minimum entrance requirement being Grade 9 and the NCV 4 being the equivalent of Grade 12 (Department of Higher Education, 2017). Learners are expected to complete a Career, Maths and English assessment in order to apply for this programme. The course offers the same subjects each year, starting with a basic introduction to the subject and becoming more complex each year.

The Fundamentals subjects (Levels 2,3,4) are:

- English First Additional Language
- Life Orientation
- Maths Lit

The Vocational subjects for the Hospitality National Certificate (Vocational) are:

- Hospitality Generics (Levels 2,3,4) – This subject equips the learner in aspects such as health, hygiene and food safety and maintaining a safe work environment. Other aspects such as understanding the hospitality sector and identifying work opportunities are also covered in this subject. The subject is largely theoretical.
- Client Service and Human Relations (Levels 2,3,4) – This covers some of the business skills required to function in the hospitality industry such as functioning in a business environment, customer care and basics of human relations. The subject is intended to be practical.
- Food Preparation (Levels 2,3,4) – This subject incorporates the different methods of food preparation, such as frying, grilling and baking as well as assembling food for quick service. Preparation of different food types and food storage is also covered. It is intended that this subject will be presented practically.
- Hospitality services (Levels 2,3,4) – In this subject learners are trained in the cleaning and preparation skills required in the hospitality industry of items such as linen, glassware, and kitchen areas. Other skills such as stock control and storage management are also covered in this subject and are largely delivered in the classroom.

(ibid)

Although the courses are often offered separately and by different lecturers, the subject matter is related. The content in theory is often assessed in practical subjects.

3.6 Primary Research

As per the College selection processes, the stakeholders to be interviewed were pragmatically selected based on their relevance and the knowledge they could contribute to the study. The comparative case study literature also identified that it would be important for the researcher to first develop a broad overview of the organisation and its structure, and that it may require a few interviews to gain this perspective (Aaltio & Heilmann, 2012). In keeping with this recommendation, the decision was made to interview the staff from the regional Department of Higher Education offices to obtain the necessary authority and a general overview and orientation of the implementation of the NC(V) Hospitality.

It was then required that the College identify at least one academic and one WIL or Student Support staff member to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were held with these key personnel that had been identified by the TVET Colleges' principals' offices. The interviews were largely informal and the questions were generally open-ended to allow for multiple responses that would bring richness to the emerging narrative.

Institutional responsiveness

The colleges were asked about how they have been responsive to industry and the mechanisms they use to understand company demands. Further questions included who accepted responsibility for engaging with employers and how the interviewees managed being responsive to employers and learners.

WIL Office

Interviewees were asked about the structure in their organisations that are responsible for work placement and the relationship of this structure to other units such as Marketing, Student Support and Academics. They were also asked about the structure of their team and what they thought contributed to their effectiveness.

Curriculum Relevance

There is not much flexibility built into the system that allows for Colleges to change or adapt the curriculum. Academic staff was interviewed to understand if they add anything to the national curriculum. They were also asked about how they incorporate practical skills into the curriculum.

Partnerships

Questions asked of interviewees included who their key partners are, and specifically if they are large companies, small and medium businesses or if these partnerships are facilitated through intermediaries, including SETAs. They were asked to expand on the nature of their partnership, if they are long-standing or more recent partnerships. Interviewees were also requested to expand on how they are measured and what incentives are offered to partners.

Work Readiness

Interviewees were asked to expand on their understanding of work readiness. They were questioned about the duration of their programme and if they receive any feedback from learners or employers regarding the effectiveness of their learners. They were also asked if they train for networking skills.

A general question asked of all the interviewees was what they considered as the discerning factor that results in their team being successful at work placement.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES OF THREE TVET COLLEGES

4.1 Introduction

In an initial meeting with an official from the Regional Office, a background was provided to the overall operations of the qualification in the Western Cape. The respondent was of the opinion that this programme was one of the more successful ones, and was directly related to many lecturers having industry experience. In the region, the Hospitality lecturers also meet regularly in a Community of Practice focus group to share experiences and learn from each other.

The respondent felt that a common challenge encountered by the TVET Colleges is that employers are expecting a fully trained learner. However, the training does not equip the learner to do the full job because the programme provides a basic overview of working in the hospitality sector. If the learner is interested, they would have to specialise from NCV 4, however many learners do not extend their studies due to funding limitations. This was consistent with the findings from the NSA funded study (SSACI, JET and NBI, 2016).

Another challenge reportedly encountered in the programme is that learners can exit each year and get a certificate at every point, which has an impact on the drop-out rate with the numbers declining rapidly between NCV2 and NCV4. In the respondent's opinion, this is largely due to the cost issue again, as many learners in TVET Colleges come from impoverished communities and try to access work as early as possible.

The respondent also questioned the effectiveness of the class size, with the average class having a ratio of 30 learners to 1 lecturer. She thought that the ideal class should be a maximum of 15:1 for learners to derive benefit from the practical teaching. To compensate for these large class numbers, lecturers reportedly bring the exercise into the classroom and demonstrate to the class rather than giving learners an opportunity to practice the skill individually. As a result, subjects such as Hospitality Services that should be practical have become more theoretical in delivery.

The respondent was of the opinion that the recruitment process also assisted in producing the quality learner as it was sufficiently onerous, and provided the learners with a realistic impression of the work environment. The hospitality academic team have also recently introduced an induction process that offers learners a good overview of the industry, in an attempt to reduce the number of dropouts, who have unrealistic expectations of a career in hospitality.

Below is a synopsis of the interviews with the College respondents

4.2 College A

- ***How responsive is your organisation?***

One of the respondents was of the opinion that the NC(V) Hospitality does not offer much flexibility to respond to external influences and stakeholders. The curriculum is quite rigid with very little room for movement, and they often failed to influence learners' course choices.

The academic staff reported that they do not have any formal feedback process with employers for the NC(V) Hospitality, but through their informal interaction they are made aware of what issues these employers have with their learners and they use this to influence what they add to the practical curriculum.

The academic staff at College A indicated that their previous employment in industry assists them to deliver a quality product to their learners and better prepare these students for industry. In their experience, the foundational skills requirements within the hospitality industry have remained constant with customer care and quality service being key elements. They also mentioned that they receive regular feedback from learners, who often come back to report that the learning they receive from the College is a good match to the requirements of the workplace. Learners have also, on occasion, informed that the standards of industry are even less than the standards the College sets for them.

College A's academic staff advised that they also ensure that their offerings remain relevant and responsive to industry needs through their lecturers, many of whom are national examiners and/or moderators. One of the respondents, who is both an examiner and moderator, advised that she receives regular training in these roles. She is bound by confidentiality in terms of the work they perform as examiners, but is able to transfer the general lessons learnt and provide exposure to the rest of her colleagues. The academic respondents reported that the assessment is a particularly important tool for managing the quality of offerings and the programme manager uses the capacity building she receives to influence the assessment processes of the College, which provides a gauge of their effectiveness.

One of the WIL respondents was of the opinion that the DHET, through having a 'set curriculum and qualification', encouraged more of a 'push system' with its policies and processes and did not necessarily seek demand information from employers. The WIL office's main role is to monitor learners in the workplace and they try to build industry feedback into these visits. When information is obtained from an employer it is informally conveyed to the head of the department and academic staff. The feedback may also be used to influence the work readiness offerings so as to guide learners' behaviour.

The WIL officer saw his role as seeking employment for the learner, with a goal of workplace experience of one year for NCV graduates, whereas N6 graduates need the placement for

obtaining their educational qualification. He found this to be problematic with employers though, as this can clash with their business needs as they are often seeking learners who can be as productive as possible in the short term. The WIL respondent was of the opinion that employers do not understand that the learner still needs further learning. The WIL officer considered information sharing as critical, so that learners understand the requirements of the workplace and employers understand the needs of the learners.

The WIL office was considered by the respondent to be largely under-capacitated, which has resulted in them not having sufficient time to actively recruit employers. He felt that it was fortunate that the College has a history and sound reputation with industry, so initiation for work placement comes from employers. The WIL office has only needed to source employers, when they have big numbers to place. They have also on occasion invited employers to events on campus to give them a better understanding of the College. The WIL respondents acknowledged the support from management, who appreciated the importance of WIL and this gave their unit the necessary authority and credibility with the rest of the institution.

- ***What is the role of the WIL Office?***

The WIL department was established in 2016, incorporating the work of the Linkages and Partnerships unit, and have numerous functions for which they are responsible. This office comprises a team of three people, who are responsible for placing approximately 4 000 learners per annum. Respondents confirmed that the team generally has a huge amount of credibility with their internal colleagues. The WIL team also has regular engagements with students and management.

According to the WIL respondent, the role of this unit has become more focused on occupational qualifications, with them pursuing mainly learnerships and apprenticeships as this is where the external funding opportunities are. The WIL officer was concerned about the administrative burden placed on the unit, as a result of mandatory reporting to funders. It has left the WIL team with little opportunity to actively manage relationships with industry.

The DHET measures both the throughput and placement rates per College and campus and College A's management and WIL teams have set themselves steeper targets. The WIL respondent was appreciative that the management of the College has acknowledged the importance of the unit and the structure allows for additional capacity. However, they still had to recruit urgently to ensure successful implementation.

The WIL respondent acknowledged that their unit has needed to be creative due to the lack of resources. They have started utilising social media (particularly WhatsApp and Facebook) to engage with learners and employers, to post opportunities and encourage employers to register opportunities. They have yet to assess the results of this marketing initiative

- ***How do you ensure curriculum relevance?***

As mentioned before, the Colleges do not have jurisdiction over the curriculum. According to the academic respondents, even though there have been no recent updates, the curriculum is sound, having been extensively consulted in its conception.

The approach of the academic team, however, is to prepare the learners from the beginning as to the expectations of the industry. They reinforce the message of quality daily, and they also establish rules from the outset. The academic respondents and their colleagues instil strict discipline and expect learners to show up on time and hand in projects to a certain quality or they are ‘punished’ by having to scrub the pots or not tasting of the food that has been prepared.

One means that College A sees as a valuable method to maintain the quality of their offerings is by encouraging their learners to compete in various competitions. These competitions are seen as a tool to hone the learners’ practical skills. The National World Skills South Africa (WSSA) competition is a significant stimulus, and preparing learners to compete encouraged their lecturers to stay informed of new trends and techniques to ensure that the learners remain competitive.

The respondents also considered the exchange programmes with international schools and colleges, which incorporates learner and lecturer exchange, as valuable because they provide good learning spaces to stay abreast of current trends.

- ***What is the nature of partnerships?***

The respondents advised that their partnerships are generally ‘robust’ with regular engagements to ensure that the relationship is sustainable. The WIL office spends time forging and looking after these relationships by understanding the challenges of the employer with their learners. The WIL respondent was appreciative that this role was shared between all colleagues, as management and academic staff also interact with industry and take responsibility for maintaining the partnerships. The WIL unit invites colleagues to accompany them to key meetings.

College A has many relationships with employers that are long-term partnerships, and they spend time maintaining these so that they are ‘still available for the next ten years’. Although they are measured by the Department of Higher Education and Training in terms of the number of partnership agreements, the WIL Office tends to favour the longer term relationships that have greater impact.

However, the respondents acknowledged that with the set curriculum and minimal flexibility for adapting the programme’s curriculum, these partnerships are mainly pursued for the placement purposes of learners. The academic staff is also expected to scheduled workplace exposure time in industry. At College A, the academic respondents informed that they are expected to be spend between two to three days per annum to stay abreast of any shifts in

the industry, and the lessons learnt are filtered back into the programme offerings. This College is committed to pursuing this, but does experience challenges with releasing staff for the opportunities due to capacity constraints if any lecturer is not available.

In terms of intermediaries, the WIL respondent indicated that they avoided working with third-party organisations as it limited the monitoring and evaluation of learners. The further removed the College is from the learner and employer, the more difficulty they experienced in managing the learner and partnership. The WIL respondent was also of the opinion that it was important to change the way the College engages with SETAs. He felt that the language of 'a grant' or 'intervention' was problematic and it resulted in unequal partnerships, with the perception that SETAs were doing the College a favour. He considered the purpose of a partnership should be for each partner to fulfil their mandates and for the language to change from 'doing it for us' to 'doing it with us'.

The respondent also viewed it as fortunate that College A's hospitality lecturers were recruited from industry so they already have good linkages with employers and carry credibility; therefore, in the NC(V) Hospitality programme, it has not been necessary to dedicate too much effort to these partnerships.

- ***How do you ensure that learners are work ready?***

According to the academic respondents, the structure of the curriculum left them with insufficient time to prepare the learners with the necessary work readiness skills, and this was one aspect that they needed to focus on. The academic team has tried to encourage the necessary culture through their daily interaction with learners in the way they demand quality in assignments and practical exercises.

The academic respondents also worked closely with the Student Support Centre and learners are registered for a short training session that equips them with relevant information and skills, including how to draft a CV and preparation for interviews. One of the respondents was also of the opinion that the work readiness training that happened at the end of the NC(V) 3 year was scheduled too late in the programme and should be offered earlier. This way they could prepare learners before they accessed the Workplace Based Exposure (WBE), so that the employers' first experience with the learners is a positive one.

The learners are also taught networking skills informally and are required to contact companies directly for WBE. The academic team serves as the network and may support with information on potential employers, but the learners are encouraged to make the initial contact. It is only if the learner struggles to source placement that the lecturer will assist.

The WIL office tries to support the exiting learners with sourcing work placement, and have used graduates to build an alumnus structure that can serve as a potential network. However, they recognise that this is an artificial system in light of the key challenges facing their past learners who are also challenged with sourcing employment.

The WIL respondent viewed the preparation of the workplace for hosting the learner as an important aspect of work readiness. The WIL office spends time engaging with identified mentors and induction is conducted for the learner and the employer to ensure that both groups are prepared and know what is expected of them. They also spend time inducting the learner so that they can advocate their needs in the workplace. In the respondent's experience, the more intensive the induction, the more likely it is that the learner will continue in the project.

4.3 College B

- ***How responsive is your organisation?***

College B also acknowledged that the centrally developed NC(V) or even NATED curriculum left them with very little flexibility in being responsive in their offerings to industry. They however do meet on a regular basis with industry to keep in touch with the latest developments. The programme manager has also consciously accepted a role in the development of a new qualification with the purpose of engaging more meaningfully with industry and other stakeholders to understand the current developments in the industry. She also felt that it assisted her to develop further relationships with new employers.

The respondent noted that many of the academic staff have been drawn from industry and therefore maintain relationships with employers. Having been employed in industry previously made a difference in terms of how they were perceived, and therefore received by industry.

The current curriculum and lack of resources have restricted the College in their offerings, prompting the respondent and her staff to be innovative within these limitations. The College has started discussions with employers to determine in advance what their requirements are, and the academic team is already seeking to facilitate a relationship between NC(V) 3 learners and prospective employers. The motivation for this process is dual. One, the respondent is hoping that it will motivate learners to stay in the programme, as they will be linked to an employer who can offer mentoring. Two, it is argued, to also facilitate greater employer inputs into the programme so that learners are groomed specifically to their needs.

The academic respondent has also identified the importance of attracting the right learner from the outset and providing them with a realistic perception of the working environment. Their unit will be launching a campaign using past learners to share their success stories, so learners have realistic expectations and aspirational role models.

The respondents all acknowledged the management team of the College, which has been supportive of all initiatives by staff to ensure learners are better suited to industry. The management team of College B has encouraged the staff to be innovative and created the necessary environment and provided them with the resources and flexibility.

- ***What is the role of the WIL Office?***

The WIL office is decentralised to a programme level, with the WIL officers reporting to the relevant academic managers. The respondent's key focus is on Hospitality, Tourism, Hair and Beauty.

One of the respondents acknowledged the important role played by WIL Office as they are the 'face of the organisation'. The Hospitality unit has, however, been experiencing challenges with the appointed WIL officer in the past year. The respondent admitted that she wished she had understood this before making the appointment as she would have advertised for a different skills set. When making the appointment they had advertised for someone with a business qualification, thinking that this would have offered the skills set to engage with business. However, there has been a realisation that a person with a marketing background would have been preferred as the person represents the College and is often the first contact with employers.

The management and academic respondents also felt that in future they would appoint personnel with knowledge or experience of the subject matter. The lack of subject knowledge resulted in problems with the industry and almost ruined well established relationships. As a result, the academic staff had to play a bigger role in engaging with industry.

The WIL respondent in turn did not consider his role as the principal agent for spearheading relationships with industry. In his opinion, this was the responsibility of everyone in the organisation. Instead, he believed that his job involved maintaining already established partnerships and ensuring the necessary compliance with the requirements of funders. This included monitoring and evaluating the learners in the workplace and feeding any challenges needing escalation, to the academic staff. He would, however, occasionally facilitate new partnerships that were referrals from the marketing or academic units.

- ***How do you ensure curriculum relevance?***

The academic respondent informed that they have tried to ensure that the theory is supported by practical applications. College B does not have restaurants like the other Colleges, where learners can have a realistic workplace experience, so are required to be creative. Currently they convert a day classroom into a make-shift restaurant at night, where half of the NATED learners cook and half of the NC(V) learners serve their peers.

However, this is still largely a simulated situation. So the programme manager is presently renovating the College cafeteria, to be managed by learners with the support of staff. The learners will design the menus and prepare the meals whilst also managing the facility. The intention of the College, is also to use the funding raised to purchase a branded food truck that will be placed outside the campus and can be taken along to College events. The respondent has a vision of the Hospitality NATED and NC(V) learners also working in a catering service that will provide platters for College events and surrounding businesses. The respondent felt that learners are often not ready for the workplace because the simulated

experience is not realistic enough. Through these various initiatives, she intends to create a realistic environment and also teaching learners about business.

The academic unit also uses educational excursions as a valuable supplement to theory. Learners are taken along to hotels, restaurants and exhibitions such as the Good Food and Wine show. Resources are made available through the organisation and also funding sourced from various funders for these excursions.

- ***What is the nature of partnerships?***

The academic respondent reported that managing relationships with employers has been challenging, not least because of the WIL Officer who has not fulfilled his responsibility. Where the partnerships have been established, they are sound and yield value, in part because of the College's proximity to key hotels.

Generally, the respondents have found that partnerships are not always easy to maintain and there is a constant requirement to make sure that the partnership is mutually beneficial. The programme manager has encouraged the academic staff to utilize the relationships with hotels in the surrounding area to provide the learners with realistic workplace experiences. For example, when learners are being taught stocktaking, lecturers are encouraged to contact employers to offer the learners to assist with repacking the linen cupboard which then offers a mutual benefit for the learner and employer.

The College also has strong partnerships with international organisations that provide them with valuable insights and resources. In a recent visit to an international College the academic respondents observed their hybrid model where learners spend three days per week at the College and two days at various employers. On return, they have tried to introduce the model, with little success. They are therefore introducing a workplace environment in the College, using the stipend that would usually be spent on learners, to give learners a realistic workplace experience. The academic respondent felt that this will assist with them being able to present employers with a better prepared learner.

The WIL respondent identified the challenges with employers who have unrealistic expectations of learners. He is pursuing placement for learning, but employers are expecting a fully productive employee. He does, however, provide both learner and employer with induction to minimize the unrealistic expectations from both sides.

The WIL office also targets relationships with industry to secure placement. He tries to maintain relationships with all employers, even if they are not hosting learners but he finds this challenging with limited resources. The main partnerships that he currently manages are with SETAs and large companies, as small business are not able to accommodate large numbers and deal with the cumbersome administrative processes demanded by funders.

- ***How do you ensure learners are work ready?***

The respondents of College B focuses on ensuring their learners are work ready and they offer at least three programmes that covers the softer skills. Their benchmark training programme, is a one-week course that covers key skills such as interview preparation and work ethics, which is funded by an international donor.

However, through feedback from employers they have understood that there is further work needed, and have now introduced an enrichment programme that is embedded in the curriculum and equates to one lesson per week. The WIL team will be monitoring this to determine if it has a positive impact on the learners and employers' experience of their learners.

The respondent admitted that the College takes up every opportunity available to enhance the learning process. Recently the National Skills Fund offered each learner R700 for any extra-curricular educational activities. The academic staff took the opportunity to take the learners to a five-star hotel for the day as guests, so they could experience excellent service first-hand. The programme manager also engaged with the hotel management to ensure that learners were introduced to different functions in the hotel by the relevant staff.

The programme manager also believes in harnessing the valuable 'technical skills of Generation Z learners' to their advantage. Generation Z learners are regarded as people born between 1996 and 2010 and are viewed as technically savvy (Forbes, 2016). The academic respondent has encouraged these learners to create an individual Instagram profile that showcases their work at the College and at educational trips. The College has also established an Instagram profile where College staff post pictures of learners for them to access. The respondent felt that this has become a valuable marketing tool for learners and also serves as their CV when they engage with employers.

In addition to all the above-mentioned work readiness efforts, the WIL office also presents a two-hour workshop with learners when they exit the programme, before entering a workplace. The WIL respondent supports the learners in terms of finding placement, even taking them to interviews and observing to understand the learner's shortcomings.

4.5 College C

- ***How responsive is your organisation?***

Based on the discussion with the various respondents at College C, it was evident that the engagement with industry is largely vested in the management of the college and its Innovation and Development unit that incorporates the WIL office, marketing team and Linkages and Partnerships unit.

The Innovation and Development unit engages regularly with industry through events, work placement and have also signed up as members of industry associations to facilitate relationship with employers. According to the respondents this allowed them to keep up to

date with current industry developments, which they communicated to the academic staff. It also gave them insights into what skills were required by industry and they used this information to plan the College's offerings. They expressed concern, though that information on the skills requirements of employers were received too late from SETAs and the provincial government. They require current data as needs are constantly changing.

The academic respondents interviewed did not have much engagement with employers except when the lecturers decided to visit learners in the WBE phase or through the World Skills Competition. They found this engagement quite beneficial. The respondents expressed concern that employers were not aware of the curriculum content and therefore not aware of what learners were capable of. Their observation was that the WIL office was placing learners based on their examination results, but they thought that this was not a good determinant of a learner's fit for the workplace. They expressed their need to be involved in the placement process as the assessment results did not denote the learner's attitude, and therefore how successful they would be in the workplace.

The academic staff felt that it would be important to improve their relationship with employers and would request the WIL team to include them in their future engagements with employers. They also felt restricted in terms of the funding available for practical teaching and thought that an improved relationship with industry could provide them with access to additional resources.

The targets for work placement are established by DHET and become a performance indicator of the principal. According to the respondents, this target is increased by College C to provide them with higher performance measures. The WIL office is not solely responsible for achieving this target as the College has cascaded the responsibility for the successful placement of learners to other units too.

The WIL respondents felt that they were achieving greater success with placement, with companies providing positive feedback on the quality of learners and increasingly contacting them directly for interns. They attributed this to the management of the College, who has positioned the WIL office strategically in the organisation and to the skills of the team that is responsible for WIL. The respondent also felt that the team is motivated by ongoing success and the public acknowledgment by management of the good work of the WIL office.

- ***What is the role of the WIL Office?***

The WIL Office resides in the Innovation and Development unit alongside the Marketing department and Linkages and Partnerships unit. The WIL team is responsible for obtaining workplaces for learners exiting from the programmes, whilst the Linkages and Partnership unit assists with sourcing funding to facilitate this placement.

The WIL respondents were of the opinion that the close working relationship between these various teams located in one unit contributed to a successful working relationship. Each team

brought their expertise and the respondents confirmed that when interacting with large company engagements, they would send the WIL and Linkages and Partnership units with the marketing unit having provided the key messaging.

The head of the Innovation and Development unit admitted that the team was successful due in part to their interpersonal skills and passion for the learners. However, should any vacancies arise, they would consider sourcing subject matter experts who would be well-placed to engage with employers around their particular industries. According to the respondent, subject matter experts would also benefit the learner placement process, as they are better placed to monitor if learners can apply the learning. The units responsible for work placement also have regular capacity building sessions where the team is informed of significant changes in the TVET landscape. The head of the unit is currently sourcing funding to train the team in sales, which has been identified as a key skills requirement.

- ***How do you ensure curriculum relevance?***

The academic respondents from College C also acknowledged that the out-dated curriculum did not pose a problem for the NC(V) Hospitality programme, as this industry has not seen too many shifts recently. The WIL respondents felt that the biggest concerns encountered by employers were not around the technical skills but rather the ‘softer skills’ issues, such as learners not reporting to work. The respondents agreed that this was more pronounced in the shorter courses where lecturers did not have time to reinforce work ethic.

The academic respondents shared their frustrations with the lack of practical space to practice a skill and the lack of funding to procure products, such as food for learners to practice with. The lack of resources resulted in the academic respondents having to show the class how to prepare something, instead of the learner having an opportunity to experience it. They admitted that the ‘restaurant’ at the College is not used for producing anything but mainly used to practice layout of tables or simulated service activities. However, the academic staff are occasionally utilising learners at the conference centre where they are expected to serve guests as this provides provide them with relevant work experience. The academic staff also supplement the learning material with excursions, on-line material and DVDs.

The WIL respondents felt that there is a disconnect between the curriculum and workplace, and not enough being done by the academic units to take up issues raised by employers. The academic respondents expressed the need for partnerships with employers to ensure learners are exposed to workplaces to work on current equipment, as the College cannot afford to be updating the curriculum and equipment every five years.

- ***What is the nature of partnerships?***

College C prides itself on its partnerships with industry, and although there are no formal long term agreements, the relationships with many employers have been long-standing, and they continue to place learners each year. According to the respondents, the College has an active marketing campaign that includes events and communication through media. They regularly

host breakfast events where they engage not only with companies but also NGOs and schools as these are all potential employers of their learners. The WIL respondents recently hosted an Internship Fair where employers had an opportunity to conduct speed-interviews with learners for placement. As a result of this activity, the WIL unit are starting to experience the benefits with employers contacting the College directly for interns.

The College has identified that their goal is not only to place their graduates in workplaces, but also to groom them as entrepreneurs. They have an Entrepreneurial school where learners who have shown an aptitude are referred. Employers are then requested to serve as coaches and mentors to the potential entrepreneur.

The WIL respondent informed that the partnerships they have secured did not extend to them sourcing workplaces for lecturer placement. This is the responsibility of the academic staff who are expected to spend at least one week, in a three-year cycle, in industry. One of the academic respondents uses his participation in the World Skills Competition to cover this requirement. The academic respondents spoke of the challenges with lecturer placement as one of the lecturers was allocated to the kitchen at a hotel, and was tasked with cutting onions for the duration. She left the experience with no sense of the broader operation of the hotel and felt that she gained nothing to share with her learners. In the respondent's opinion, the lecturer placement can add huge value but needs to be better structured.

The WIL team is currently establishing a database of alumni, especially of past students who are owners or managers of companies, as they could become a resource when seeking work placement opportunities.

The respondents also expressed concerns about working with intermediaries as it impacted on their monitoring and reporting responsibilities with data and information not filtering through timeously. They would be willing to work with intermediaries if they could find a solution to the challenge of reports not being provided timeously and to specifications of funders.

The respondents also felt that there was a plethora of national policies and incentives that enable work placement, but that this is not marketed sufficiently from a central space. They are also of the opinion that a campaign is required to inform employers of the requirements when employing a graduate. Employers need to understand that the College graduate is 'a learner first and foremost' and should be developed to gain maximum benefit from the workplace experience.

- ***How do you ensure learners are work ready?***

The NC(V) curriculum does cover key soft skills through the life orientation component but the respondents agreed that it was too little to influence the learners. The academic respondents added simulation, but felt that this does not adequately prepare the learners for

a workplace situation; it especially did not equip the learners for an industry that could be quite harsh.

The academic staff also felt that bringing experts from the industry to speak to learners would provide them with an accurate sense of what is happening in the workplace and would also motivate them. The WIL respondents raised concerns that employers do not play a bigger role in preparing learners for the workplace, but they are also considering adopting the international training programme of College B, that allows them to train-the-trainer and integrate additional work readiness modules in the timetable.

The academic respondents also acknowledged that the age of the learner could impact on their ability in the workplace, with many of the learners lacking the maturity rather than work readiness skills. They raised concerns that there was not sufficient career awareness, as often learners chose to study Hospitality because they love cooking without an understanding of what the job really entails. They found this to impact on the learner's overall experience as their expectations and reality were not congruent. In the academic respondent's experience, they found that when learners encountered the challenges of working in a hospitality environment with its focus on customer service and strict regulations, many of them dropped out of the programme.

The academic respondents acknowledged the value of WBE during levels 3 and 4, but did not pursue it last year. They found it had become too difficult to coordinate as learners were not willing to sacrifice their school holidays without an incentive and there was no funding available to provide them with any stipend.

5. ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

5.1 Interview analysis

- ***Institutional Responsiveness***

From the interviews it was apparent that the Colleges have all restructured their organisations to give effect to policy changes that have prioritised partnerships with industry. The leadership of all three TVET Colleges, in recognizing the importance of work placement, have placed this function strategically within the organisation, also taking personal responsibility for engaging in networks with business and government structures in the region. This is also reinforced by DHET having instituted measures that quantify work placement and partnership contracts. The indicators have been included as performance management criteria in the Principals' contracts which were then cascaded down to all other relevant staff.

A view is that the NC(V) curriculum does not allow for adaptation and this industry has also not seen too many changes, so the interaction with employers is generally limited to accessing workplaces and then monitoring learners.

There are, however, good practices that have been reported. The academic staff from College B, have forged strong relationships with individual employers, as they have recognised that access to workplaces adds to the richness of a learner's experience. Furthermore, it provides the learner with opportunities to work on the latest equipment, which as a College, they may not have access to. They have also found it valuable as their lecturers can gain current information from these employers that enhances their effectiveness in the classroom.

In light of capacity constraints that do not always allow for one-on-one interactions, College C's WIL office participates in key employer and regional structures. They host a series of structured events to engage with employers to understand the industry shifts and their future requirements.

The Skills Competition and curriculum development process have been identified by various academic respondents as key spaces for academic staff to benefit from interaction with employers, and this assists with understanding their skills requirements.

The challenge is where responsiveness is vested. The Colleges have introduced different structures that vary in terms of centralisation and decentralisation. Regardless of the formal structure adopted by the Colleges, it is apparent that internal coordination is important for the College to have a comprehensive responsiveness strategy. The literature highlights the importance of the commitment of everyone in the organisation to being responsive and understanding their role in preparing the learner for the workplace.

- **WIL Office**

The interviews highlighted that College C's WIL unit was the most structured, with clear lines of responsibility and functions and a coordinated system for engaging with employers. They were also regarded as the centre of their College's employer engagements with all interactions logged with the unit so that they have a global understanding of the College's relationships with employers.

College A acknowledged that they were newly instituted and still 'finding their way', but the WIL unit was strategically placed and integrated in the system. This was largely due to the management's approach. College B's WIL officer advised that he rarely engages with employers for purposes other than monitoring of the learners and that the relationships were vested in the academic unit, a view supported by the academic respondent's interview. It is not clear whether this is applicable for all qualifications or only in this instance because of the challenges with the current WIL officer.

The three Colleges interviewed have identified the critically important role played by the WIL office, and in their own way, have restructured their internal organisation to reflect this. The organisations have all recognised the value of a decentralised model, but with the WIL offices having a different focus. College A and College C have decided to have their WIL officers assigned to specific campuses with College B decentralizing at a programme level with a campus base.

The common issue raised by all the respondents was related to identifying the 'ideal' skills set of the WIL Officer. The optimal candidate would have to have marketing expertise to sell the College's brand, whilst also being a sector specialist. These officers also need to understand the education and training sector and have facilitation and stakeholder management skills. The question is whether it is possible to find all these skills and knowledge vested in a single person. In my opinion it would be challenging to find someone who possesses all these skills and knowledge. There is a need for capacity building to fill the gaps in the team's knowledge.

College C has decided to spread this skills and knowledge set across the WIL team to allow for internal capacity building. This does require a mechanism or system for structured interactions to ensure a regular knowledge transfer for successful implementation. The WIL respondent at College C identified that should she have any vacancies in the near future she would add subject matter experts to the team. Through her recent experiences it became clear that employers related better to people who are sector specialists, and they offer better support to the learners they are expected to monitor.

Previously, Colleges had a Linkages and Partnership Unit (LPU) that facilitated regular strategic partnerships with employers. In College B and College C they have maintained a separate LPU, while College A has merged the function of the two units. It is too early to determine the effectiveness of having this function in one unit.

The LPU, where it still exists, has become a key unit for raising funds for placement or running occupational and skills programmes. Their key source of funding is the SETAs, and it would appear that they spend a lot of time drafting proposals and then ensuring the successful implementation of these projects. This has placed an enormous administrative burden on the WIL office who is responsible for the monitoring of learners in the workplace, and then ensuring the requisite reports are prepared in time to ensure continued funding.

There is recognition of the strategic role the WIL office can play, but the common refrain is the lack of capacity. It has also limited the engagement of certain WIL units with employers as this is now further removed in a SETA. It is suggested that the partnerships with the SETA offers broader opportunities than funding for placement, and they should be seen as facilitators of strong partnerships with their members and TVET Colleges. If DHET is serious about forging stronger partnerships between TVET Colleges and employers the funding has to be allocated accordingly for a well-resourced unit.

- ***Curriculum relevance***

There was general agreement among respondents that the NC(V) Hospitality curriculum is still relevant even though it has not been updated recently. The basic subjects of Customer Service and Food Preparation have not changed too rapidly. There may have been improvements to the administrative processes in hospitality, but the lecturers seem to have incorporated it into their teaching.

The curriculum remains an important element in the responsiveness discussions, but it would appear that a lot of the credibility is vested in the academic staff. One of the respondents commented that the first question she is asked when she visits employers, is about her qualifications and experience. As many of the lecturers of the NC(V) Hospitality have an industry background they appear to carry credibility with their employer stakeholders.

Simulation is key in the practical offerings of the curriculum and this varies in its reflection of a typical workplace. College C respondents acknowledged that this was largely due to a lack of resources available to them, to simulate a realistic workplace. Two of the Colleges offer simulated environments where learners cook and serve their peers or invited guests for practical sessions. Internal catering is also used for practical exposure when available. All academic respondents acknowledged that the availability of electronic media has made teaching easier, and it is a key resource in their teaching.

College B has attempted to incorporate the practical elements through linkages with industry by offering learners the opportunity to provide functions that benefit the employer, whilst facilitating learning. The respondent admits that it has been easier for the College, as it is in close proximity to key hospitality employers with whom they have an ongoing relationship and it does not require any additional resources for learners to get to the employer.

- **Partnerships**

One of the common refrains from respondents has been the challenge of consistently recruiting employers to participate in the learner placement initiatives. All of the Colleges lamented the challenge in also maintaining the partnerships as employers only respond to incentives. College C felt that this was also true for learners who would not commit to work placement or exposure without a stipend. The challenge is finding the value proposition that would motivate employers and learners.

All of the Colleges noted an increase in occupational programmes as they are perceived as better options by employers, mainly because the courses are short and specific to their individual skills requirements. Funding for these courses is also more easily secured through SETAs. However, these programmes are short-term, and do not provide learners with qualifications that allow for their career mobility. One respondent also noted that this translates into short-lived partnerships with employers that last for the duration of the project.

The literature identifies the importance of lecturer workplace exposure (LWE), as it has been recognised as critically important to ensure that academics are up to date with current industry trends and practices (Akoojee, 2008). Even where the curriculum is structured, lecturers are able to benefit from workplace exposure as it can assist them in providing learners with realistic insights. WIL officers have not taken responsibility for lecturer placement as per their original function, so this has not received the necessary prioritisation.

The Colleges all have varying approaches to this with DHET standards used as a guideline. College A indicated that their lecturers were expected to spend two to three days per annum in the workplace. College C has a goal of lecturers spending one week per three-year cycle and College B indicated that they expect two lecturers for two weeks per annum.

The reasons provided for the lack of lecturer placement from certain Colleges ranged from the limited time available, due to the focus of lecturing staff on preparing their learners to be examination ready, to the lack of capacity if lecturers are out of the 'system', to the bad experience they often have in industry.

The literature identifies the valuable role that can be provided by partnerships with public and private intermediaries to facilitate relationships between TVET Colleges and employers. All the respondents identified their reluctance to work with private intermediaries, as they struggle to obtain the necessary monitoring and evaluation information from them for reporting purposes. However, SETAs as public intermediaries, have become key partners for funding and linking to employers. Two of the Colleges raised their concerns about SETAs in general who are willing funders, but whose role has not extended beyond this to become partners in other respects.

There are numerous innovative suggestions for ensuring that partnerships have mutual benefit and that the work placement process has benefit to employers. The Colleges have used processes of induction and administrative support to reduce the burden on employers. One of the Colleges is also assisting employers with the administration to access BBEEE incentives and an internship fair has been conducted as an innovative response to simplifying the recruitment process. College B is providing their learners as an additional resource to employers whilst providing a workplace experience for learners. All of the Colleges reported a shift in the relationship, with employers now approaching them with requests for learners. However, it requires effort, focus and resources to build the necessary trust which detracts from teaching and learning time and which may have implications for preparing learners for exams.

- ***Work Readiness***

The respondents all agreed on the importance of work readiness and the need for work readiness to be infused in the curriculum. They agreed that both what is taught and how it is taught adds value. The respondents agreed that the discipline required in the workplace should be introduced from the outset, with learning being reinforced throughout the programme. The first few months in the programme are most critical where gaps in learners' prior knowledge is being bridged and good habits are inculcated. The respondents also identified that there is a need for a stand-alone training programme, which has to be incorporated before the learners enter the workplace for the first time. Also, a further session is required before they exit the College to train them in networking and interview skills.

Respondents from College A acknowledged that learners who are placed in industry for WBE purposes would not have received the necessary work readiness training, so an employer's first engagement is often with a 'raw' learner. They have realized that this encounter with the inexperienced learner may deter employers to give a further opportunity when the learner graduates and will be working with the Student Support office to offer the work readiness training earlier.

The common refrain from all the Colleges is the lack of time to deal with the preparation of work readiness of learners. The curriculum is quite structured and does not leave them with the leeway to introduce key work readiness skills.

Two Colleges identified College B as the model of how work readiness should be addressed, and they would be looking to them to share their experiences. College B seems to have been the most creative in their response to these resource limitations and have worked with industry and other funding agencies to provide their learners with the requisite skills, through offering stand-alone courses and an 'enrichment' session per week.

5.2 Placement results analysis

The placement results from the various Colleges were obtained and the intention was to analyse it using the following evaluative dimensions:

- Optimal – learner placed in workplace relevant to field of study
- Partial – learner placed in workplace not relevant to field of study
- Minimal – learner not placed

However, it was determined that many learners extend the studies after NC(V) 4 to specialise in a particular field. This result has been added to the optimal dimension, as in many instances, further education will result in a better skilled learner who can be an asset to employers. A limitation in this data is that the statistics are not clear as to whether learners have continued with studies in their initial courses, or if learners are extending their studies of their own free will. It also does not reflect if learners are extending their studies because they are unable to access employment, so learning is a gap filler. However, assumptions have to be made that learners exiting from further studies will have improved skills and greater employment opportunities.

The data provided valuable insights into the situations in the College (Table 1). College A's statistics are only available from 2015 as their WIL office was only established after this point. It is important to note that they over-achieved in this year, because as the WIL officer advised, they had to deal with a historical backlog where learners were not supported to find workplaces. There are also no statistics that were kept to this point.

College B shows 100% success with all their learners either placed in hospitality establishments or having progressed into further studies. The respondent could not provide the detail of employers where these learners were placed, and the academic respondent raised concerns that the WIL Office was sourcing placements with employers that are not their traditional workplaces, and may not strictly fit into hospitality

College C's WIL Office provided the most comprehensive data of their learners. They were able to provide the workplaces and also the course of studies the learners have progressed into, including those learners who are no longer at the College. Their statistics show that on average 22% of their NC(V) Hospitality learners are not optimally placed.

It is near impossible to say who has performed better out of the three Colleges, as it will require greater depth to analyse the nature and size of employers and the type of work where the learner has been placed.

			College A		College B		College C	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Year 1 (2014)	Learners graduating						22	100
	Placed in hospitality	Optimal 1					10	45
	Further education	Optimal 2					2	9
	Placed in other sectors	Partial					2	9
	Not placed	Minimal					8	36
Year 2 (2015)	Learners graduating		20	100	27	100	19	100
	Placed in hospitality	Optimal 1	35		13	48	5	26
	Further education	Optimal 2			14	52	8	42
	Placed in other sectors	Partial			0		0	0
	Not placed	Minimal			0		6	32
Year 3 (2016)	Learners graduating		16	100	29	100	27	100
	Placed in hospitality	Optimal 1	1	6	6	21	8	30
	Further education	Optimal 2			23	79	13	48
	Placed in other sectors	Partial			0		5	18
	Not placed	Minimal			0		1	4
TOTAL	Learners graduating		36	100	56	100	68	100
	Placed in hospitality	Optimal 1	36	100	19	34	23	34
	Further education	Optimal 2			37	66	23	34
	Placed in other sector	Partial			0		7	10
	Not placed	Minimal			0		15	22

Table 1

5.3 Summary

The statistical analysis combined with the interview analysis was expected to add a further lens to the practice in the various Colleges. However, each College has good practice and the results in work placement cannot be correlated to the overall performance of the College, especially as context is important. Colleges have historical relationships with employers that result in a level of trust in the institution and by extension, in its qualifications and learners. College B, who shows the highest rate of optimal placement, has their campus in close proximity to many of the big hospitality employers. They, however were also the College who experienced challenges with the WIL officer.

College C has introduced a structure that is well-managed and staffed and strategically located in the organisation. However, they have lecturers who feel removed from employers and struggle with resource challenges to ensure a well-constructed simulation experience for their learners. College A has also just recently established their WIL office, but have an academic unit with lecturers that are drawn from industry who have maintained strong linkages. They are also performing well in skills competitions.

May (2010, p.3) notes that triangulation is not possible for social sciences as it is difficult to 'produce one picture of reality'. She identifies the complexity of social realities that cannot reflect one result as being better than the other, but allows for the 'messiness' that exist in social reality.

The analysis does however assist to identify 'islands of effectiveness' within a broader dysfunctional institution (Levy, 2014), offering insight into good practice across the five elements.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

Colleges are important organisations in South Africa's development efforts. They have been identified as institutions that can address key socio-economic issues by offering historically disadvantaged youth access to skills and ultimately improving their prospects for employment. This has required that they become responsive to the local environment within which they operate.

It must be noted that TVET Colleges, as with all public organisations, operate within the constraints or opportunities defined by the current policy and governance frameworks and the legacy of historical institutional development and operation (North, 1990). These are important to consider as they traverse the new space they are asked to occupy.

6.1.1 Complex problems, multi-stakeholder solutions

For Colleges to respond effectively to employers' needs, they cannot operate in isolation from employers and the employment sphere. Boraïne (2014) indicates that the complex challenges faced by the public sector require collaborative solutions. In his view, development is complex and it would be difficult to find solutions or resources vested in one organisation. This is a view shared by Levy (2014: 148) who is of the opinion that 'collective action' can be used successfully between government and non-government sectors, including the private sector and beneficiaries of services. Boraïne (2014) suggests that the more cross-sectoral the collaboration, the greater the opportunity for innovation.

Levy (2014: 189) reminds though that 'collective action does not happen automatically'. It has to be led and facilitated by an institution where collaboration and partnerships are valued and pursued. And it has to be noted that collaboration and partnerships are more complex in South Africa, made so by its apartheid past and inherent inequalities, and challenges must be anticipated when bringing people together with different values, ways of working and historical backgrounds (Boraïne, 2014).

Dewulf (2007), though, considers that if the relationships have interdependencies, the space is created to build a shared vision. He also acknowledges that the process is not easy and suggests that successful multi-stakeholder collaboration requires strong process leadership and people who can facilitate the necessary dialogue. This view is shared by Boraïne (2014), who suggests that finding common purpose or shared values is key to initiating the partnership. Successful multi-stakeholder collaborations can be facilitated when all partners are assisted to deliver on their individual mandates. It also requires that the necessary conditions are created to allow for diverse ideas to be shared. A facilitated process can result in each stakeholder's goals and objectives being identified and met through the process (Dewulf, 2007). An important step in the process is to focus on results as this builds the

momentum and keeps stakeholders motivated to work collaboratively (Boraine, 2014; Dewulf, 2007; Levy, 2014). Levy (2014) also advises that early results build compelling cases for engaging and attracting further stakeholders to participate in the process.

The TVET Colleges have largely been single-minded in their approach to the education and training of learners, with partnerships with industry only being pursued when they require placement opportunities for their learners. They have therefore had difficulty facilitating sustainable partnerships with employers. All the Colleges acknowledged that they generally do not have long-term partnership agreements signed with employers. Most employer agreements are signed for the duration of a project, although they often sign multiple contracts per employer.

A concern from respondents is that employers are only willing to enter a partnership if there is an incentive. In many instances, this incentive is usually supplied by a SETA or the National Skills Fund. When there are no incentives, the Colleges struggle to access workplaces. A further consequence of the incentive scenario is that Colleges then pursue large or medium-sized businesses, either because they are SETA members or because it is easier administratively to manage learners at these companies. However, the South African economy is known to comprise many small businesses, hence the focus on large and medium enterprises implies significant lost opportunities for work placement in the broader economy.

As noted by (Kruss & Petersen, 2016 (b)), there is an expectation of a responsive TVET College to meet the skills needs of industry, yet employers often struggle to specify their skills needs or they are short-term in nature. The challenge is for industry to engage with education institutions around their longer-term and strategic needs as the time frame of education takes longer to shift and change to accommodate modifications. Often Colleges are responding as best they can to identified needs of employers within their timeframes and structural limitations.

This is a critical process and Dewulf (2007) suggests that these collaborative processes often require shared leadership. TVET Colleges may not have the necessary resources or capacity to perform this function. A role has already emerged for private and public sector intermediary entities, such as SETAs, industry associations, professional bodies and civil society organisations, who have recognized this void between TVET Colleges and employers. The study of Kruss, et al. (2014) highlights the valuable role played by intermediaries in facilitating collaboration. This needs to be further explored to consider how the Colleges can work with these intermediaries, as they could be a resource to build capacity and communication at both TVET College and sectoral levels, especially important given a lack of resources to appoint additional staff at colleges to facilitate this role.

Learners and their parents or guardians are also key stakeholders who should be considered in the 'collective action'. They influence the course offerings at Colleges by selecting courses that have available bursaries or that appear to be easier. This impacts on the Programme and

Qualification Mix (PQM) of Colleges which may not be sufficiently linked to industry requirements. Planning and working collaboratively could yield solutions that would see all stakeholders' goals and objectives being met, and would encourage ongoing participation and involvement.

This presents an opportunity for a 'collective action' or collaborative approach to finding solutions. In TVET Colleges there are multiple stakeholders with vested interests. Facilitating 'collective action' with all these stakeholders can potentially yield positive results as their needs are all interdependent. Learners and Colleges require workplaces just as employers require appropriately skilled employees. This requires a process of dialogue if employers are to become true partners and contribute to the solution of creating employable learners.

All of this has broader policy implications, and would require structures, systems and processes that could facilitate the necessary 'interactive capabilities' (Kruss & Petersen, 2014). It will require a decentralised structure with the various PSET institutions working collaboratively on a more a regular basis to address regional issues. For example, SETAs would have to start producing regional skills plans that identify skills requirements at a local level through consultation with key local stakeholders. There should also be regional labour market information system that can facilitate the planning processes, and employers need to be more involved in the planning processes of Colleges. It also needs to be determined who will drive and facilitate this. Colleges are central to the discussions but are they well-placed to drive the processes?

6.1.2 Institutional shifts

If the DHET is serious about prioritising partnerships and facilitating the necessary collaboration between industry and Colleges, then it has to address the organisational and institutional structures that hinder the Colleges from effectively pursuing partnerships. Chipkin & Meny-Gibert (2012) draw a distinction between organisations and institutions, with organisations being the formal structure and institutions being the formal or informal rules that govern the behaviour of the organisation. These writers are of the view that informal structures will always resist change and will therefore require sustained investment and resources to transform.

Recent TVET College policies and strategies (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) have focused on these organisations being more responsive to the labour market and were introduced to counter the high unemployment rate of College graduates. However, these policy changes have not considered the strength of the informal rules and historical legacies that are embedded in these institutions. The implementation of transformative policies would have to be supported by additional resources to allow Colleges to respond effectively to counter the negative perceptions by industry of their learners.

One of the key elements to be addressed is the ethos and structure of the institution, which is still largely geared towards education rather than vocational training. This manifests in how

the organisation directs most of its resources and processes to teaching and learning. Efforts are focused towards learners doing well in the examination with the qualification as the ultimate goal. Even as the lecturers intend to prepare the learner for the real world environment, their time on the practical aspects of the curriculum is limited as they are expected to prepare their learners for exam preparation, as this is used as a measure of the lecturer's effectiveness.

The structure of the NC(V) qualification, with its heavy theoretical bias, has to be reviewed. It is structured so that a learner obtains a certificate at each level but many of the respondents felt that learners are ill-equipped even at the NC(V) 4 level to be productive in the workplace and therefore their learners are encouraged to continue to the N4 to N6 courses and specialise. Employers do not necessarily understand this and therefore expect a NC(V) 4 learner to be fully work ready, perpetuating the employer's perception that TVET College learners are incompetent.

New public management speaks to organisations that have greater autonomy and accountability, to be able to respond to the differentiated experiences at a provincial and local level (Chipkin & Meny-Gibert, 2012). The management and curriculum of TVET Colleges have remained largely centralised, however. TVET Colleges and their offerings are largely still governed by national funding norms which in some instances are linked to national priorities. The funding structure therefore does not allow Colleges to use their discretion to become more responsive to the local needs. This limits their offerings and ability to respond to the demands of their local industries. Even SETAs funding is governed by Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) and they are directing TVET Colleges towards meeting the short-term needs of employers.

Pursuing relevant and dynamic partnerships requires flexible resources that allow the College to respond to the evolving demands of employers. TVET Colleges as public entities should continue to be the champion of qualifications as this allows learners the mobility between sectors and companies, but should have the discretion to introduce new technologies and practices that become observable through their employer engagements. They should also have the flexibility to introduce particular modules that meet specific employers' needs. The OECD (2014) suggests that in keeping with international practice, a certain percentage of the curriculum should be flexible to incorporate local industry needs. They propose that 20% of the curriculum be malleable.

Many of the writers speak to the need for a clear regulatory framework which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in Workplace Based Learning (National Business Initiative, 2017; Badroodien & Kraak, 2006; Rassool, 2014). They also caution that the framework and resultant administrative processes should not be too onerous, to dissuade employers from participating in the process.

Financial benefits can offer a practical and effective means for initiating partnerships (Human Resource Development Council for South Africa (HRDC), 2014). A funding framework is also needed for WIL that should include incentive schemes, that have the flexibility required by employers, whilst also accounting for the requirements of the TVET College and learners. Administrative processes such as incentive payments, log book monitoring and induction of learners are all processes that can facilitate the work placement process and increase numbers. These regulatory frameworks and processes should be developed in consultation with employers though to ensure that they are not too cumbersome.

6.1.3 The important role of the public entrepreneur

Dewulf (2017) reminds that although the collaborative processes take place among organisations, the information sharing, decision-making and learning takes place between individuals. He therefore emphasises the importance of selecting the appropriate person to represent the interests of the individual stakeholder. Levy (2014, p.158) shares the view that addressing many of these complex developmental challenges requires a skilled 'public entrepreneur' that has the commitment to 'build both the internal capabilities and external alliances'. It therefore requires a 'public entrepreneur that brings a different skills set which has been identified as: negotiation, persuasion and enablement (Salamon, 2002, p. 18) integrity (Levy, 2014)

Each College has structured their organisation differently, and it is not in the scope of this study to evaluate the success or otherwise of these structures. However, it has been noted by respondents that by building the 'internal capabilities', the 'external alliances' are improving. All respondents have noted an increase in employers approaching them directly. These 'internal capabilities' should be led by management and also be cascaded to all levels of the structure. The Colleges should have a stakeholder engagement framework with the roles and responsibilities of the various internal role-players clearly identified and a central system for data management.

The question is how much of the success of responsiveness is due to the passion and commitment of the individual? Although all respondents were passionate about the importance of the learner, the respondents varied in their enthusiasm for engaging with industry. In the beginning, to build this enthusiasm and motivate these staff members may require a greater clarity of the purpose and the actions of staff may need to be incentivised. It may need to be included through the performance management system if this is not inherent in the system and people.

The challenge is to consider how to build a cadre of 'public entrepreneurs' that are able to move their innovation agendas and convince sceptical audiences (Levy, 2014). It may require the current inspired 'public entrepreneurs' to motivate with their competence and achievements. The spaces are being created for WIL offices and Hospitality lectures for

sharing of practice and ideas, but they need to also have joint sessions of sharing so that there is cross-functional sharing and learning.

The relevant skills sets for the various 'public entrepreneurs' also need to be determined based on the job specifications of the people that will be interacting with employers. Capacity development may also be necessary and this will have to include the development of stakeholder management and facilitation skills. In addition to the training of relevant staff, the lecturer workplace exposure should be prioritized and structured to ensure maximum learning and benefits to both the lecturers and employer representative.

6.2 Limitations of study

When deciding on the subject to focus on, the decision to look at the NC(V) Hospitality was based on an understanding that there are many learners who are struggling to find placement when exiting this programme. It is now understood that the learners exiting out of this qualification, exit with a generic qualification that does not provide them with the depth of content that makes them employable immediately. There is an expectation from Colleges that this course provides learners with an overview of the hospitality sector which then directs them towards specialisation.

In addition, the number of learners coming through NC(V) 4 is low, and one of the respondents is busy with a study to identify why there is such a high drop-out at NC(V) 2 and NC(V)3 levels.

This dissertation did not consider the role played by the inherited systems which also impacts on the institutional realities of these TVET Colleges. Certain Colleges have a historical relationship with employers that assists to facilitate the placement of their learners. Although all the Colleges selected for interviews are metro based, their geographic location may have an impact as the Colleges have varying proximity to employers.

The study also provided separate analysis of the individual elements and their contribution to the successful placement of learners. It did not allow for how these different elements intersect and overlap and influence each other.

6.3 Conclusion

(Salamon, 2002) suggests that in addressing the challenges of new public management it is not always necessary to bring in reforms. Often there are processes already in place and the challenge is to find innovation already in practice or to manage the system and make it work. This is particular true for TVET Colleges who have been through many changes and now require relative institutional stability. What these organisations need is to learn lessons from good practice and adapting these to their specific contexts.

Levy (2014) writes about 'islands of effectiveness' that within a given dysfunctional environment provide us with an understanding of how things are and also provide a vision of how things could be. The purpose of this study was not to analyse the effectiveness of these TVET Colleges or to provide a blue print for work placement interventions, but offer insights into key elements related to work placement that can be adapted to suit specific organisations.

The three Colleges have responded to the challenges of a new policy dispensation by restructuring their organisations to give effect to the requirements of the White Paper (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). They have strategically positioned the units responsible for work placement but the capacity is not necessarily in place to implement the policies. There also remains the challenge to cascade an attitude of responsiveness across the organisation to ensure that everyone understands their role in delivering an innovative and quality service to all their external stakeholders.

This is not only the role of the WIL unit, but is also dependent on other units to ensure that the overall experience of the partner is a positive one. To give effect to this, requires strong internal coordination, so that all TVET College officials understand their specific role in driving successful work placement of learners.

The academic staff are particularly important role players in the delivery of an innovative curriculum and quality learner, as all three Colleges noted that their lecturers' experience influenced the value employers attached to their graduates. Employers have a clear interest in the curriculum and the quality of learning but in the instance of the NC(V) Hospitality it would appear that the curriculum has not become too outdated. The academic staff were also important in ensuring innovation in the delivery of the curriculum, and provided the learners with practical experience despite resource constraints.

Throughout the study it is evident that the role of employers is paramount to ensuring the successful transition of learners. TVET Colleges cannot educate and train the learner for all workplaces, and should be expected to provide them with the broad knowledge and skills that allow the learners to have mobility in their careers. Employers therefore play a key role in providing a learning environment for the graduate to practice and hone their skills. The employers are also able, through their induction and mentoring processes, to develop the industry specific technical and soft skills required of the learners.

Quality partnerships that are built on trust are needed between the various stakeholders in the post school education and training sector. These partnerships need to be coordinated and facilitated in spaces where the various partners are able through 'collective action', to identify issues, debate and find mutually beneficial solutions.

This would also necessitate a policy and funding environment that grants the regional TVET Colleges the autonomy to build these partnerships that can fulfil the specific requirements of their local economy and employers. It is also dependent on 'public entrepreneurs' at all levels

of the organisation who have the requisite skills and motivation to initiate and maintain the necessary partnerships. Additionally, it requires strong leadership who can sustain a careful balancing act that is able to manage the necessary flexibility, governance and institutional agility required.

CHAPTER 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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